

## London Museum Development Art Fund Projects 2020–21

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## Introduction

London Museum Development, with generous funding from The Art Fund, announced a support and grants programme, to support London's Museum services to recover from the impacts of the global pandemic, in July 2021. The deadline for applications was 03 August 2021 but only two applications were received by that time, the deadline was therefore extended to 01 September and a further four applications were received. Of those two were immediately included in the programme and after some consideration a third project was supported with funding still remaining in the Re-opening Grants budget.

### Museum Development Organisational Health Check

In developing criteria for the Recovery Programme it was recognised that many museums had an urgent need to look at how their organisations were operating in order to assess priorities for the service in the light of the immediate and longer term impacts of Covid. Participating museums were asked to use the Museum Development Organisational Health Check in order to review their operations. The Healthcheck is a self-assessment toolkit that looks at six themes related to a museum's operation:

1. governance and leadership
2. financial planning and resources
3. people development and management
4. working practices
5. audiences
6. collections

Museums are encouraged to carry out the self-assessment with a team that is representative of the whole workforce, where possible. Two of the five successful applicants, having previous experience of the LMD Survive and Thrive programme, opted to carry out their Health Check without facilitation from the MDO. The remaining three Health Checks were facilitated by the MDO, via zoom, each session taking approximately ½ day.

The full MDN Healthcheck can be viewed online at <https://wh1.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=159224228947>

Self-assessment findings are entered into the MD snap chat survey and then forwarded to the MDO.

### **Advisory Reports**

Working from the self-assessment findings and drawing on expertise from specialist colleagues the MDO compiled an Advisory Report for each museum. This report set out the three main priorities for the museum going forward and provided guidance towards resources, training and contacts that can help the museum to make improvements. The Advisory Reports formed the basis for discussions regarding the funded Recovery Project.

Audiences was a priority for all 5 of the museums, with 3 indicating that this is their top priority as they seek to find new ways to engage with audiences during periods of reduced capacity and lockdown. Working Practices was cited by three museums as a priority as was People Development and Management. This clearly related to the need for organisations to rethink their current operations and activities in the light of the closures due to the pandemic. Collections was identified by 2 museums as a priority but again this related strongly to the need to rethink the museum offer during periods of closure:

‘The priority for us at the moment is to get people back to the museum and support them – most probably through a hybrid approach combining use of the collection alongside digital provision.’

Governance and Leadership was cited by just one organisation as a key priority during this period – this linked strongly to the Museum’s need to develop a new strategic vision to ensure future sustainability. The same museum was also the only one to identify financial planning as a priority ‘We would like to develop a new business model that enables us to become a cost neutral or income generating service within the next 3–5 years’.

The Advisory Reports will hopefully provide a really useful starting point for future MDO advice to these museums and we hope to encourage participants to refresh their self-assessment in the coming year.

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## Recovery Projects – financial summary

| Museum                    | Award         |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| The Old Operating Theatre | £5000         |
| The Freud Museum          | £5000         |
| Bruce Castle Museum       | £3200         |
| Anaesthesia Museum        | £5000         |
| Kingston Museum           | £5000         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>              | <b>£23200</b> |

N.B. An additional sum of £1500 was awarded to Bruce Castle Museum towards Recovery Project costs in February 2021 bringing the total award to £4,700.

| Funding                   | Amount         |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| Art Fund                  | £19,656        |
| London Museum Development | £3,544 *       |
| <b>Total Allocated</b>    | <b>£23,200</b> |

\*This figure does not include the additional £1500 allocated to the Bruce Castle Recovery Project. Total LMD contribution totalled £5044.00

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## Project Summaries

### Recovery Project summary

#### The Old Operating Theatre



The Old Operating Theatre used the Recovery Grant to create improvements to visitor flow and experience:

- A traffic light system has been installed to regulate visitor flow on the narrow spiral staircase. The system can be controlled by one team member from the shop space who can monitor via CCTV, negating the need to have a team member at the bottom of the stairs.
- 3 new interpretation panels have been installed in the foyer to help visitors contextualise why they are in a church about to climb a 52-step spiral stairwell. A digital screen has also been installed that can be pre-loaded with further key information for visitors, before they climb the stairs.
- The shop space/entrance area has been developed to create the style of an old apothecary shop, reflecting the aesthetic from the wooden spiral stairs and garret.

## The Freud Museum

## Recovery Project

The project enabled the museum to facilitate better home working and re-organise the office space to provide a safer Covid compliant working environment by:

- Moving the server to a cloud based system, and upgrading home access to a wider range of office suites.
- Provision of better equipment for home workers.
- Re-organisation of the museum offices to give those who do need to come to work greater protection, through sorting, deep cleaning and clearing the large main staff office.

## Bruce Castle Museum

## Recovery Project



Bruce Castle Museum used the grant funding to upgrade its digital provision to facilitate virtual provision for users, through:

- Enhanced WiFi and digital enhancements physically on site to develop more digital engagement for visitors when accessing the building or using collections whilst in the building
- Development of three new online digital resources
- Staff training to increase digital skills within the museum

These improvements will enable the Museum to develop a hybrid approach for future use of collections, especially when the museum is closed and to support audiences in engaging with collections.

Image – Stella Dadzie on a Zoom webinar event hosted by Bruce Castle Museum

| Society of Anaesthetists Heritage Centre   | Recovery Project |
|--|------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out consultation via focus group for family audiences.</li> <li>• Scope marketing options for family groups and learning offer.</li> <li>• Create a storage and transportation solution of the museum's Handling Box</li> <li>• Create an evaluation strategy to support development of new audiences.</li> </ul> |                  |

| Kingston Museum | Recovery Project   |
|-----------------|--|
|                 | Interim report March 2021  |
|                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consultant Andrew Evans of Think Philanthropy is working with the Heritage Service Team to develop and assist the service to create an engaging and achievable forward plan and business model.</li> <li>• Freelancer Robin Moran is coordinating the building and development of two income generation streams: 'Membership &amp; Patrons Scheme' and 'New Technology to Improve Income Generation'. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Plan for Membership &amp; Patrons Scheme has been drafted – awaiting discussion by The Friends.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

- Business Case for the online till system has been created – presented to Council for sign off. Hope to have new system purchased by the end of March '21.

## How did the projects relate to the priorities set out in the Advisory Report?

Two of the museums designed projects that addressed areas of all three priorities identified by their Advisory Reports. The three other museums focussed on just one of the priorities identified. This was not necessarily the priority ranked first by the Advisory Report but museums took a pragmatic approach as to which priorities should be addressed during the extraordinary circumstances resulting from the current pandemic. Two of those museums did however address their first priority area as part of their grant funded project.

Priorities tackled as part of the grant funded projects:

| Identified Priority                | No of museums addressing this priority as part of their project |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Audiences                          | 3   |
| Working Practices                  | 3   |
| People Development and Management  | 2   |
| Collections                        | 1   |
| Governance and Leadership          | 1   |
| Financial Planning and Resources ? | 1? Kingston (await final report)                                |

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## **How did the projects help museums to prepare for recovery?**

### **Audiences**

The impact of the Covid-19 crisis has impacted heavily on how museums can connect with audiences and the Health Check and Advisory Report process gave museums an opportunity to reflect and plan improvements to ensure ongoing engagement.

#### **Anaesthesia Heritage Centre**

Further to completion of the Advisory Report the Anaesthesia Heritage Centre took part in an online meeting with MDO Audiences Rachael Crofts. Working on recommendations from that meeting AHC developed an improvement project to carry out focus group and consultation work to inform audience development and in particular, examine potential from developing 'hyper-local' audiences. Central London museums in particular, may benefit from looking more closely at hyper-local audiences as London begins to emerge from lockdown as many visitors may still be reluctant to use public transport.

#### **Bruce Castle Museum**

Bruce Castle Museum identified the need to improve digital infrastructure at the site in order to ensure continued engagement with audiences in an area with high levels of social deprivation.

#### **The Old Operating Theatre**

Entry to the museum at The Old Operating Theatre is via a very narrow, spiral staircase. Introduction of a traffic lights system means that visitor flow can be safely regulated by one member of staff at the top of the staircase but this does mean that visitors spend longer in the orientation space at the bottom of the stairs. Introduction of interpretation panels, explaining the context of the visit has enhanced the visitor experience for returning visitors.

### **Working Practices**

#### **The Old Operating Theatre**

Prior to introduction of the traffic light system on the spiral stair case, two members of staff were needed to regulate the flow of visitors up – one at the top and one person waiting at the bottom – a really inefficient use of staff time for a museum with a much reduced staff cohort. The traffic light system means that visitor flow can now be regulated by just one member of staff.

### **The Freud Museum**

The requirements for safe working onsite and for staff to work comfortably from home meant that improvements to working environments both in the office and at home were necessary. The shift towards a working environment where some staff can work safely from home and teams can also function safely within existing office accommodation required not only detailed planning to re-organise teams but also; upgrades to the digital infrastructure, the purchase of new equipment for home workers and a re-organisation of the workspace within the offices. The Freud Museum is now set up to operate more flexibly and safely as museums begin to re-open from 17 May.

### **Society of Anaesthetists Heritage Centre**

The Audience development work undertaken has resulted in improved planning and better recording of data and evidence. This improved practice will help the museum to plan – targeting where to do better as well as providing advocacy for its work both internally and externally.

## **People Development and Management**

### **Bruce Castle Museum**

Moving towards more digital delivery has required staff to undertake training. Staff feel supported with improved confidence in developing resources from attending online digital learning and engagement training/ awareness sessions. In addition an unexpected benefit from the project has emerged from the closer working of Museum and Council IT staff

*“there is now a better understanding of our needs to embrace a digital future. In particular, it has been educational for IT to understand the end-user/ beneficiaries/ our audiences at the Museum. The advocacy involved has paid off as we were able to discuss directly with the Head of Infrastructure the benefits of, for example, using Zoom as opposed to using MS Teams, and weighing up the benefits of*

*access to more people using this as a platform for public engagement versus the council policy for (very good) security reasons to use MS Teams.”*

## **The Old Operating Theatre**

Improvements to working practices have freed up staff time towards development of the museum’s volunteer team.

*“we have already made improvements in our **volunteer offer**: we have refocussed and reenergised three existing volunteers, recruited a team of 6 students as part of the Oxford University Micro-Volunteering Programme, a new Digital Content volunteer, have secured a British Society of the History of Science (BSHS) Fellowship due to begin in summer 2021 and are about to recruit to the new role of Conservation Housekeeping Volunteers to assist with collections care.”*

The addition of these new volunteer roles will add value to the reduced museum offer.

## **Collections**

### **Anaesthesia Heritage Centre**

The project enabled AHC to create better storage for the handling collection. Being able to transport the collection and having two boxes will also increase its usability through increasing opportunities for outreach and engagement as identified through the audience development process.

### **Bruce Castle Museum**

The prolonged periods of lockdown have demonstrated the continued need and importance for the improvements to digital infrastructure at Bruce Castle Museum in order to support future provision of services and access to and engagement with collections and learning at the museum.

## Governance & Leadership

### Kingston Museum

Kingston Museum is a local authority museum and as such has not needed to furlough staff during the pandemic. Museum Managers are aware that the Local Authority will need to make considerable savings over the next two years and the project is focussed on ensuring the long-term sustainability of the service through create of a forward plan, linked to the Museum's income targets and aspiration to become more resilient and relevant as a service going forward.

## Financial Planning & Resources

### Kingston Museum

As part of its work to enhance the sustainability of the service Kingston Museum also set out to build and develop its Membership & Patrons Scheme and to make a strong business case for the introduction of contactless payment systems for the shop.

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## What has the impact of the project been on organisations and how will they build on its success?

Longer term impacts from these projects will be more evident in 6–12 months time, especially as museums begin to re-open their doors to staff, volunteers and visitors again. The process of carrying out the Healthcheck and receiving the accompanying Advisory Report has in itself been beneficial for museums:

*“The whole process from health check assessment to the subsequent project has been a very beneficial exercise. The assessment highlighted areas for improvement and the subsequent Advisory Report identified possible ways of addressing these areas.”*

*“The organisational health check and advisory report helped us to stand back a little from the day to day problems caused by the pandemic, and instead look for some longer term solutions. The links and resources provided in the report continue to be of great value”*

Projects have enhanced the ability of museums to re-open safely for both staff and audiences. Museums have used the grants to ensure that they have the infrastructure in place to ensure continued engagement even if required to close again at short notice e.g. as part of a local lockdown.

Taking time to review and reflect on their service has in each case enabled museums to make improvements that will result in improved efficiency, better visitor experiences and increased profile.

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