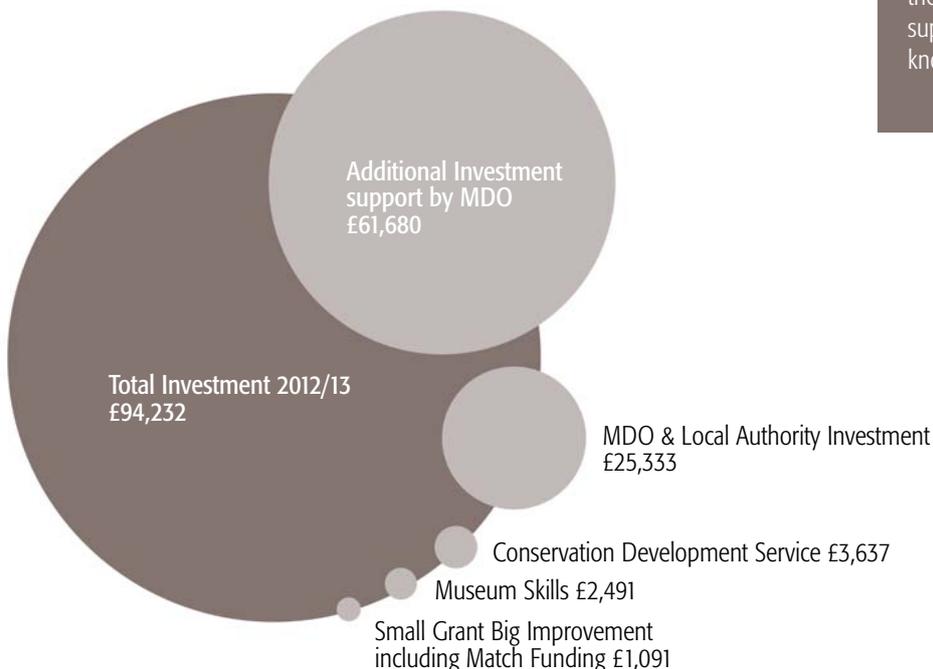


West of England Museums

BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET AND SWINDON

Across the West of England is a richness of history celebrated by a wealth of museums. There are 14 Accredited museums in B&NES and 5 in Swindon. Together with numerous other heritage organisations they collectively tell the story of two unique areas in the West of England. They are a major tourist attraction and generate substantial income for the local economies.

The MDO, Elizabeth Neathey, plays a vital role in helping these museums achieve excellence and has provided 87 instances support to 19 museums across B&NES and Swindon. This included advice on Accreditation, collections care and aspects of business management such as governance and forward planning. The MDO has provided 21 instances of funding support and advice to 9 Accredited museums across B&NES and Swindon. This helped museums secure £26,400 project funding, representing an almost 2 times return on investment in MDO salary costs. The MDO has also supported information sharing and network building across the B&NES and Swindon heritage communities, producing a bi-monthly news bulletin.



CASE STUDY BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET MUSEUMS VOLUNTEER FORUM

In 2012, the MDO worked closely with the Workforce Development Coordinator to establish a volunteer forum in B&NES. All museums and heritage organisations in B&NES engage volunteers and the MDO wanted to facilitate a space to share motivation, ideas and best practice.

Working with Stepping Up Training, two sessions were delivered enabling museums to explore best practice with volunteers. The second session was supported by the Bath Volunteer Centre and Officers from B&NES Council who have developed an employee volunteering programme. Since then there have been 3 meetings which have explored themes such as recruitment, supporting volunteers and sharing knowledge.

West of England Museums

BRISTOL & SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Bristol is one of the largest cities in the UK with museums exploring its culture and influence on the world ranging from Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives, an Arts Council England Major Partner Museum, to the famous ss Great Britain and the New Rooms, the oldest Methodist Church in the world. In South Gloucestershire, its rural history is celebrated by Frenchay Village Museum and Thornbury & District Museum among others.

In 2012-13, 11 museums, including 6 Accredited museums accessed the Museum Development Officer (MDO) advisory service, with the MDO, Julie Reynolds, providing significant support to museums seeking to professionalise or join the Accreditation scheme such as Kingswood Museum. Nearly half of the MDO capacity focused on collections and business management, including advice on collections accessibility, volunteer management and sustainability. The MDO also supported a range of successful funding applications bringing in new investment into the area. This included support for the Bristol Aero Collections Trust which helped to secure £243,600 Development funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund announced in May 2013. This is part of a £4.4 million bid to support a major project to establish Bristol Aerospace Centre in Filton.

Improving audience engagement is vital to ensure museums are sustainable and meet the needs of their visitors. In South Gloucestershire, the MDO has supported museums with the development of the Timeportals website to engage with children and young people. Timeportals features free interactive online resources for Key Stage 2 targeted at teachers in support of both classroom teaching and museum visits.



CASE STUDY IMPROVING COSTUME DISPLAY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL THEATRE COLLECTION

Costume is a key part of this museum's collection and it used a £240 grant secured from Small Grant: Big Improvement to purchase two mannequins to display costumes in a new exhibition space. The improved exhibition space helps the museum to achieve its revised vision and objectives from its Forward Plan 2012-2015, to 'showcase the collections and encourage access to them so they can be used for the purposes of inspiration and enjoyment as well as research, teaching and learning'.

The mannequins are also used to photograph costumes, such as the dressing gown worn by Noel Coward seen above. These can then be made available online, improving the documentation of the collection and widening access.



▲ American Museum in Britain, Bath



▲ Lydiard Park, Swindon



▲ Thornbury Museum