

Research  
to understand,  
and learn from,  
museums  
that have  
experienced  
significant change  
in the  
past five years

A report for Arts Council England 2017

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pomegranate



Report by **Sara Selwood, Victoria Pirie** and **Scott Dickson**.

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# Executive Summary

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This study reports lessons learned by a number of local authority, regimental, university and independent museums (including those managed by volunteers) that experienced significant change between 2010 and 2016. It outlines the various forms of change experienced, drivers of change, factors facilitating or hindering change, and the roles played by key partners.

The research findings are based on a literature review, 40 semi-structured interviews with museum directors and national stakeholders, and three regional workshops - all undertaken in September 2016, which involved museum directors, representatives of museum federations and funding bodies from all nine English regions.

## Forms of change in museums

The literature review and consultees identified different forms of change, which included changes of: **mission and focus, leadership, legal status, organisational structure, staffing structure, business model, buildings, collections, and services.**

## External drivers of change

A number of significant external drivers of change were identified, including: **reductions in the level of public sector funding** to museums, especially from local authorities; **Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)'s continued investment in museums**, which is a force for, and an enabler of, change in the sector; **demographic change** and changing visitor and community expectations; **technological change**, including use across all aspects of the business and new ways of communicating with and engaging visitors; and **changes in the local cultural offer**, which may create clusters of attractions, which increase visitor numbers, or may result in competition that attracts people away from museums.

## Internal drivers of change

The most significant internal factors promoting change in museums were identified as **leadership and culture**. Poor and dysfunctional leadership, if left unchecked, leads to crises. On the other hand, visionary and effective leadership, linked to political and strategic acumen, helps to identify the need for change, its initiation and management. Other significant internal factors supporting change include the production of an open and transparent **plan for change**, which is communicated to all constituencies; the **analysis of timely and accurate management information** along with data on the external environment, in particular demographics; the **flexibility of buildings**, and the **rationalisation and development of collections**.

## Characteristics of successful change

Successful change in museums is, first and foremost, **anticipated; integrates** commercialisation, collection development, and community engagement; is **led from the top, but distributes leadership** through the organisation; is dependent on the **committed support** of staff and volunteers; is based on organisational **ambition, political awareness, pragmatism**, and is often **facilitated** by grants and capital investments, which enable better use of collections and spaces that enable income generation.

## Barriers to change

Common barriers to the successful implementation of change in museums are: where a museum's ability to change its business model is **constrained** by the terms of its founding, its location or the nature of its building; **lack of consensus** among senior managers and/or board members with regard to the changes required; **lack of awareness** of the demographic, social, economic and political **context in which the museum operates; insufficient capacity**, in terms of skills, knowledge and understanding, to manage change; **insufficient investment in training** to enable staff and managers to carry out their newly defined roles; an **absence of meaningful, accurate and timely management information** on the drivers of cost and income; **opposition to proposed changes** from within the museum, users and friends groups; **reluctance to rationalise collections** by a culture focused on preservation rather than the development of collections that are relevant to communities and which enable cost-effective collections management; and **dependency** on help from public agencies, rather than assuming the responsibility to lead change.

## Recommendations for museums

Recommendations for individual museums are grouped under three headings:  
**Plan, Do, Review**

- **Plan:** a museum should **understand** the demography and needs of its **constituencies**; to analyse and understand the **drivers of cost and income**; be **clear about** the ownership, use and management costs of **assets**; draw on **expert and peer advice and support** – but, ensure that any lessons drawn from the experience are learned by the organisation; and **build a track record** in managing change.
- **Do:** a museums should establish a **clear mission**; determine the **most appropriate organisational form**; review and update **staff structures and roles**; strike the right **balance between** the needs of **commercialisation, collection development and community engagement**; make **personnel changes where necessary**; **invest in** staff, management and board **development**; and **review collections** to ensure that they are relevant to the museum's aims and mission.
- **Review:** museums should assess their **outcomes** and **lessons learned**, and ensure that they produce and follow **succession plans**.

## Recommendations for local authorities

Local authorities should follow the example of those that have already: **not sought quick financial fixes; set realistic timeframes for museums' financial independence**; been **clear about the ownership, use and management costs of museum assets**; ensured that museums are an integral part of **"place-making"** activities; played an important role as **convenor and coordinator of cultural activity** in a place, even if the local authority has no residual role in service delivery or museum funding, and considered establishing **innovative financing arrangements** to support museums, such as loans or from local authority assets.

# 1. Introduction

*"As a local authority museum, we're a dying breed"*

*"There is a lot of negativity around change ...  
It can be self-perpetuating.*

*So many museums are changing and a lot of it is positive.  
It is not all doom and gloom.  
It feels like a one-sided debate."*

Research to understand, and learn from, museums that have experienced significant change in the past five years was commissioned by Arts Council England. This study reports lessons learnt by a number of local authority, regimental, university and independent museums that experienced significant change between 2010 and 2016. It reviews drivers of change, types of change, factors facilitating or hindering change, and the roles of key partners, such as local authorities, Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The research findings are based on a literature review, 40 semi-structured interviews with museum directors and national stakeholders (September 2016), all of whom were identified by Arts Council England as consultees with experience of significant change, and three regional workshops (September 2016), which involved museum directors, representatives of museum federations and funding bodies from all nine English regions. It should be noted that while the evidence is up to date, the museums directors' contributions represent a single perspective of change in a given institution. Furthermore, several such interviewees had been in post for less than five years, and therefore had not experienced their museums' whole journey through change.

All consultees' contributions to the text have been treated as anonymous. However, the names of all of those consulted appear in Appendix 1. Appendix 2 contains the topic guides used for the interviews and workshops.

## 2. Context. The literature on significant change, drivers of change and responses to change

### 2.1 Significant change

The academic literature on significant change in museums is predominantly focused on the funded museum sector as a whole. Yates (2010), for example, observed, how little had been written about volunteer-run museums.

Much of that literature is concerned with museums effecting social change (for example, Watson, 2013; The Warwick Commission, 2015, and Crossick & Kaszynka 2016). But, this is not our subject here; nor is the more general issue of museums needing to transform themselves for the twenty first century (see for example, Black, 2012), or with their failure to do so (Kotter, 2007). The present research is concerned with change experienced by museums themselves. There is a strand of the literature that focuses on the evolution and growing complexity of the sector since the nineteenth century (Knell, et al, 2007) and how museums have changed accordingly - the diminution of curatorial status being an example (McCall & Gray, 2013; Wilkinson, 2014).

Accreditation identifies significant changes that may impact on achieving, maintaining and complying with the standard as changes in governance, policies, staff structure, museum re-development and proposals to sell collections or items (Arts Council England et al, 2014: 8, 20, 22).

The grey literature is, understandably, more focused on current concerns. While the 2001 report of the Regional Museums Task Force falls outside the timeframe allocated for this report, it nevertheless raises a number of issues pertinent to it. It noted, for example, the absence of sustainable museum services across England; that the financial pressures of museums' parent bodies had resulted in declining investment, including in expertise and scholarship. Even at the time, the government was calling for greater engagement by local citizens and greater empowerment of communities across public services. The subsequent Review of Renaissance in the Regions, a programme that had been established to address many of those issues, found that many of these issues had not been substantially addressed (Selwood, 2009). This Review anticipated the then proposed National Museums Strategy.

Since 2011, the Museums Association (MA) has annually reviewed changes taking place in museums, and their impact on the sector. Its latest survey (2015) notes that while visitor numbers continue to rise, the health of the sector is causing considerable concern. However, this may not represent the whole story. The MA's returns represent only around 5% of the UK museum population - and, as such, its findings are neither robust nor representative. Moreover, the changes described may not necessarily be due to cuts. Other factors are involved; since the nineteenth century, whatever the state of the economy, a number of museums have opened and closed every year as a matter of course.

As building-based organisations with the associated operational and maintenance overheads, museums are, nevertheless, vulnerable to changes in their financial regimes. Their business and operational structures have often relied on core costs being covered by public subvention. Lindqvist (2012), however, suggested that museums' long-standing dependency on public sector funding bodies should be of greater concern than the immediate impact of the current economic crisis.

As Hughes (2010) observes, other challenges are apparent. Museums are increasingly being called upon to demonstrate their public value. Much of the academic literature has concerned itself with advising museums how they might change - how they might better demonstrate their value, make a difference to the public, improve their accountability and sustainability, and leadership (Davies et al, 2013; Scott, 2013; Madan, 2011; Silverman, 2010; Hatton, 2012).

Many commentators have focused on perceptions of museums. Watts (2010), for example, explored the relationships between the constituencies that work within, and for, cultural organisations (including paid staff, volunteers and the board members). The general consensus is that engaged constituencies better support new policies and programmes. It is, therefore, deemed important for everyone to understand the organisation's mission in the same way - not just identify with it, but be committed to it to make decisions and act on the mission (Robinson, 2010: 28; AIM, 2016). And to recognise that change is continuous rather than episodic (TBR, 2015b: 10; AIM, 2016).

These kinds of changes are all seen as contributing to resilience. TBR et al.'s 2015 and 2014 research for Arts Council England on the resilience of local authority-related

museums highlighted the complexity and diversity of the sector. It revealed a wide range of operating contexts and institutional structures, different governance and management arrangements, organisational strategies, partnership arrangements and business models. It made it clear that there was no “one-size-fits-all” response to changing political and funding environments. Scale and capacity of a museum, visitors and location were more important in responding to change than legal structure (2015:2). The research on the economic impact of museums and the case studies of museum business models illustrated this very clearly (TBR et al, 2014 and 2015a). Some museums are prepared and able to embrace radical reform in placing visitors and communities at the centre of their business model; others are not.

There is, it should be said, a degree of rhetoric involved in perceptions of museums’ change. Swain (2010: 250), for example, questioned academics’ assertion that museums “have played an important part in shaping social changes and have themselves been witness to revolutionary change”. Much is made of museums ability to empower communities, but research suggests that the majority of the sector’s users are less interested in this than in museums’ old-fashioned collections-based knowledge (Cameron, 2007; BritainThinks, 2013). Research by ComRes (2015: 7) for Arts Council England on public attitudes to culture identified providing education, entertainment and tourism as important contributions to life in Britain. With tourism viewed as the most important goal for government investment. While libraries and museums are the most desired areas for government support for culture.

The literature also highlights examples of the constraints that museums themselves place on embracing change. Nolan (2015) is struck by museums’ disinclination to learn from history; Hatton (2012), Ross (2014) and Walker (2016) comment on museums’ reluctance to overcome the challenges of innovation projects (such as the development of digital visitor generated content applications), or to be led by non-museum professionals. Indeed a number of consultees for this research noted that museums were not always very good at accepting criticism from outside.

## 2.2 Drivers of change

### 2.2.1 Public funding

Work by TBR et al (2015b) and Harvey (2016) indicates that further cuts to local authority spending are certain, although the reductions applied between 2010- 2015 have not been as severe as was expected. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) figures indicate a 16.6% reduction across arts, culture and public entertainment (Harvey 2016: 9) with, in 2015, £1.2 billion being spent on arts and culture. Museum funding has experienced a lower reduction relative to other local authority services (TBR et al., 2015b: 1). Harvey noted that arts and culture reductions in funding have been unevenly spread; the East and West Midlands had the highest level of reductions, followed by the North, with the South West having the least (2016:9).

Harvey (2016: 12) suggests that smaller museums suffer most as a result of funding reductions, because they are least able to generate income. Local authority funding for Arts Council England’s Major Partner Museums (MPMs) shows a 0.8% reduction between 2012/13 and 2014/15, But, MPMs’ total income in this period increased, with the exception of the South East (Harvey, 2016: 14). DC Research points to a 16% reduction (as a percentage of 2010/11 funding) in local authorities’ funding of museums and galleries between 2010/11 and 2014/15 (2016b: 22). The largest decreases were in the East Midlands and South West and the smallest in East of England and South East (2016b: 23).

The impact of funding reductions on individual museums should not be underestimated. Developing new ways of working constitutes a “challenging terrain”, which “ever shrinking resources will make it harder to navigate” (Harvey, 2016). BOP’s 2016 report, *Character Matters: Attitudes, behaviours and skills in the UK workforce*, suggests that museums’ ability to take on such challenges is likely to vary. It suggests that the workforce:

“...still strongly believes that the sector should be entitled to significant government funding given the public service that museums provide. Further, a sizable minority of the workforce see the requirement to balance commercial goals with a public service mission as inherently challenging.”  
(BOP, 2016: 3)

### 2.2.2 Demography

Issues pertaining to demographic change - museum users and participants and the diversity of their profiles - are well rehearsed (Consilium, 2014; ComRes, 2015, The Warwick Commission, 2015; Davies et al, 2015; TNS BMRB, 2016: 52-53). The predominance of cultural participation by higher socio- economic groups has led to questions about the definitions of culture and participation and calls for “everyday” culture and participation outside the funded culture sector to be recognised (Ebrey, J., 2016; Taylor, M., 2016 and 64 Million Artists, 2016 ).

The lack of diversity in the museum workforce is longstanding: changes have not kept pace with the changing demography of the population BOP (2016: 13). This is despite numerous initiatives and funding intended to address this issue at all levels of the workforce.

In *Valuing Diversity The case for inclusive museums* Turtle & Bajwa (2016) identify issues operating in museums that impede diversity, including ethnicity. These include unconscious bias in recruitment; programming and representation in museum spaces; the operation of power and the pigeon holing of work around diversity (for example as community engagement). Change will depend on horizontal decision-making; the sector challenging itself; better training and better understanding of why the case for diversity is required 2016: 17-18).

Community engagement and participation appears to have a low profile in influencing change. In *Whose cake is it anyway?* Lynch (2011) found that despite being encouraged by public and private foundations’ funding, community engagement remained peripheral for most museums. The project-funded nature of investment is an issue; organisational change will be fundamental to how museums think about community engagement. This view was reiterated in *No longer them and us* (Bienkowski, 2016). Competing strategic agendas within individual organisations; challenges to professional expertise; working with the “usual suspects” in terms of communities (communities already known to the museum); and staff’s existing skillsets and expertise, all impede sustained community engagement.

### 2.2.3 Organisational culture, staff structures and roles

The challenges of cultural change and skills have most recently been re-iterated by TBR et al. (2015b), Turtle & Bajwa (2016) and BOP (2016). They present the museum workforce as inclined to be risk averse, as having top-down and hierarchical structures, and a record of poor cooperation internally and externally. All this undermines the

likelihood of museums having the ability to adapt and respond quickly - factors that Robinson (2010: 14, 20) identified as necessary for resilient organisations. Organisational “routines” may also contribute to a lack of flexibility and speed of response (BOP, 2012: 4). Speed of response to customer needs is identified as fundamental to being agile, as identified in the high-tech and digital sector (Gothelf, 2014). Hierarchical decision-making processes are considered to impede this (Denning 2015).

Governance and senior management are often regarded as impeding change and innovation. Boards are “relatively traditional and rigid and, therefore, not open to changes in approach or attitude” necessary to meet the pace of change faced (BOP, 2016: 55). Yet, the cultural sector has seen sustained investment in board and governance development and a wealth of guidance and training opportunities available in the voluntary sector, including the Small Charities Coalition<sup>1</sup> and NCVO<sup>2</sup>.

The Clore Leadership Programme<sup>3</sup> and others have commissioned a review of the current state of governance in the cultural sector, in the context of a rapidly changing and uncertain environment.

The split between staff being specialist and non-specialist, back-of-house and front-of-house needs to change, as transferable skills and multi-tasking are becoming more important in the context of diminished workforces. Greater autonomy in staff roles across museums’ staff structures is needed to encourage problem solving, experimentation and enable the ability of staff to act more quickly to changing contexts. Recruiting from outside the museum sector may be advantageous in that it brings in new and different experience, skills and knowledge (BOP, 2016: 52).

In short, attitude and such personal qualities, as motivation, persistence, optimism and ability to learn, are crucial if the museum workforce is to manage, deliver and sustain change (BOP, 2016: 1). This is all the more important if museums, like other businesses, need to comply with the notion that “constant transformation is the new normal” (Anthony, 2009).

## 2.2.4 Charging

Charging admission has been a contentious issue for the museums sector for many years. Research by DC Research (2016a) indicates that charging appears not to impact on the visitor profile (2016a: 15). Paying visitors are more likely than non-paying visitors to visit museums’ shops and cafés. In both charging and non-charging museums, the quality of the retail and catering offers influences secondary spend (2016a: 17). There is little to distinguish visitors’ views on the quality of their visit at charging and non-charging museums. The trend was for more museums to shift from charging to free admission, than from free admission to charging (DC Research 2016a: 6). While in the last three years, just under half of free admission museums had considered charging, they had not done so. Appendix 3.3 describes one museum’s experience of reversing its policy of changing for admission.

## 2.2.5 Digital technology

NESTA’s third annual survey of digital use by arts and culture organisations indicates that museums are more likely to identify themselves as “late adopters” of new technology than the wider culture sector (NESTA, 2015b: 3). They regard technology as most important for marketing, preserving and archiving, and least important in terms of

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.smallcharities.org.uk>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/practical-support>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cloreleadership.org/item.aspx?id=207>

their business models and creativity (NESTA, 2015b: 1). Museum digital skills gaps have increased since 2013, and include data analysis, databases and customer relationship management, project management, IP and rights clearance (NESTA, 2015b: 5).

Many of the issues raised in the literature found echoes in the primary research undertaken for this study.

### 3. Definitions of significant change

Arts Council England does not apply a particular definition of significant change except in the context of Accreditation, and the museums that Arts Council England identified for interview had experienced many different types of change. One national stakeholder summed up the position, saying “[change] can mean different things to different people: what may matter is what feels significant to a museum, or what disrupts its organisational model”. It was also observed that museums are slow to change, in part due to the fact that they hold collections. Another consultee observed, “addressing a sudden crisis by making changes that have been imposed upon you over, say, five months, is very different to introducing significant change over an appropriate period of time, which can be a very positive experience.” The former tends to have negative connotations; the latter, positive.

Consultations found that significant change is relative both in the sense of its scale and scope. A number of museums had experienced a series of incremental changes over a number of years; in such cases, consultees often referred to change as a continuous process or a process of discovery, with one consultee remarking, “it’s about how we identify ourselves, understand who controls us, assert our independence and how funding relates to that”. While others had experienced change programmes that were consciously aimed at bringing about a transformational change across the whole organisation over a planned period of time.

In some instances, interviewees’ understanding of significant change appeared to reflect the factors (often material changes) that had brought about change, these are discussed in the next section.

### 4. Drivers of significant change

Consultees identified external and internal drivers of change.

#### 4.1 External drivers of change

The most significant of the external drivers of change, in particular for museums governed by local authorities or in receipt of local authority grants, was the scale and speed of reduction in local authority spending on museums – which was understood to be part of a wider programme of cuts in local services. Reductions in local authority spending of around 30% were common, cuts of over 80% were also reported, and further cuts, ranging from 20% to 100%, were anticipated for the period 2018-2020. In many cases a reduction in local authority funding was foreseen, This was the case as described in Appendix 3.1, which considers how one museum service addressed the closure of a museum. The scale and speed of cuts was said to have taken some museums by surprise. Similarly, independent museums that were heavily dependent on investment income, were thought likely to be facing difficulties linked to low interest rates – although at least one consultee reported that an actively managed fund was helping to cover the museum’s running costs.

In some instances, local authorities had driven organisational change in museums by developing and appraising different options for the future and deciding to establish independent trusts to run museums. These were often regarded as a means of reducing tax liabilities and/or accessing funds not otherwise available to local authorities. Appendix 3.2 describes the establishment of an independent charitable foundation intended to support a local authority museums service. Other local authorities opted to retain the museum service in-house and incorporate it into a wider programme of change for the delivery of local services. In some instances, a change in a local authority's expectations of what the service should provide had driven change in the activities undertaken by a museum. Examples included authorities seeking to promote the visitor economy or develop social care services. It should be noted that changes in the commissioning of social care were not seen as significant drivers of change in museums, as museums were said to lack the capacity and the capability to bid directly for NHS contracts. However, the development of a transactional relationship between a local authority and an independent trust may have unintended consequences for both local authorities and museums; some trusts had handed back sites and services to the relevant local authority when those sites failed to generate income or the local authority had failed to provide the funding for their maintenance.

HLF was cited by many consultees as a positive external driver of change - most obviously through capital support, but also by supporting organisational change through Transition funding and collection development via its Collecting Cultures programme. The extent to which HLF consciously drives change was raised. The sustainability of its investment on capital was also queried. Similarly, Arts Council England's support for change through individual officers, its Museum Development programme, the Museum Resilience Fund (MRF), including its support for such initiatives as the Future Proof Museum and Hallmarks of Prospering Museums were highlighted as important drivers of change, as well as aids to change. More negatively, questions were raised as to the museum's effective use of Renaissance funding beyond programming.

Consultees also highlighted the importance of "place" in driving change in museums. In the case of Rugby Arts Gallery and Museum (Appendix 3.4) this entailed working with the sport's international governing body, to provide a tourist destination associated with the town. Sometimes this related to changes in neighbouring attractions, which helped to change public perceptions of an area and its visitor or leisure offer. It also related to the way that a museum's location set parameters as to what was achievable, for example, in terms of visitor numbers in winter months. One museum, which was previously located out of the way, was preparing to move into a local library, which would allow it to break out of previous constraints, and which was generating a new-found sense of optimism, "I think it's the most popular library in London. So, we hope that the museum will reach many more people than in the past."

Demographic change, competition for people's leisure and learning time and technological change were also cited as external drivers, particularly in relation to community engagement and audience development. Although, it should be noted that, consultees who cited technological change often saw it as an issue for the future rather than one that had led to significant change over the past five years, and a number of consultees remarked on the lack of detailed and up-to-date data on visitors, audiences, and local communities. As one director put it, "the community has changed an awful lot in this borough in recent years, and it's been very hard for the service to keep up... It really needed to be more fleet of foot and more adaptable. The demographic has more BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) communities than ever before."

Another director reported that a museum had belatedly come to recognise the importance of an earlier audience development programme, saying, “In the past, we ran a five-year audience development programme with HLF funding and staffing ... [but] ... the work hadn’t been embedded – and was simply regarded as ‘additional’. However, we’ve been taking its findings on board...”. Some reported investing in new consultations to develop their plans: “We spoke to lots of people and got a very good sense of what visitors and the community thought.”

## 4.2 Internal drivers of change

Change was also promoted by museums themselves, in order to facilitate the running of the museum, bring “a new life to it”, protect the level of service for the future, enable more effective community engagement, and provide better access to, and care for, the collection. One consultee captured the internal drive for change, saying, “We’re concerned with constantly developing. When we’ve done things, it seems like a great step forward, and then we ask ourselves: ‘What next?’.” In the hands of business-minded management teams, the gathering and analysis of timely, accurate, and relevant data also acted as an internal driver of change. For example, one museum used improved data to analyse visitor trends in order to inform its programming; and it took catering back in-house, once it became clear that it offered better margins than room hire and event management.

Relatively few museums considered their collections to have driven significant change, although many consultees cited the centrality of the collection to museums and their overall operations. The need for further discussions about the relevance and purpose of collections was viewed as a sector-wide issue. Consultees also recognised that significant change had often occurred in relation to governance or business models, buildings and additional income generating activities, with less emphasis given to changes to their collection, either in terms of disposals or acquisitions. This led to collections being identified as driving future change, once business and organisation change had occurred.

Elsewhere, separate collections were reported to have been brought together in order to form a single heritage collection. However, this could lead to difficulties in establishing a new mission and operational priorities for the museum concerned. For example, in one case it was noted that whereas “the museum collection was well managed and preserved, the archives collection had been quite neglected” and the biggest challenge for the service was “to make sure that the joint collection reflects [the Borough] now.”

A number of consultees cited changes to buildings – often a result of HLF grants – as drivers of change. Several museums had moved, or were planning to move, into new or refurbished premises. The buildings were said to enable improvements in the delivery of services, including interpretation, community engagement, and education, and to provide additional space with the potential to generate income, such as meeting rooms, retail space, cafés, bars and restaurants. In one regrettable instance, the inadequacy of a museum’s storage facilities led to a deterioration of material and concerns over its long-term viability – this situation was resolved by transferring a third of the collection, which comprised human remains, to another museum, which was not only better able to care for it, but also a more appropriate home for it.

## 5. Types of significant change

### 5.1 Changes in legal status

The changes that museum directors talked about often included transitioning to an independent trust, and merging with other local services (such as libraries and archives) or joining an independent leisure trust, underpinned by a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the local authority.

But, not all change was marked by a move to trust status. Indeed, some local authorities had considered and rejected a move to trust status or adopted a hybrid position, whereby the service was retained in-house and a museum development trust or foundation was established in order to provide a vehicle for the museum to access funds not available to local authorities.

### 5.2 Changes in staff structures and roles

Consultees also highlighted changes to staffing structures – both in terms of the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff and the balance of roles in a new structure. In general, new staffing structures had fewer FTEs, more volunteers, and more dedicated roles to address business development, fundraising, and marketing requirements. Consultees reported that where business, fundraising and marketing had been added on to existing roles, the scope and scale of change had been limited. The museum eventually found that they needed to split those roles, so that specialist-targeted resources could be deployed to deliver significant change.

For one museum director, the expectation that she could deliver on the museum's new model was a real problem: "I'm not a business-person, I'm a historian. I need advice and training as to how to develop the business side of the organisation, which is so at risk. I could do with one-to-one support. It's really down to me. The trustees are at a bit of a distance and the volunteers deal with day-to-day matters."

### 5.3 Changes in organisational culture

Cultural change was highlighted as a major element of change and, for some consultees, the most important. The nature of the changes in organisational culture inevitably varied from institution to institution. However, the general tenor of such changes was from risk-averse institutions, often operating in professional and organisational "silos", to outward-facing organisations, which were more commercially focused, more engaged with their communities and with other related services and institutions, such as libraries or nearby visitor attractions. It was noted that, in order to be successful, investment had to be made in training staff and volunteers, and developing board members and managers, so that they were equipped for their new roles. Defining roles, responsibilities and expectations of performance were also important. However, not all consultees were confident about changing museum culture: "Museums aren't well-structured to do this kind of thing [entrepreneurialism] in the context of local authorities."

### 5.4 Changes in business models

A number of directors cited changes in their museum's business model as a significant change. These tended to be in relation to the diversification of income streams. One museum was "looking to create schools and regular memberships as a way to generate a steady flow of revenue". Others described intentions "to [operate] on the basis of donations, sales and charging admission". One museum, which had abandoned

admission charges, was focusing on “visitors’ secondary spend – in the shop, in the café, through the learning department. We’re growing a new sleepover business – it’s socially brilliant and very profitable. We... also manage the mediaeval priory, which we use for weddings... We hire out museum spaces after hours... and are now looking to generate income through sponsorship.”

Another museum, which was part of a joint-committee involving a number of local authorities, had sought to maintain its position by selling services and developing project-funding opportunities: “We’re working for [one] DC to excavate a Roman villa; and with [another] on its town centre development and HLF application. Selling our expertise constitutes a bolt-on benefit in our relationships with our funders.” The same museum had also established a commercial wing for Conservation and Design Services and a Foundation. As an independent charity, the Foundation enabled the museum to take advantage of concessions on business rates as well as other financial benefits, such as raising money that helped the museum to achieve a better leverage for HLF and Arts Council England projects.

In some cases, however, making significant changes to the business model was easier said than done. Local authority museums reported difficulties in generating funding from other sources. One identified “project funding” as its only additional source of income; another mentioned archival image sales and learning services. One interviewee recalled the frustrations associated with writing a fundraising strategy: “In reality, our problem is that as part of the local authority, we are unable to accept certain kinds of funding, and people or organisations are unwilling to support us”. As noted above, changes in organisational structure, such as the establishment of a development trust or a trading company, are essential if local authority museums that remain in-house are to access all available sources of funding.

Museums also needed the freedom to use their assets to contribute to business outcomes. Board structures and representation did not always enable this. In particular, local authorities’ dominance of trust boards could impede organisational effectiveness for example, the need to develop income generation or the appropriateness of a local authority chair when the local authority grant was being reduced or removed.

The requirement to buy services, such as IT, from the local authority, could be problematic in relation to cost effectiveness and development capacity. The digital challenges faced by museums required to use local authority procurement and communications strategies has been raised by the MA with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)<sup>4</sup>.

## 5.5 Changes in relation to collections

Although most consultees did not consider collections to be a driver of change, disposals, acquisitions and new displays were sometimes symptomatic of wider change. For instance, one museum sought to revivify the collection that it managed on behalf of a local authority by acquiring related but different items and collections. “So whereas we had a very strong lace collection, we are now integrating the ... Guild’s collection (which is coming under our management) and are currently negotiating the transfer of a significant private national collection of 20th-century book illustration”. Other consultees indicated that a collection could form the centrepiece of a strategy to increase visitor numbers and raise the profile of an institution and its place. One museum director identified the museum’s collection as “the very foundation of our whole strategy”.

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/19102016-councils-urged-to-give-museums-freedom-online?dm\\_j=2VBX,BU7B,27MBON,15PDG,1](http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/19102016-councils-urged-to-give-museums-freedom-online?dm_j=2VBX,BU7B,27MBON,15PDG,1)

Some consultees regarded funders' investments in museums as being "underpinned by increased community involvement." They regarded this as additional to what they regarded as their "core functions... the emphasis on community engagement has frustrated our attempts to work on the collections that are, after all, the very foundation of the community programme." Some were holding out for the possibility of something more radical. As one director commented, "The approach to the collections needs turning on its head... We will talk to our communities, who have sophisticated views about what should, and should not, be done."

For some interviewees, rationalising their collections was a function of change; for others it was simply part of good collections management. It could, however, be regarded as contentious by local authorities.

"Members are scared of rationalising ...Regarding the public reaction, you have to be prepared to have a debate, be honest and open about your decisions. In my view, if an object isn't on display, it must be stored accessibly... Rationalisation is about understanding collections, and the best outcomes for them."

Objects contribution to "telling stories" was a major factor.

"There is no sense in ... collections ... not telling the story. Until recently, disposal was seen as a terrible thing. But now we, as collections managers, are signed up to it. Acquisition and disposal policies can sometimes subvert common sense decisions. The collections are a lot healthier than they were 10 years ago and we continue to work through our reserve collections and rationalise them."

Many consultees were preoccupied with having to address the loss of curatorial expertise. "We need to look to skills and expertise in the community, and how to harness this effectively... we need to understand what the curatorial skills are that are special." In some instances, new curatorial posts had been created with the intention of specifically developing parts of the collection. Contemporary collecting, which was considered vital to make museums relevant, complemented disposals. Museums were said to "need to tackle disposal seriously, otherwise it's the same old collections and same old problems". Many gave the impression of having stopped collecting at "the end of WW2".

However desirable, contemporary collecting was considered particularly challenging for a number of reasons. Interviewees cited inertia and museums' passive approach to collecting - "sitting behind a desk and waiting for things to come in"; the public's perception that museums collect "old things"; uncertainty as to what museums and collections are for; museum professionals' inhibitions around collaborative decision-making with communities, and their uncertain grasp of the role and place of contemporary material culture.

For local authorities, selling objects may be "the easy way out" of their current predicaments. It's

"... a policy option, but the way it's been approached so far hasn't been correct. If an object is sold, an endowment should be created that helps secure the future of the museum. And ethical guidance should be used to do it. Don't just write [items] off. Selling is something that should be explored and it's a debate that the MA and Arts Council need to get going. Civic museums are talking about it<sup>5</sup>. These are tough times and if selling something helps sustain the future of the museum, then it serves a purpose."

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/19012016-arts-council-england-awards-funding-to-local-authority-civic-museums-network>

Some interviewees noted that the MA's guidelines on disposal support re-investment in collections care.

"Any money raised as a result of disposal through sale must be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the museum's collection. Money raised should be invested in the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection (e.g. by creating or increasing an endowment, making new acquisitions or making a significant capital investment which will bring long-term benefit). The use of proceeds from any sale will be monitored through the Accreditation process." (MA, 2016: 18)

That guidance has been endorsed by all the national agencies involved in supporting museums.

## 5.6 Changes to museum missions

Several of the museums consulted as part of this research had grappled with the prospect of a change of mission. Sometimes, this resulted from a change of leadership – at director or board level. At other times, leaders disagreed over the future direction, or mission, of their museum.

One consultee outlined a situation where a director had sought to maintain a museum by focusing on its traditional services, whereas the board had sought to redirect the museum's focus to engaging the local community in a range of leisure activities. This could have diversified the museum's offer and generated more income. The museum faced financial difficulties and resignations at board level; the failure to agree a way forward was followed by closure. At the time of the research, a new provider was expected to re-open the site with a new mix of services that would emphasise the community, leisure and training capabilities of the assets: a venue with a museum rather than a museum with a venue.

Another consultee highlighted a similar choice, namely one between a diversification programme that would serve wider community interests and generate income, and an effort to sustain the core museum offer with diminishing resources. In this instance, however, the change of mission was driven by a change of provider: the local authority awarded a contract to manage the museum to a Community Interest Company (CIC) that offered a wide range of cultural and leisure activities. As Appendix 3.5 shows, this, in effect, turned The Whitaker museum into a locally run centre for arts and culture with a museum as part of its offer. This type of change led several consultees to consider redefining museums given the kinds of transformations that they are going through.

## 5.7 Changes in partnership working

For some museums, partnerships were a relative novelty. One director commented, "The museum was very inward-looking and we didn't previously have partnerships. We're now much more outwardly focused". However, for these museums in particular, the notion of what constituted a partnership was relatively ambiguous. One referred to the rest of the Borough's cultural offer, including "various historical societies, the Art Gallery, the National Trust, schools and other places". Others identified service providers, including the regional Museum Development Officers, website providers and other contractors as partners.

Content providers were also seen as partners: “We are increasingly drawn into partnership work, not least in terms of bringing partners’ programming into our venue. This brings people in and is proving very successful in terms of visit numbers.” Longstanding relationships with national museums, which involved loans and touring displays, arguably served the same purpose.

Other partnerships involved relevant parties investing in the joint development of mutually beneficial programmes. One museum described working with a local university “to develop primary and secondary school programmes around our primary collections.” Partnerships of this kind involved those with regional branches of such national agencies as the Prince’s Trust, YMCA, Age UK and Mind.

Local authorities were sometimes, but not necessarily, regarded as partners: “Our relationship with the County Council has changed from their managing the museum to our working in partnership with them. That’s largely based on us caring for their collection. We’re also developing a relationship with [the] Town Council and various local organisations who support us.” Other museums described how long-standing partnerships, established by the local authority, had been, or were being, renegotiated. In some cases, new local authority relationships were established, where a trust based in one county was contracted to manage council-owned collections in another county. Relationships with the owners of the building that the museum occupied, or which it used as a store, and owners of collections it managed were being tightened up through Memoranda of Association and Service Level Agreements, and more formal agreements with local authorities themselves.

## 5.8 Changes curtailing ambitions

Consultees also reported significant changes that had had a negative impact on their museum. One museum had hoped for many years to get its collection Designated. But “considerable staff reductions and a... loss of skills... and knowledge” combined with its failure to recruit specialists, “partly due to a lack of [available] expertise... and partly [to] people’s reluctance to... take up a one-year post” meant that this now looked very unlikely.

## 6. Those involved and their roles

Many different combinations of actors were said to have been involved in identifying the need for change. These included board members, lead members for culture in local authorities, museum directors, museum staff, funders and communities. The precise combination of actors depended on specific circumstances, for example, the history of volunteer involvement in operating a museum, or the specific skills and experience of board members.

In practice, where significant change occurred, it was most often led by senior management and/or the board. As noted above, change is sometimes led by a new leadership team. And, in the case of one independent museum, research revealed that the Charity Commission had pursued the need for significant change, on the basis of its concerns about governance arrangements. However, the involvement of communities, visitors, and volunteers was usually restricted to their engagement in displays, interpretation and the exhibitions programme.

Consultees reported that community engagement with plans to change organisational or governance arrangements was limited. Museums were more likely to involve communities in rethinking access to services. This is a requirement for HLF funding. It was generally the case that, following significant change, museums went to some effort to engage more with communities and users than they had in the past. One museum director noted, "We've expanded learning, widened the programme, and had our first festival this year. This brought business to the city, and in particular to the Business Improvement District [BID], which had supported us, along with the Chamber of Commerce."

## 6.1 Factors facilitating and preventing change

### 6.1.1 Clarity of vision

Clarity of vision, ambition, understanding organisational challenges and weaknesses were commonly cited factors in successful change in museums. This applied regardless of scale, governance arrangements and whether or not the museums were reducing, re-shaping, or expanding their services. But consultees also suggested that the scale of change needed to conform to the scale of ambition and challenges faced.

### 6.1.2 A sound understanding of the drivers of costs and income

A sound analysis of accurate and timely data was necessary to underpin the clarity of vision and approach. One consultee cited the need for "A really good and thorough evaluation of the service, for example, its current and future costs, and timescales for change." They went on to observe, "Change can be seen as a quick fix, but it takes years, embarking on change requires really knowing the ground. Undertake the needs analysis in a thorough way including public consultation." Another consultee illustrated the importance of reliable data in making a case for change in the face of opposition from local councillors and sections of a local community: "To convince people, we used data [to tell] the story about what had been achieved and what hadn't worked. We appreciated that people love the house and gardens, but people living in the area weren't using it. Users were the typical middle-class museum audience. We knew from our project work that people living in the area valued the garden and summer family activities, so that is what we should be focusing on."

### 6.1.3 Attitudes and capabilities of decision-makers

For museums that remain inside a local authority, or that have strong links to a local authority, maintaining a high profile with senior councillors in cabinet and on scrutiny committees was highlighted as important: so, too were strong links with relevant ward councillors. One museum service explained, "There is a lead member for each area of work and we meet fortnightly. This meeting would normally be the director and the relevant assistant director, but as we have no assistant director at the moment the heads of service attend. It's very helpful to have direct contact. The lead member is very supportive of the service and of us as officers. [The councillors] understand the professional role and the role vis-à-vis the public, and how to present issues to the public."

Interviewees noted the importance of lead councillors' or trustees' capability and willingness to be directly involved in change and to work with staff. Identifying and recruiting active trustees, however, was frequently described as a challenge. One interviewee highlighted difficulties in recruiting trustees from diverse backgrounds, especially outside of the larger cities. Other interviewees commented on the need to

continuously develop boards in order to meet the needs of the organisation. This could involve refreshing a board that was established to set up a trust, in order to develop one that was better suited to dealing with on-going operations, or ensuring that the right membership was in place to establish a new focus for the organisation. Understanding the skills and knowledge required of trustees was viewed as the essential starting point. Finding trustees with the right skill sets was crucial to the successful management of change.

Local authorities' commercial acumen and competence to commission services was considered vital in effecting, or supporting, museum change and development.

As well as driving change, boards and local authorities could also hinder change. As one national stakeholder suggested, boards "...can all cause problems. They can push changes through on to the staff and volunteers. But, it's also the case that they may be out of touch, or unwilling to face up to the situation. It could be that they are at the centre of a museum's difficulties." The same might be said of local authorities' senior management teams. Types of hindrance cited by consultees included procrastination, insufficient commitment, and poor execution of proposed changes. In some local authorities, museum managers were not directly involved in the decisions to make significant changes in their governance, the museum's mission, or its provision of services. This made change more difficult to implement. Consultees referred to lacking confidence in their governance arrangements. As one consultee observed, "the process was very reactive as the council tried to move quickly. A lead officer was appointed who had no... background [in culture]. With hindsight this was not helpful." In this case, decisions were taken without a full understanding of "the implications and impact of [the] decision... on audiences, residents, staff and collections."

Consultations indicated two, sometimes interrelated but distinct, factors which affect a museum's ability to imagine and implement change successfully. First, the museum's attitude to risk – sometimes captured in discussions of entrepreneurialism – was said to enable or hinder change. And second, the museum's freedom to act. Some consultees attributed a museum's move from being part of a local authority to an independent trust as offering freedom to enable, or indeed foster, a more entrepreneurial culture, and an increased appetite for risk. In some cases, greater freedom was ascribed to the museum's ability to introduce its own – less onerous – procedures, in others, it was attributed to the ability of a smaller organisation to focus on its mission and be more fleet-of-foot. One director of a local authority museum put it:

"It is a massive cultural shift to move from a large organisation to a smaller one. We need to understand the shift and make connections that allow us to be more responsive, quicker and delegate responsibility to staff. For example, community groups that meet and decide on action don't want to wait for weeks for us to help them. We need to be much quicker and more responsive, and this has an element of risk. The local authority is not comfortable with risk; in fact, it's risk averse. The local authority will go along if everything is okay, but if things go wrong nobody wants to end up with egg on their face. That's the major difference between local authority and independent museums, which don't have the level of scrutiny that we receive. It's not unreasonable to be scrutinised, but there is a balance [to be struck]."

## 6.1.4 Attitudes and capabilities of staff and volunteers

Unsurprisingly, the attitudes of staff and volunteers to change varied from place to place. At one level, significant change was perceived in relation to individuals' determination. But, as one strong-minded director admitted, change could be draining. She was "...a bit tired ... you hit a wall, get over it and then find another wall in your path. "Despite having a strong team who want to work through the changes, the outcome can't be guaranteed. Indeed, the result "could be uncertain if people leave, or if the team changes." Some museum directors feared the impossibility of the task ahead: "Given that I'm part-time and the only member of staff, I'm not sure that I have the capacity to plan, deliver, evaluate and impose changes more than minimally. It's going to take longer for things to be in place than the plan implies... I'm already concerned that some [of the] changes needed, haven't happened and that we won't be able to achieve what's necessary."

As one consultee noted, volunteers need to understand their role in working towards change. "If they don't... they can resist change substantially." A number of consultees commented on the sometimes personal and vitriolic nature of responses to change both externally and internally. The issues were often said to revolve around different views of what a museum should be. As one director put it, "We had real difficulty around the financial drive to reduce costs and to become more commercially driven - to introduce charging and popular exhibitions and act in a different way. Across all groups, senior management, staff, members, and Friends have disagreed ... It remains a big challenge for the service. The Friends in particular signed up to something profoundly different." Another reported that "Some staff thought we were selling out and were involved in lobbying against the change, not realising this was not appropriate behaviour."

In some instances, staff referenced museum ethics in opposing change. They "felt the changes [of use of space, for example] were not ethical as museums should serve the public." Ethics have also been invoked by staff arguing against the rationalisation of collections and to belittle the role of community curators as non-professionals.

Interviewees also commented on the sector's attitude to change: "The importance of change hasn't been fully accepted, museums can't remain as they were. Many user groups would prefer for them to be as they were ten years ago. Even some of the MA's messaging doesn't quite ring true for us. We have to adapt and change. The people who protest against change know how to do that [but] other users, who are very supportive of change, are less vocal." Some consultees proposed that museums are not very good at accepting criticism from outside, (for instance, from a tourist body à propos the quality of visitor experience).

Consultations highlighted that maintaining staff morale was a particular challenge that required active management. One director described the process, thus:

"The staff had already been through restructuring and there was a period when morale was rock bottom. Turning this around was my biggest difficulty. The staff were TUPE'd<sup>6</sup> and there was a feeling that [their posts] would [only] last the 2-year minimum period and then ... be at risk. Overnight, new systems were put in place - IT, phones, financial management. It was like being hit with an iron and at a time when people felt vulnerable. The systems change was the biggest shock for everyone and very difficult. But it's short-lived and you just have to get on with it.

<sup>6</sup> TUPE stands for Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment).

I thought, 'what can I do to turn this around, give people a big vision; a project'? The turning point was success with HLF Round 1 [which meant that] people saw the museum was going somewhere. And, the momentum has built with the MRF. It is only really 6 months ago that the corner was turned."

Some directors reported how staff supported change. This was often linked to investment in staff training and a new vision for the museum. And, it served to inspire confidence in the future when other museums were closing down. In one case, where a change of provider occurred and there was no transfer of staff, a new team of managers, staff and volunteers, who were all signed up to the new vision, took over the museum. In this instance, significant change – including diversification, employment growth and community engagement – occurred rapidly. In another case, where a service remained in a local authority, it became part of a wider programme of change across the authority, which included management development and staff training. In this instance, the scale of support provided by the local authority assisted the museum service to make significant changes to its staff structure, roles and organisational arrangements.

### 6.1.5 The pace of change

The speed at which change was sought was mentioned as both a challenge and, if change was rushed, a hindrance to successful implementation.

This story is not untypical:

"The change was not an easy journey; it had to be rushed. Staff would say they were not consulted enough but, looking back, there wasn't enough time to consult them. The trust merger took six months and needed 12 so as to [provide time for] more due diligence [work]. Consequently, we unearthed problems post-merger, which led to [a] second re-organisation, which was also very fast. This meant, rather than engaging staff, we had to tell them what was [going] to happen. The outcome might have been the same, but we might have taken more people with us [through] a happier process. For example, we removed weekend enhancements, if we had been able to consult and say why this was needed - [namely] to secure jobs, we would have had better engagement ... [The first] change took two years; the second re-organisation was too quick [too] and ended up [taking] two years anyway."

## 6.2 Working in partnership with local businesses, the local community and funding bodies

### 6.2.1 Being active in the wider business community.

Several museums described engaging with their local business communities, often for the first time. That involvement is seen as good for the city or town, tourism, developing a sense of place and attracting inward investment. Museums often described themselves as being at "the heart" of local regeneration. As one museum director put it "I've invested a lot of effort in getting to know the business community, LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership), BID and Chambers of Commerce. Senior management also get out more than we used to, and have strong links with, for example, the contemporary art scene. The local BID is very proud of having the museum in its area: they've been very supportive and we work together."

## 6.2.2 Involving others

Communication is a major part of museums establishing and sustaining external relationships, one consultee described how: "We set up an advisory forum of stakeholder organisations... The forum is a good bellwether. [Some stakeholders] were initially very suspicious of what they saw as a [single] County-centred organisation." Visible improvements and the success of services contributed to community stakeholders' confidence in changed museums.

Some interviewees sought to integrate themselves in the community by "Embedding diversity in the organisation - having diversity at the top of our strategic development, staff days with speakers from different communities (disability, trans-gender) challenging us, asking how accessible are we to people whose sexuality is more fluid. Also building diversity into HR."

## 6.2.3 The role of agencies in facilitating significant change

Agencies can make a positive contribution to significant change. Interviewees identified that support through advice and guidance was provided both formally (regarding Accreditation) and informally, in the sense of "being at the end of a telephone". Museums also referred to being able to access grant funds to help with change. But, as one national stakeholder observed, national agencies "can't... make people realise they have an issue to tackle... An organisation needs to know that it needs help - even if it's not united, or doesn't know where to start."

The Association of Independent Museums' (AIM's) Hallmark, Governance and Sustainability programmes; Arts Council England's Museum Development, Museum Resilience Fund, and its support for Future Proof Museums; and HLF's Catalyst and Transition programmes, all support organisational change. They contribute to business planning, financial management systems, audience development, reviews of volunteer and education provision, website and e-commerce, improving museum spaces for hire and commercial use, efficiencies, fundraising strategies, training and development to support delivery.

One interviewee noted the value of a Museum Resilience Fund financed course in shaping and supporting their leadership and management of change. "This was all part of the change process, and highlighted the fact that, as a local authority, we need to think differently about delivery... [The course] had an impact on our ways of working and decision-making." Another referred to attending workshops funded through the HLF Catalyst programme which "provided a model to test ideas and move forward. We have developed the [museum's] vision as part of a long-term plan". By the same token, AIM's Hallmarks programme was reported as valuable in enabling participants to learn from others, which helped shape their thinking.

Some consultees thought that even more support should be available. It was suggested that there ought to be some follow-up of individual museums that were unsuccessful in getting Arts Council England resilience funding. "Someone ought to be looking at our needs in more detail and think about how we could be helped." Another consultee described how "The big challenge for a lot of us is continuous change; it affects capacity and morale - it can be very unsettling. I think there's an issue about how the workforce can be helped and supported to deal with continuous change in the future and be okay with it."

However, HLF's focus on capital funding was seen by some consultees as a challenge. According to one national stakeholder, "The focus on refurbishments, exhibitions and redispays means that every 15 years, we [aspire to] get a massive amount of investment and bring external consultants in to do the work. It's not necessarily a great business model. Many independent museums do it differently, by introducing new elements on a yearly basis - so, they effectively have rolling programmes of changes. Clearly, the real downsides to this kind of dynamic are that it's competitive, and focuses on big sparkly projects, not smaller, modest incremental development."

But despite the existence of various networks, consultees wanted to be pointed to more examples of good practice, and introduced to peers who had recently been through, or were currently experiencing similar situations: "Arts Council England and HLF could say to people like me, 'go and talk to so and so', as you, yourself, don't always know who's going through change." "I think encouraging more coaching and mentoring for those leading organisations through change is probably very important." The need to resource such peer-to-peer support was also mentioned in consultation.

Some interviewees welcomed the proposal that from 2018, all Arts Council England funding for museums in England will be integrated into the existing National Portfolio Organisation (NPO). This means that a greater diversity of museums might be eligible for funding than under the current Major Partnership Museums model. "I think it's really important to make sure that the museums that get [Arts Council England] money aren't just members of 'the club', or happen to know the right people. I feel much the same about the HLF. There need to be more opportunities to meet people who can explain to us what funds are available." Once in the national portfolio, museums could be eligible for financial intervention if they met the criteria.

## 7. Prospects for changes in the future

Many consultees regarded organisational change as an ongoing process, rather than a project whose progress could be measured against quantifiable milestones. Some regarded significant change as synonymous with continuous change. Others described it as a challenge, which "affects capacity and morale": "I realise now that things will never settle down."

For museums that had only recently embarked on their change process, it was too early to measure change. At best, they were re-assessing where they should be in relation to their business or forward plans. For others, it was becoming evidently unrealistic for the service "to comply with everything in the activity plan that referred to the previous regime." For at least one newly formed trust, measuring change in practice equated with ticking various items off lists related to the transfer of contracts.

### 7.1 Building on success and exploiting core strengths

Most consultees anticipated further reductions in local authority funding for museums - some said that local authority funding for their museum could fall to zero by 2020. Others pointed to growing unpredictability and uncertainty in local authority funding, to the extent that, one director regarded their museum's agreement with the local council, as "not worth the paper it's written on. When the trust started, this was a three-year agreement, which was followed by a rolling one-year agreement. Now they [the local authority] have a clause according to which they can break the agreement at six months' notice." It was suggested that local authorities should move beyond "transactional approaches to make savings. A more innovative approach might link the transformation of services to demographic change and pressing issues, such as adult social care."

Further reductions suggest that museums have to be prepared to innovate, and do better with less - in the sense of making frugal improvements. A number of different strategies were highlighted in response to further reductions in local authority funding.

Some were engaged in negotiating a one-off investment. One consultee reported that a local authority was considering making a one-off investment to establish a revolving fund that would enable a museum to secure blockbuster exhibitions. This would help it to generate sufficient income during the summer to carry it over the winter, when visitor numbers are lower, and to cope with the occasional "miss".

Most other strategies designed to generate new income streams were either based on museums developing an already successful activity, such as opening up spaces for other activities, or exploiting a core strength, such as managing other organisations' collections, even "benefitting from HS2 archaeology storage"

A number of consultees had already been successful in utilising space for weddings and events (although these were said to work better in some venues than others). Some were now looking to refine that model, by making franchised catering arrangements work better for them. They were also considering other options for generating income. Some were looking to introduce paid-for curatorial tours; others were evolving to provide a wider (and less museum-focused) range of cultural activities. One museum has established a film club and live performance nights, along with a café, a licensed bar and event facilities. It is now seeking to re-develop nearby buildings in order to capitalise on its success. Another museum was concerned to raise the standards of other, independently run operations based in the same park. One consultee explained that a museum's management team had sought to identify local business opportunities linked to its core activities; it had explored the possibility of providing childcare, given a lack of local supply and the museum's reputation as an educational resource for children. Another consultee outlined plans to build on existing strengths in education and training to generate more income in the future.

## 7.2 Philanthropy and endowments

Consultations indicated that some museums were hoping to attract sponsorship and philanthropic donations; others reported limited success and scope for sponsorship. One local authority museum had "undertaken a business plan (based on endowment funding) for [a] Memorial project, originally proposed over 30 years ago". But, in general, consultees doubted that endowment funding was likely to generate enough to cover operating costs, given that low interest rates are likely to persist. Some consultees, nevertheless, highlighted the importance of existing investment portfolios to cover operating costs, while others were pursuing legacies as part of a long-term funding strategy.

## 7.3 The importance of working in partnership with others

Working with partners was considered important to managing change. Some consultees highlighted the value of links with national museums – as a source of loans and exhibitions, professional expertise, and kudos with local stakeholders and the public. Others thought that such relationships need to be reviewed and redefined. The cost of loans and exhibitions was cited, as was the need for greater access to curatorial expertise. All consultees highlighted the importance of support from Arts Council England and HLF to the successful management of change. A number of consultees indicated their support for Arts Council England's plan to allow museums to become

NPOs, this move was seen as a step towards further integration of museums with the Arts Council England “family”, and as a mechanism for ambitious museums to seek investment for their plans.

The role of museums in “place-making” and the need for better coordination of cultural activities in a given place were highlighted as issues that were likely to increase in importance. This requires museums to understand local authorities’ priorities and the range of partners involved, such as BIDs. Many local authorities are developing cultural strategies, cultural quarters and visitor economy work for which the localisation of business rates in 2019 is viewed as an opportunity. Already, where a local authority lacks the resources required to develop a cultural strategy, and/or provide visitor information, museums and other cultural venues and visitor attractions have formed partnerships to promote their place. The Great Place Scheme<sup>7</sup> was identified as a potential solution to these problems – although the likely scale of resources required for such a scheme across the whole of England was a concern. One trust was working closely with the local authority to establish a cultural quarter, which includes a heritage enterprise project, based in a former factory, which is being developed as a heritage and arts space. The trust was purchasing the factory’s former outhouses, which it proposed to rent out to generate income.

Few consultees referred to the devolution agenda in England. However, this may be a result of the first round of deals having been either agreed or rejected, and local authorities awaiting the new government’s approach to devolution. One consultee saw the advent of a combined authority as an opportunity for “a regionally coherent culture offer.”

## 7.4 Brexit

A number of consultees mentioned the potential risks and opportunities associated with Brexit – the UK’s departure from the EU. One consultee suggested that there might be scope for Arts Council England, British Council, and the new Department for International Trade to build on previous work to promote the UK in international markets, for example, with touring exhibitions linked to British exporting strengths<sup>8</sup>. In order for this type of activity to work effectively, it was suggested that infrastructure and resources would be required to ensure effective follow-up activity to solidify nascent trade and cultural links.

## 7.5 Digital technology

Given the pace at which technology has been changing, it is likely that within the next five years, “many museums will be adopting what very few museums are currently experimenting with. To some extent, it’s impossible to predict what’ll happen next.” It is surprising how few consultees referred to digital technology in relation to change beyond securing grant funding for websites or sales management. One museum, however, described being involved in research exploring haptic technology for interpretation and learning<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Funded by Arts Council England, HLF and Historic England, this aims to put arts, culture and heritage at the heart of communities across England by piloting “new approaches that enable cultural, community and civic organisations to work more closely together”.  
<https://www.greatplacescheme.org.uk/>

<sup>8</sup> Arts Council England’s support of such activities in the arts are explored in TBR (2016) Museums were excluded from this study.

<sup>9</sup> Haptic or kinesthetic communication recreates the sense of touch by applying forces, vibrations, or motions to the user.

## 7.6 Shifting focus

Museums may be more likely to drop some activities than others as a result of cuts in funding. Outreach and learning may be seen as peripheral by some museums. One museum was reported to have been so determined to maintain these, that they were integrated into all main activities. "In a sense, not only did outreach and learning end up being better protected, but also they became more cores to the whole organisation and its success."

## 7.7 Advocacy

Finally, a number of consultees highlighted the importance of advocacy by Arts Council England, HLF and DCMS to make the sector's case to others in central government, including DCLG and HM Treasury. Some consultees thought DCMS needed to look beyond the nationals and MPMs in its understanding of the sector. Several raised the spectre of a "museum hierarchy" in which museums are perceived as needing to be big to be excellent. Given that increasing numbers of local authority museums are migrating to independence (DC Research 2016b: 7), the profile of non-national museums could be raised by the provision of a more robust evidence base specifically designed to support them. Recent research has highlighted the scale of that sector, and the extent of its direct economic impact (TBR et al., 2015a: 5; DC Research, 2016b: 4).

However, there was a perception that other forms of advocacy had run their course, and that the sector was culpable in regard to many of the problems facing it.

"The sector overall (and the MA in particular) tend to think that any closures are a bad and all museums should stay open. But, I'm not sure that a blanket stance is the best one. The sector could be much more strategic. If there is funding to be had, it should be seen to be being used most effectively – even if it means closing a not very good museum."

"It's very clear that the sector has spent too long being positive and advocating for itself and it's completely lost its ability to talk about how hard things can, and to be truthful. We should be talking about the fact that the stores are damp and mouldy, and that the documentation needs sorting out. We need to address all that before we can even start to think about growth."

## 8. Lessons learnt

### 8.1 Forms of change in museums

According to consultees, the most common forms of significant change in museums include changes of:

- **mission and focus**, for example, becoming a combined service organisation that encompasses archives, heritage, visual art, film, performing arts, tourism etc. or becoming a community asset serving a local community's wider leisure and cultural needs;
- **leadership** at board level and/or of senior management – changes in personnel may be a necessary condition of delivering change;
- **legal status**, for example, a move from local authority service to independent trust or community interest company, or a transfer to another organisation, such as a leisure trust;
- **organisational culture**, for example, a shift to a more entrepreneurial culture or a shift to a community-focused organisation or both;

- **staffing structure**, which may include reductions in staff numbers, especially of managers, a shift in the balance of staffing, new job/role specifications, the introduction of specific business development and marketing roles;
- the **business model**, for example, through “sweating the assets” (including the improved management of volunteers) and/or diversification of services into non-museum related activities;
- **building/s** through re-development or closure;
- **collections** through rationalisation, informed by the core mission of the museum; and
- **services**, for example, opening hours, education, community engagement, development support for smaller museums and community heritage organisations.

These changes need to be underpinned by:

- **clarity of purpose**, and clarity as to what changes to make, what success will look like in relation to the current and future operating environment;
- a **shared organisational culture** in which everyone understands, is committed to, and is motivated by, the same purpose and goals; and
- an understanding that **change is on-going**.

## 8.2 Drivers of change

### 8.2.1 External drivers

Among the many factors driving change in museums, consultees highlighted **reductions in the level of public sector funding** for museums, especially from local authorities, but also from others, such as the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The scale and the pace of reductions in public funding have forced rapid change in museums. On the other hand, **HLF’s continued investment in museums** has both driven and enabled change in the sector. Furthermore, **Arts Council England** support has been vital for museums seeking to change.

Other significant factors driving change include:

- **demographic change**, the cultural relevance of a museum to its communities, change in visitor expectations and the importance of the visitor experience;
- **technological change**, as the literature review indicates museums are not currently developing and embedding the use of digital technology to the same extent as other parts of the culture sector. Museums need to move more quickly, in particular communicating and working with visitors, potential visitors and communities; and
- **changes in the local cultural offer**, increasing the number of visitors to a place, not just to a given venue or attraction and working collaboratively to achieve this, and changes in what local authorities expect from museums they support, for example, participation in adult social care and promotion of the visitor economy where an understanding of the visitor journey<sup>10</sup> are increasingly important.

### 8.2.2 Internal drivers

The most significant internal factors promoting change in museums **are leadership and culture**. Poor or dysfunctional leadership eventually leads to a crisis, which requires action. On the other hand, visionary and effective leadership, linked to political

<sup>10</sup>

acumen, moves a museum away from an insular/defensive culture towards an outward-facing organisation that is both commercial and engaged with its communities. A culture whereby staff and volunteers are committed to change and working collaboratively is vital to the implementation of successful and continuing change.

Other significant internal factors that enable change include:

- an open and transparent **plan for change** that is communicated to all constituencies, from whom feedback is subsequently sought;
- **analysis of timely and accurate management information and data on the external environment** – those delivering successful change understand the drivers of cost and the drivers of income, and act accordingly.
- **flexibility of buildings** – flexible spaces provide vital opportunities for income generation, as they lend themselves to being hired for multiple uses to a wide range of clients. Critical to this are staff and volunteer attitudes to the more flexible use of space.
- **rationalisation and development of collections** to ensure that they are relevant to and engage visitors and communities, serve the museum's mission, generate income, and minimise current and future costs of collections management.

### 8.3 Characteristics of successful change

Successful change in museums:

- is **anticipated**, by looking ahead, identifying and planning for possible changes in the operating environment, for example demographic change and the changing role of local authorities;
- **integrates** commercialisation, collection development, and community engagement;
- is **led** from the top but **distributes** leadership through the organisation;
- is dependent on staff and volunteers' **committed support**;
- requires **investment** in staff training and management development;
- is based on organisational **ambition, political awareness, pragmatism** and the ability to work with and **manage uncertainty**;
- is often **facilitated** by grant and capital investments that enable better use of collections and spaces for generating income. While such investments are not sufficient to facilitate change, they are usually necessary.

### 8.4 Barriers to change

Common barriers to the successful implementation of change in museums are:

- where a museum's **operating model**, informed by the terms of its formation, or its location, or the constraints of its building, doesn't lend itself to generating significant levels income;
- **lack of consensus** among senior managers and/or board members with regard to the changes required and the steps to be taken;
- **lack of awareness** of the demographic, social, economic and political context in which the museum operates;
- **inflexible attitudes** and **risk aversion** amongst the board, management, staff and volunteers;
- **insufficient capacity**, in terms of skills, knowledge and understanding to manage change;

- **lack of investment** in development and training to enable staff and managers to carry out their newly defined roles;
- an **absence of meaningful, accurate and timely management information** on the drivers of cost and income, visitors, visitor spend, and market information to inform diversification;
- **opposition** to proposed changes from users and friends groups;
- **reluctance** to rationalise collections due to a culture that is focused on preservation rather than on the development of collections that are relevant to communities and which will deliver cost-effective collections management;
- **physical constraints** on how a space may be used, which limit the scope for displays, community engagement, education, and income generating events;
- **dependency** and responsibility. The sector has come to rely on help (as distinct from funding) being provided for it by public agencies, rather than assuming certain responsibilities itself.

## 9. Recommendations

### 9.1 Recommendations for museums

In general, museums seeking to undertake significant change should make use of the guidelines, good practice and resources that already exist such as the AIM Hallmarks (2016), the Arts Marketing Association's Future Proof Museums<sup>11</sup>, HLF<sup>12</sup>, Museum Development such as SHARE Museums East<sup>13</sup> and regional federations, such as South Western Federation of Museums and Art Galleries<sup>14</sup>.

The recommendations below are based on the experiences and lessons learned identified by interviewees, workshops and the literature review, and echo the guidance referenced above. They follow what an interviewee described as "plan, do, review" – acknowledging that change is continuous and that museums need to take hold of, and be responsible for, change.

#### Plan:

- understand the demography and needs of the **museum's constituencies** and how these relate to the place, wider socio-economic, technological and cultural trends, and local stakeholder, political and culture priorities;
- analyse and understand the **drivers of cost and income** in order to inform decisions on cost reduction, income generation, project feasibility and delivery;
- have **clarity about the ownership, use and management costs of museum assets**, such as ownership and costs of managing and maintaining its buildings and collections;
- draw on **expert and peer advice and support** – but ensure that the lessons to be drawn from the work are learned by the organisation as well as the experts;
- build a **track record in managing change**, in order to build confidence in funders, policy-makers, board members, managers and staff and the public.

#### Do:

- establish a clear **mission**, articulated through the business plan, for the museum that is visitor-focused and balances commercialisation, collection development, and community engagement and which is shared by the governing body, management team, staff and volunteers;

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.a-m-a.co.uk/learn/training/long-term-programmes/futureproof/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.resilientheritagechecker.org.uk>

<sup>13</sup> <http://sharemuseumseast.org.uk/resources/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.swfed.org.uk/resource/> Supported by the SW Museum Development programme.

- **determine the most appropriate organisational form** for the museum, given the **local context**;
- **review and update staff structures and roles** in order to strike the right balance between the needs of commercialisation, collection development, and community engagement setting out expectations of behaviour and performance;
- make **personnel changes** where necessary, in order to deliver change;
- invest in continuing **staff, management and board development**, in order to ensure that the relevant skills and knowledge are available when required; and
- review **collections** to ensure that they are relevant to the museum's aims and mission, and rationalise them where necessary.

### Review:

- **outcomes and lessons learned** to support future development and/or change – for many interviewees, insufficient time had elapsed for them to have undertaken a review, but review was recognised as an important part of the change cycle; and
- **succession plan** for governance and staff.

## 9.2 Recommendations for local authorities

The recommendations for local authorities build on those identified in Research to understand the resilience, and challenges to this, of Local Authority museums (TBR et al, 2015b: 28- 31). These noted the importance of sharing information on effective leadership and delivery of change between local authorities, the importance of promoting change in the context of effective medium-term financial planning, the existence of an entrepreneurial culture in a local authority to the promotion of risk-taking in museums, and the importance of freeing museums from core processes and requirements, such as the use of in-house IT services, which limit the scope for cost savings and service innovation.

Local authorities should learn from the experience of those that have already:

- **not sought quick financial fixes**, and enabled timely and thorough needs analyses in advance of museum change, including community consultation;
- **set realistic timeframes for financial independence**, linked to enabling the effective use of museum assets, for example, allowing a range of uses;
- **been clear about the ownership, use and management costs of museum assets**, such as ownership and costs of managing and maintaining its buildings and collections;
- ensured that museums – along with the wider cultural and leisure offer in their area – are an integral part of “**place-making**” activities;
- played an important role as **convenor and coordinator of cultural activity** in a place, even if they no longer have a direct role in service delivery or funding museum services; and
- considered establishing **innovative financing arrangements** to support museums, such as establishing a revolving loan fund, resourced by the local authority, to enable innovative programming or use of other local authority buildings to generate income.

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# Appendix 1: Consultees

Julie Aldridge	Executive Director	Arts Marketing Association
Maggie Appleton	CEO	RAF Museum
Katy Ashton	Director	People's History Museum
Victoria Barlow	Director, Museums	Maidstone Museum and Art Gallery
Nina Baptiste	Relationship Manager	Arts Council England
Richard Barber	Business Development Officer, Strategy and Performance at South Tyneside Council	South Tyneside Council/Bede's World
Carl Bell	Executive Director	The Whitaker Organisation Community Interest Company,
Alan Bentley	Museum Development Manager	Museum Development Yorkshire
Cllr Richard Blunt	Cabinet Member with responsibility for Heritage, Leisure and Arts	Leicestershire County Council
Claire Brown	Museum Development Manager	Museum Development East Midlands
Rebecca Cox	Principle Policy Adviser	Local Government Association
Lorraine Cox	Senior Policy Advisor	Arts Council England
Louise Cross	Visitor Economy Service Manager	Shropshire Council
Karen Davies	Museum Development Manager	West Midlands Museum Development
Richard de Peyer	Director	Bucks Museums Trust
Tim Desmond	Chief Executive	Galleries of Justice Museum, The Egalitarian Trust
Derek Dick	Outreach & Engagement Manager	Warrington Museum and Art gallery- Culture Warrington
Lynne Dunning	Group Leader – Arts & Heritage	Culture and Visitor Economy Service, Culture, Housing and Regulation Place Directorate, Barnsley Council
Corinne Galloway	Curator	The Cromwell Museum
Nikki Grange	Arts, Heritage and Visitor Services Manager	Growth & Investment, Rugby Borough Council
Simon Green	Director of Cultural Services	Hull Culture & Leisure Ltd
Cathy Hakes	Director	The Novium, Chichester
Victoria Harding	Programme Manager	South West Museum Development Programme
Amanda Hart	Director	Corinium Museum, Everyday Leisure
Gary Hall	Chief Executive	Culture Coventry
John Hamshere	Director	Sheffield Industrial Museums Trust

Amanda Hart	Director	Corinium Museum, Everyday Leisure
Rodney Ireland	Trustee	Classic Boat Museum
Adrian Jenkins	Director	Bowes Museum
Liz Johnson	Senior Manager, Museums Review	Arts Council England
Lynsey Jones	Museum Development Manager	Museum Development North West
Lydia Lee	Head of Culture	London Borough of Bromley
Stephen Lowy	Secretary	South Western Federation of Museums and Art Galleries
Andrew Mackay	Director	Tullie House
Eve MacPhee	Relationship Manager	Arts Council England
Tom Mayberry	Chief Executive	South West Heritage Trust
Ellen McAdam	Director	Birmingham Museums Trust
Stuart McLeod	Head	HLF, South East
Paddy McNulty	Director	Paddy McNulty Associates
Steve Miller	Head	Norfolk Museums Service
Steve Minnitt	Head of Museums	South West Heritage Trust
Trina Murphy	Museums, Heritage and Arts Manager	Sunderland City Council
Tamalie Newbery	Executive Director	Association of Independent Museums
John Orna- Ornstein	Director of Museums	Arts Council England
Tom Perrett	Head	The Higgins
Karen Perkins	Director of Arts & Museums	Wardown Park Museum
Nisha Popat	Business & Development Manager	Arts & Museums, Leicester City Council
Eloise Poole	Officer, Policy and Research	Arts Council England
Lynda Powell	Director/Curator	Green Howards Regimental Museum
Liz Shaw	Development Manager	HLF West Midlands
Roger Shelley	Director	Cresswell Craggs Trust
Cheryl Smith	Head of Heritage	London Borough of Islington, and Deputy Chair, LMG
Emma Smith	Centre Manager	Dean Heritage Centre
Katy Ashton	Director	People's History Museum
Libby Strudwick	Heritage Collections Manager	Brent Museum
Emma Stubbington,	Visitor Services Supervisor,	The Novium, Chichester District Council
Louise Sutherland	Development Manager	Heritage Lottery Fund NW

Sue Thiedeman	Head of Culture	Culture and Visitor Economy Service, Culture, Housing and Regulation Place Directorate, Barnsley Council
Cllr. Heather Timms	Portfolio Holder for Growth and Investment	Rugby Borough Council
Ben Travers	Regional Museum Development Manager	London Museum Development
Jonathan Wallis	President	The Midlands Federation of Museums and Art Galleries
Jo Warr,	Head of Development	Norfolk Museums Service
Catriona West	Director	Powell Cotton Museum
Franne Wills	Head of Service: Development	Communities and Wellbeing Service, Leicestershire County Council
Caroline Worthington	Chief Executive	Bexley Museums Trust, and Chair, LMG

## Appendix 2: Topic guides

### 2.1 Topic guide: Museum directors

Consultation questions for Arts Council England research into museums experiencing significant change...

#### **What do you understand as “significant change”?**

#### **Which changes are planned/were made?**

1. What kind of change/changes did/does the museum/museum service require? What prompted that need for change?
2. How was that need for change identified (e.g. as part of a planning process, a slow process of evolution, or an unforeseen crisis)?
3. Over what period did that change take place? Would you say it was complete or on going?
4. Who was involved in identifying the change that was considered necessary?
5. Are (or were) any changes related to visitors and communities, If so, what?
6. Are (or were) any changes related to the collections? If so, what?
7. Are (or were) any changes related to the museum’s funding model? If so, what?
8. Are (or were) any changes related to governance and management? If so, what?
9. Are (or were) any, changes related to partnerships? If so what?

#### **How was (or is) change implemented?**

19. How did the Board, the management team, staff and volunteers contribute to facilitating or hindering change?
10. How did partners and stakeholders (including the local community and users, plus professional bodies and associations) contribute to facilitating or hindering change?
11. How did the Local Authority, Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund contribute to facilitating or hindering change?
12. What is/ was most important to the successful implementation of change? And how is that being (or how was that) achieved?
13. What is/ was most problematic to the successful implementation of change? And how is that being (or how was that) overcome?

#### **Progress to date and lessons for the future**

14. Have you assessed your progress in implementing change to date? If so, how?
15. Are you looking to identify and approach potential changes in the future? If so, how?
16. How confident are you that you’ll be able to address continuous change?
17. Are there any changes in the kind of support provided by Arts Council England and others that you would welcome?
18. Do you have any other thoughts or comments that you’d like to feed in to this review?

**Last but not least:** Might you, in principle, be interested in your experience of change being used as a case study for this report?

#### **It would mean**

- providing us with annual reports/ accounts
- us talking to someone else associated with the museum
- signing off on the case study itself

## 2.2 Topic guide: National stakeholders

Arts Council England research into museums experiencing significant change in non-national museums over the past five years

### Defining significant change in the museum sector

1. How would you define “significant change” in museums?
2. What do you see as the drivers of significant change in museums over the last five years?
3. What do you think the drivers will be over the next five years?

### Museums response to change

4. From your perspective, do you have sense of how museums have identified the need for change (e.g. as part of a planning process, a slow process of evolution, or an unforeseen crisis)? Do you think that there are issues still to rise to the surface?
5. Do you have a sense of who has been involved in identifying necessary changes in museums? If so, whom?
6. What are your views on the contributions of museum Boards, management teams, staff and volunteers to facilitating or hindering change?
7. What are your views on the contributions of partners and stakeholders (including the local community and users, plus professional bodies and associations) to facilitating or hindering change?
8. What are your views on the contributions of Local Authorities, Arts Council England and the Heritage Lottery Fund to facilitating or hindering change?

### Museums implementing change

9. From your perspective, what’s is most important to the successful implementation of change in individual museums? How might that be achieved?
10. Conversely, what do you think is most problematic to the successful implementation of change? How might that be overcome?
11. Do you think that changes in the kind of support provided by Arts Council England, other partners and stakeholders, and the sector might help non-national museums? If so, what?
12. Do you have any other views or comments that you’d like to feed in to this review?

## 2.3 Topic guide: Workshops

### Issues for discussion

1. What can Arts Council England and/or HLF do to support museums in crisis ?
2. Some local authorities aim to have self-financing museum trusts within 2-4 years, even when they will still own the collections and buildings. Is there a role for DCMS and/or DCLG? Can Arts Council England and/or HLF provide guidance?
3. Many museums are looking for commissions from such sources as the NHS and social care sector. Should Arts Council England help to ensure that their evaluations meet the evidence requirements of Directors of Public Health and Clinical Commissioning Groups?
4. Can collections contribute to change by emphasising local communities’ interests? If so, how? What might this imply?

5. Should museums be allowed to sell objects, or whole collections, to finance their services, but still retain their accreditation status?
6. Does it matter if museums lose their identity in the face of commercialism? What does the move from museums with venues to venues with museums imply?
7. Does the "new normal" mean that the assumptions underpinning grant support should be reconsidered? Should funders move away from "shiny" capital and project support, and invest in "dull" and invisible core activities? Should HLF redirect its funding to revenue support?
8. What would it take to make endowments and investment portfolios a viable option for more local and regional museums?
9. As the resource gap between the nationals and local and regional museums increases, how can the former benefit the latter?
10. If local authorities stop funding museums and other organisations, will they still have a role in relation to local heritage and culture? If so, what?

# Appendix 3: Vignettes

## 3.1 Leicestershire County Council

### Introduction

Leicestershire County Council museums are part of the Communities and Wellbeing Service, within the Adult and Communities Directorate. The service manages five accredited museums, which include an historic house and garden, an historic battlefield and a theatre. The Community Museum service offers advice, guidance and support to some 40 museums and heritage organisations across the county<sup>15</sup>. The service also hosts Museums Development East Midlands, funded by Arts Council England, which supports accredited museums across the East Midlands region

### Background

In July 2015, as part of substantial council wide budget reductions, Snibston Discovery Museum closed to the public. The museum, open for 22 years, focused on science, technology and mining, and was located in a science and technology park on the site of the former Snibston Colliery. Cost and low visitor numbers contributed to the closure decision, which was controversial, with extensive local media coverage, and culminated in an unsuccessful High Court challenge<sup>16</sup>.

### Changes

The closure followed previous museum service budget reductions over five years. These had led to staff reductions, loss of curatorial expertise and an options analysis on the service's future. The council's decision to close the museum in January 2015 presented the service with two challenges; the large scale practical challenge of successfully decommissioning a museum, ensuring Accreditation requirements and issues around public trust were met, and developing the future focus and ambitions for the service.

Practical challenges included re-locating continuing events and activities at what had been a key service venue. Following a collections audit, no collections were disposed of and collections were re-located, stored, or returned if on loan. Discussions with Leicester City museum service where collections had a crossover provenance led to transfer to that service, in accordance with a pre-existing collections sharing agreement.

Addressing visitor and public concerns about collections at risk was a priority, giving reassurance that collections were safe and accessible. Public consultation and in particular face-to-face meetings, between the Leader of the Council, Cabinet lead and concerned parties were important in communicating and managing the decision and subsequent process. Senior councillors recognising that closing a museum is an emotive issue.

For staff, concerns including professional issues were addressed through regular staff and team dialogue and conversations, involvement in the process, and advice and support from Arts Council England. At times there were restrictions on the information that senior museum staff could share with staff and this was challenging.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/history-and-heritage/museums-in-leicestershire> Accessed 17.11.2016

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leicestershire-33715157> Accessed 17.11.2016

Alongside de-commissioning Snibston the service was looking ahead. The launch of a new Communities and Wellbeing strategy in July 2016 enabled the service to set out its ambition to engage and support communities to work with their heritage. A review of service changes over the past five years, including income generation and service costs such as collections management, concluded that a re-focus on core areas of service delivery; collections management, development, making collections accessible for communities to use and share in different ways, and supporting the existing venues and volunteer run museums were priorities.

This is accompanied by a cultural shift from being a large museum organisation to an effective smaller one working across teams. As a large museum service staff were used to making substantial funding applications. Based on the success of the cross service HLF funded Century of Stories<sup>17</sup> there is the realisation that benefits can also be achieved with smaller grant sums e.g. in partnership and community work. What matters are energy, focus and the ability to broker relationships. This is accompanied by a need to be more responsive to community groups who make decisions and act more quickly than the council.

### **Lessons for others**

Factors supporting the successful de-commissioning of Snibston and determining the future direction of the service:

- face to face meetings between lead councillors and interest groups setting out and discussing the issues;
- senior museum staff having direct and regular contact with lead councillors and a high service profile with ward councillors;
- all involved need to understand that following a museum closure, collections dispersal is not reversible;
- staff resilience developed through managing change within a strategic plan;
- senior museum staff have regular and active involvement in directorate wide medium term financial planning;
- recognising and understanding that success and innovation does not require scale, and understanding the cultural shift in becoming a smaller effective museum service;
- the importance and challenge of accurately understanding service costs e.g. the costs of generating income and the minimum core costs of meeting Accreditation standards;
- being clear whether an activity is primarily achieving community outcomes or generating income; and
- continuing to learn about managing and delivering change.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.centuryofstories.org.uk> Accessed 17.11.2016

## 3.2 Norfolk Museums Service

### **Introduction and background**

In 2011, Norfolk Museums Service (NMS) ran an options appraisal, which explored the possibility of the Service going to trust. As part of that, it undertook detailed business planning and income projections. In the event, NMS's governing body, the Norfolk Joint Museums Committee (which comprises 16 elected members representing the eight local authorities served) opted for the Service to remain under the governance of the joint local authorities of Norfolk, primarily Norfolk County Council.

The business planning process had, however, identified various potential income streams that would have been impossible for NMS, as a local authority-controlled museum service, to access. The Service approached several peer museum services to learn about the charitable Foundations that they were operating. These included the Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums' Development Trust, Bristol Museums Development Trust and the Royal Pavilion and Museums Foundation and have the advantage of being able to apply for funding from trusts, foundations and corporates, and incentivise corporate sponsors through tax benefits.

### **Changes**

The Norfolk Museums Development Foundation was incorporated in May 2014 as an independent charity. Its purpose is to support NMS to achieve its key goals by expanding its fundraising capacity (securing investment for capital and major development projects); supporting its education work and that of its partner organisations; contributing improvements to the visitor experience and, ultimately, boosting the Service's long-term sustainability.

The Foundation has no employees per se, but is led by NMS's Head of Development, who is also responsible for Museum Development and the MPM programme. The Foundation's first year was largely spent in appointing Trustees and establishing its vision and purpose; its second, in setting up systems.

As an advisory body, the Foundation assists NMS's fundraising through its Trustees' contacts with corporates and other businesses; their marketing, PR, coaching and mentoring skills; their knowledge and experience of capital developments. Although, the Foundation liaises with (indeed, presently has the same Chair as) the Joint Committee, its independence is paramount.

### **Looking to the future**

To date, the Foundation has principally attracted restricted funds for specific projects and exhibitions; it hopes to increase its unrestricted funding levels in the future.

At the time of writing (November 2016), the Foundation had just been registered for Gift Aid and was exploring various trading options with a view to increasing NMS's commercial income.

Its development has been accelerated by the need to raise matching funding for HLF's recent commitment of £9.2m for the development of the medieval Keep at Norwich Castle.

### **Lessons for others**

The experience of establishing the Foundation took much longer than anticipated.

It has since been approached by other museums in the East of England who are looking to set up Foundations along similar lines. "This is emerging as a definite trend, and is possibly a reaction to museums' previous concern with moving to trust status."

## 3.3 The Novium, Chichester

### Introduction and background

The Novium is Chichester District's archaeology, geology and social history museum. It is housed in a new, £7million building<sup>18</sup>, built over the remains of a Roman public bath, and financed by Chichester District Council. The museum falls under its Directorate of Commercial Service, alongside car parks, estates and economic development, and receives £833,000 p.a. from the Council. One third of this funding accounts for building depreciation costs and business rates. Depreciation costs are not passed on to the councils' taxpayer.

When it opened in July 2012, The Novium charged admission. But, despite being a local museum, very few residents were prepared to pay: 90% of its visitors came from outside the area.

### Changes

In September 2014, the Council agreed to drop the admission fee. The museum turned to an alternative business model, predicated on generating income through visitors' secondary spends.

### Stakeholder engagement

Since introducing free admission, The Novium's relationship with the local community has improved, and it is closely involved with the Chamber of Commerce, the BID (Business Improvement District), the city centre partnership and individual local businesses. In 2015, its 50,000 visitors were estimated to have generated £1.4 million in economic value for the local economy. Chichester BID invested £5,000 in Novium's 2016 Chichester's Roman Week, which it estimated had increased city centre footfall in Chichester by 33%.

### Achievements

At a formal level, The Novium's achievements are quantified by its meeting (if not exceeding) its monthly targets in respect of visit numbers, income generation and usage of the tourist information centre.

The museum has developed a number of income streams. Its introduction of a barista to its café is credited with doubling visitors' spend per head.

The income from learning is on target to more than double in 2016-17, from £9,000 to £22,000. The Novium is one of a handful of local museums to offer sleepovers. A £20 per child, it regards these as "socially brilliant and very profitable".

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/box-of-tricks-the-novium-chichester/8634951.article>

The Novium recently launched a wedding service at The Guildhall, a mediaeval priory that it manages on behalf of the Council: this business is set to generate £30,000 in its first year with a predicted annual turnover of £150,000 after three years. It also hires out its meeting room, and the whole museum for private events. It accepts archaeological deposits, and pursues sponsorships and donations. The museum has attracted £56,500 in corporate sponsorship to fund its upcoming Tim Peake exhibition. The museum also manages Chichester's Tourist Information Centre (whose building was closed due to a cost cutting exercise). In 2015, it handled almost 34,000 enquiries in person, by phone, email and letter. Since September 2016, it has managed the city's box office. It generates 10% commission on accommodation bookings and box office sales, plus booking fees. The contract for the Chichester Festival alone generates about £50,000 revenue per annum.

By 2014, The Novium had increased its visit numbers fourfold and has shifted its visitor profile back towards local residents and repeat visitors. "Visitors tend to pop in to look at one thing at a time; many more schools come for self-led visits; the public has become enormously supportive of the museum."

The Novium has achieved Arts Council Accreditation; been shortlisted for, and won, a number of local and national awards, and attracted grant funding from the HLF, Arts Council England, Culture 24, South Downs National Park, the Sussex and Surrey Museum Development Fund, the UK Space Agency and the Pilgrim Trust.

### **Looking to the future**

In December 2016, The Novium opens its biggest exhibition to date. Focusing on its local astronaut, Tim Peake, *An Extraordinary Journey*. Is supported by the UK Space Agency, and at the time of writing (November 2016) had generated £56,000 sponsorship.

The nature of The Novium's future relationship with Chichester District Council is currently under review. Options for the future management of the museum, the Tourist Information Centre and the Guildhall are being considered: these include continuing the operation of the service in-house, establishing a trust, or contracting management out to an established trust or private contractor. The outcome should be known in February 2017.

Meanwhile, the museum is trying to establish an advisory board, generate wider connections, is determined to grow and increase its profile, audiences and capacity.

### **Lessons for others**

Museums shouldn't be afraid to drop admission fees. In the right circumstances this can be the best and most sustainable way forward. Comparing April – October 2014 (when there was an admission fee with April -October 2016 (with no fee) the Novium's total income has doubled. The Novium has managed to turn itself around at considerable speed, within a local authority context, with little advocacy and despite a negative start. But, has found that "things have become much easier now that it's begun to prove itself, visitor numbers have quadrupled, significant grants and sponsorship achieved, and the service has been nominated for, and won, some prestigious awards."

## 3.4 Rugby Art Gallery and Museum

### Introduction

Rugby Art Gallery and Museum is co-located with the Library and Visitor Information Centre, in a purpose built building opened in 2000. Rugby Borough Council manages the art gallery and museum as part of Arts, Heritage and Visitor Services in its growth and investment portfolio.

The art gallery and museum displays local archaeology collections, including those from the Roman town of Tripontium; a British 20th century art collection, begun in 1946 by the Borough Council, contemporary art, and a social history collection, developed since the building opened in 2000. In November 2016 the World Rugby Hall of Fame opened within the building, bringing a major shift in the visitor offer focus.

### Background

The council had long held ambitions to create a visitor attraction for the game in the town where it was first played. Investment by the council in the 2015 Rugby World cup festival indicated the potential benefits in attracting new visitors to the town, increasing footfall and time spent in the town centre. World Rugby<sup>19</sup> the international governing body for Rugby Union, was seeking a physical presence for its online Hall of Fame honouring the achievements of those who have made an outstanding contribution to the game.

### Managing the change

In May 2016 the council signed a four-year licence agreement with World Rugby to operate a Hall of Fame permanent exhibition in the art gallery and museum facility. Within two weeks the one of the art galleries and the museum shut to the public to enable the galleries to be cleared. The art gallery and museum was aware of the Hall of Fame negotiations and had prepared an action plan. However, the decision came at short notice and required rapid problem solving as planned work was stopped, displays that had occupied two floors were re-thought for a smaller space, and the service sought to keep visitor disruption to a minimum.

The Hall of Fame content and exhibition was developed and installed by World Rugby. The art gallery and museum will manage the attraction, and develop and deliver the accompanying schools programme. As the timetable and planning for the Hall of Fame was led by World Rugby, the service initially had to push to be involved and have their exhibition and event knowledge and expertise acknowledged.

For staff, the change both challenged the role of the art gallery and museum and presented opportunities. Managing these issues was supported by staff training and development, including leadership development, undertaken earlier as part of planning for developing work with communities, around health and wellbeing, collections re-display and income generation. This had brought the teams together developing a better understanding of what the service is trying to achieve across visitor information, museum and arts development.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.worldrugby.org/?lang=en> Accessed 14.11.2016

The art gallery and museum had a low profile within the council, however, the sudden closure prompted local people and interest groups to ask what was happening. This resulted in a meeting between council senior management, local people and interest groups to share views. This has led to closer working between the art gallery and museum and local interest groups.

In 2017 the service will develop a new business plan. All council services are charged with generating income, however the licence from World Rugby specifies free entry to the Hall of Fame. The council had anticipated greater commercial sponsorship support for the set up and is planning to invest in capacity to generate sponsorship for the Hall of Fame.

The council views the Hall of Fame as the focal point for the town centre visitor economy development. It has made a substantial investment in bringing the Hall of Fame to Rugby, including building improvements to the café and shop in anticipation of increased visitor numbers, and in the collections re-display. Work is underway to develop a destination management plan, strategic and local tourism partnerships, and a new brand for the town. This has raised the profile and role of the art gallery and museum within the council, and the service intends to capitalise on this opportunity.

### **Lessons for others**

In managing change both the council and art gallery and museum identified:

- anticipating and planning for change, even if at the time, the timetable for the change is unclear;
- staff training and development across teams to develop a shared focus and an understanding of roles supports responding to change;
- leadership training for developing a strategic view of the service and delivering change;
- having a confident and knowledgeable team supports a rapid response. The service manager role is a job share and this has led to developing a collaborative working culture;
- investing time in staff communication and supporting staff morale through change including acknowledging when there is a lack of information;
- determination to have the art gallery and museum voice heard, knowledge and expertise acknowledged and challenge accepted views of the art gallery and museum. This may not be a comfortable experience; and
- the council willing to take a risk and invest in developing the town's profile and visitor economy.

## 3.5 The Whitaker, Rossendale

### Introduction

The Whitaker is located in Whitaker Park, which is in the Rossendale Valley, Lancashire. The museum was established in 1902 with the purpose to educate and enlighten the people of Rossendale; the building dates back to 1840.

### Background

The building, grounds and collection are owned by Rossendale Borough Council. Until 2013, the Rossendale Museum & Art Gallery, as it was then known, was operated by Lancashire County Council on behalf of Rossendale Borough Council. The museum was Accredited, but was only open to the public for 17.5 hours a week, lacked a restaurant or café, and generated only a limited amount of income. Stakeholders described the service as “traditional” with little appetite for risk.

As local authority budgets tightened in the period 2010-13, Rossendale Borough Council reviewed its spending on, and procurement of, museum services. It cut the available budget by 50% to around £60,000 a year. The incumbent provider indicated that, at that level of funding, it could maintain the collection but it could not open the museum to the public. The Borough Council invited bids from other potential operators. Only one of the parties who responded to the call proposed to maintain the whole museum. The previous operator redeployed the museum’s staff within its service, leaving the new operator to recruit new staff with a different approach to service provision.

### Changes

A new not-for-profit Community Interest Company, The Whitaker Organisation Community Interest Company, was formed to operate the museum – building on advice from Locality<sup>20</sup>. The people behind the newly formed CIC had experience of working in the public sector and operating a commercial gallery. The team chose to ‘think beyond historic perceptions of museum behaviour and expectations’. And the museum aims to surprise its visitors and is promoting local, craft-based offers, rather than a standardised, franchised-based experience.

It is now open five days a week (including weekends and bank holidays) and offers a wide range of cultural and leisure activities, and crucially, in terms of income generation, a licensed restaurant and café bar.

### Stakeholder engagement and networking

Over time, a relationship of trust has been built between the CIC and the Borough Council – with the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council acting as non-executive members on the CIC Board. The local authority does not micro-manage the CIC’s activities but provides advice and guidance, when required. Furthermore, the museum has developed its local networks, with representation on Promoting Rossendale and the local leaders’ forum, led by the Chamber of Commerce.

<sup>20</sup> Locality is a national network of enterprising community-led organisations. See <http://locality.org.uk>

## **Achievements**

In the three years since taking over the museum, the team has extended the range of cultural and leisure activities at The Whitaker to include a film club, music nights and open mike nights, and it has built an events business, catering for weddings, birthdays, celebrations and wakes.

Turnover has risen to around £300,000 a year, there are 15 full- and part-time staff, plus a number of dedicated volunteers.

The museum has retained its Accreditation – demonstrating its commitment to the collection. It won Local Tourism and Heritage Business of the Year 2014/15 and 2015/16, Community Business of the Year 2016/17, and Regional Cultural Venue/Organisation of the Year 2015 at the Lancashire Tourism Awards – in recognition of the successful changes that have been introduced.

## **Looking to the future**

As local authority budgets continue to be squeezed, the museum anticipates further reductions in local authority funding. In order to grow its income further, the museum needs to re-develop adjacent buildings, for this it will require funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. At the time of the research, a bid had been submitted but the outcome was unknown.

## **Lessons for others**

The Whitaker offers a number of lessons that may be helpful to those in similar positions:

- A change of leadership or provider may be an essential ingredient to delivering change.
- A needs to understand the assets that it has, and how it can use them to meet community needs, in order better to serve its community and to increase its income.
- A willingness to experiment and take risks is essential to the successful reinvention of a museum.
- A local authority should be engaged in the strategic development of a local museum undergoing change but it should avoid becoming involved in day-to-day management.

Report by **Sara Selwood, Victoria Pirie** and **Scott Dickson**.

For enquiries about this report contact  
Sara Selwood : [sara@pomegranateseeds.co.uk](mailto:sara@pomegranateseeds.co.uk)  
020 7735 8736

**pomegranate**



[www.pomegranateseeds.co.uk](http://www.pomegranateseeds.co.uk)  
102 Boscombe Grove Road Bournemouth Dorset BH1 4PG  
Pomegranate Seeds LLP OC372237