

Dorset, Bournemouth & Poole Museums

NEW TRIPARTITE AGREEMENT



▲ Poole Museum



▲ Dorset County Museum



▲ Bridport Museum

A new tripartite agreement for the provision of Museum Development was secured in 2012 for the museums of Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. A funding agreement between the South West Museum Development Programme and the 3 local authorities provided a unique opportunity for coordinated museum development provision across the sub-region. Despite the economic challenges being faced, the addition of both Bournemouth and Poole as contributing authorities to the South West Museum Development Programme has provided a significant return on their investment and opened up access to all projects across the programme.

The newly appointed MDO, Vicky de Wit, began work in October 2012. The primary focus of the MDO role has been to establish a sustainable pattern of partnership working to maximise the impact and benefit for museums within the area. To facilitate this, 3 distinct partnerships are operating. The first being the established and successful Jurassic Coast Museum Partnership, the second being the North Dorset Museums Group and the third is a Poole-Bournemouth grouping including Priest's House Museum in Wimborne Minster.

The MDO activity focuses on priorities for each of these partnerships and builds in initiatives relating to strategic planning, governance, commercial capacity and audience development. This work has already paid dividends as by the end of March 2013, over £320,000 of funding had been secured. The MDO provided 21 sessions of dedicated funding advice to 10 museums supporting these successes and preparing future funding applications. This represents an 11 times return on investment in MDO provision.



▲ Portland Museum



▲ Red House Museum, Christchurch



▲ Lyme Regis Museum, Fossil Hunt

The role of MDO in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole is essential in supporting museums to maintain the national Accreditation Standard. In Dorset, 13 of the 26 Accredited museums require a Museum Mentor in order to meet the requirements of the Standard. The MDO acts as the Museum Mentor for these museums providing them with professional curatorial support. From October 2012, the MDO provided 16 professional advisory sessions in order to support the museums maintain their Accreditation status.

This active support of the Accreditation Scheme has attracted other museums, with a further 3 museums expected to be seeking Accredited status in 2013-14. The MDO provided a further 29 advisory sessions to support 16 museums develop achievable approaches to sustainability, improving the care of their collections, business planning, and audience development. With 6 of the Accredited museums supported by the MDO being entirely volunteer-run, access to this service is vital in supporting museums to professionalise their operations.



CASE STUDY
SECURING THE FUTURE OF
THE SCOTTISH & SOUTHERN
ELECTRIC COLLECTIONS

In 2012, Scottish and Southern Electric (SSE Ltd) decided to close their museum in Christchurch. The challenge for the Dorset MDO was to help secure a future for the collections. The MDO was instrumental in identifying ethical options to safeguard the collections. A working group was established involving specialists from national and regional museums. The first step was to create a catalogue of the collections to inform decisions. A documentation team got to work funded by SSE. The project was hosted by Dorset County Council and coordinated by the MDO.

SSE has committed further funding and through the MDO a collections team has been commissioned. It is hoped that this will help safeguard a unique history, by increasing knowledge and enhancing the collection's profile.

