Significant reductions in public funding mean these are challenging times for many museums. At the same time, museums of all sizes continue to show extraordinary ambition and resilience, and to deliver wonderful services to their communities.

Ensuring that museums, no matter what their size or scope, can access professional expertise to develop and build resilience is imperative in encouraging a thriving sector. And this is especially true in the South West, where the majority of museums are volunteer-led and have no museum professional staff.

That is where the Museum Development programme comes in. It supports museums to meet and exceed national standards, encouraging ambition, innovation and enterprise, providing a challenge to museums to do things differently and to help them prosper. Now in its second funding period, 2015-18, Museum Development has shown that it can help museums achieve major change and has made important contributions to the success of many museums.

I have spoken before about the idea of a ‘grand partnership’ between local museums and national ones and between local funders and national organisations. The South West Museum Development programme has established partnerships with 22 local authorities across the region, aligning Arts Council investment with local authority funding. This approach, which is a national exemplar, not only boosts the support available to museums but enables them to access specialist expertise that many, individually, could not afford.

Museums have changed beyond recognition in the last couple of decades, and have reinvented themselves as welcoming, animated, engaging spaces. Most reach out, rather than waiting for people to arrive and are at the heart of the communities they serve. They are working hard to become more independent, to strengthen their business models and to commercialise their offer where possible.

There is still a journey to go on, and this will require investment and time, but as this report highlights, Museum Development can play a crucial role in getting us there.

John Orna-Ornstein
Director of Museums
Arts Council England
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This year has seen the completion of the first three years of the South West Museum Development programme, funded by Arts Council England. The programme provides development support to all Accredited museums and those formally working towards Accreditation. Our support is focused on delivering against the Arts Council’s five strategic goals set out in their 10-year vision Great Art and Culture for Everyone.

Over the last three years, we have delivered an ambitious programme to support museums become more resilient, driving excellence and working with museums to provide engaging, valued and inspirational services to their audiences and communities.

Museum Development support has enabled many museums to secure transformational investment or build resilience in other ways, such as diversifying income and growing audiences. It has also helped ensure that the many small and often volunteer-run museums are well governed, have policies and procedures in place that are fit for purpose and are well positioned to progress sustainably.

In the last year the programme has supported 237 museums through a network of local Museum Development Officers (MDO), a regional conservation and collection care service and workforce development opportunities through the South West Museum Skills programme. We awarded £32,073 through our Small Grant Big Improvement scheme to 36 museums to fund a range of initiatives. The programme also invested in regional projects to support museums with audience development, digital engagement, improving their retail offer and organisational sustainability.

We have worked with museums and local authorities to advocate for the cultural, social and economic contributions made by museums and the importance of continued strategic investment. Despite the continuing pressure on local government spending we have increased the number of partnerships with local authorities. We now have agreements with 22 authorities that collectively invest £125,000 per year in the programme. This is equivalent to around 25% additional investment on our annual Arts Council grant and significantly increases the depth of support we can offer museums.

The programme has achieved excellent reach, inclusivity and value for money over the last three years, having worked with 325 museums, helping to maximise the number of museums that benefit from professional support and public investment. We are delighted to have secured further Arts Council funding to continue to deliver Museum Development in the South West for 2015–18 and look forward to sharing the results with you over the coming years.
# Our achievements 2012-15

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>£2,900,000</strong></th>
<th><strong>£1,198,548</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grant funding secured by museums with MDO support.</td>
<td>Invested by Arts Council England in museums through the South West Museum Development Programme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>325</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museums received support during 2012-15.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>£66,699</strong></th>
<th><strong>10</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awarded to 100 museums through our small grants scheme.</td>
<td>New partnerships with local authorities, now 22 partnerships in total.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>£261,812</strong></th>
<th><strong>£40,499</strong></th>
<th><strong>161</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local authority investment directly in the programme.</td>
<td>Invested to support 22 museums improve their retail offer.</td>
<td>Museums and heritage organisations supported to improve collections care.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>35</strong></th>
<th><strong>21</strong></th>
<th><strong>85%</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museums funded to develop their digital engagement.</td>
<td>Museums funded to work with the Audience Agency.</td>
<td>Of museums complete our annual survey supporting advocacy and benchmarking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Map of investment 2012-15

Cornwall
Total investment £192,526
29 Accredited Museums

Devon
Total investment £230,204
41 Accredited Museums

Somerset
Total investment £159,865
21 Accredited Museums

Dorset
Total investment £150,711
26 Accredited Museums

Gloucestershire
Total investment £113,309
22 Accredited Museums

West of England
Total investment £139,929
30 Accredited Museums

Note: Total investment figures for Wiltshire are not available as provision is funded directly by Wiltshire Council.
Over the last three years we have funded a conservation and collections care service. This has worked with museums to develop their collections, raise care and conservation standards, improve their management and increase the accessibility of collections to audiences.

The service, led by our Conservation Development Officer, supported 84 museums in 2014/15 through a mixture of direct support including remote advice, site visits, training and surgery sessions at county museum group meetings.

As well as responding to museums’ immediate needs, the service has helped museums to take a more planned approach to collections care and supported them to identify priorities for improvements. This has included collection care health checks, advice on policies, support for funding applications and project planning with museums. Our Small Grant Big Improvement fund in particular has been used to further collections care activity. The service has also offered a central purchasing scheme, saving museums money on collections care supplies and a loans service for essential environmental equipment.

Consultation for our 2015-18 programme highlighted that the conservation and collections care service was one of the most highly used and valued parts of our programme and will continue to be offered over the next three years.

Towards a sustainable conservation service

Building on the success of the conservation service, we have worked in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council and the South West Heritage Trust on a project exploring the feasibility of establishing a self-sustaining conservation and collections care service.

The project, which has secured Arts Council Museum Resilience funding, aims to support museums and heritage organisations through the creation of an accessible and affordable service, aligning existing facilities, conservation equipment and key conservation providers in the region.

Consultants, DC Research, have been commissioned to develop a feasibility study, create an assets register and undertake business modelling and sample market testing over the course of 2015/16 with a view to establishing a financially self-sustaining service by 2018.
Accreditation support

The Accreditation scheme sets nationally agreed standards for museums across three key areas of organisational health, collections management and users and their experiences. The scheme supports museums to focus on standards, identify areas for improvement and develop their resilience through forward planning.

In 2014, we successfully secured a contract from the Arts Council to deliver Accreditation and Technical Advice for museums in the South West, Hampshire and Solent. Aligning Accreditation advice and Museum Development provision ensured museums were able to access cohesive support alongside an enhanced training offer.

Six additional Accreditation Museum Skills sessions were delivered in the region, while in Hampshire and Solent, a series of jointly hosted events were held with the South East Museum Development programme. Events and resources were also developed to support the Museum Mentor network including a Museums and Mentoring conference held in February 2015.

Conservators at work during our Flying the Flag project.
Audiences

Visitor focus
Last year we continued to work in partnership with the Audience Agency on an audience data and development programme, Visitor Focus, supporting museums to collect, understand, compare and apply audience insight.

Overall, 21 museums of varying types and sizes participated in the programme which was launched in 2013. Key research themes were agreed amongst the museums which were developed into a survey to provide insight on visitor demographics, profiles and motivations.

The data collected by museums was analysed by the Audience Agency using the population profiling and segmentation tool Audience Spectrum, which has been developed specifically for the cultural sector. Reports were provided to museums with advice on how the findings could be used to inform audience development, marketing, business planning and fundraising.

This project has now been subsumed into the Audience Agency’s national audience data programme, Audience Finder, and we will continue to support museums to participate in this programme over the next three years.

Digital engagement
The digital engagement project was launched in 2012 and worked with a total of 35 museums over three years. The project funded museums to work with digital consultants to review their online activity, participate in workshops exploring what makes quality online engagement and establish a digital engagement strategy. A digital step ladder was created to help museums benchmark themselves and a digital engagement framework was provided to guide museums through the process.

Evaluation of the project highlighted a clear desire by museums to develop their digital engagement, particularly around audience development, the improved use of social media and making collections available online. Responding to this, for 2015-18 we have funded a new full-time Digital Engagement Officer to support museums across the region to maximise the opportunities presented by digital developments.

A Digital Forum, hosted at M Shed, Bristol, was held in March 2015 to mark the end of the project. This brought together a range of museums to share successes, good practice and learning as well as give museums tools, inspiration and knowledge to move ahead with their aspirations for digital engagement.
Resilience & sustainability

Retail assessment programme
Effective income generation is crucial to financial resilience, however, for many museums it can be challenging to develop and prioritise as a key activity. In 2013, we commissioned consultants Retail Thinking to deliver bespoke retail assessments to support museums to develop the income potential of their retail operations. In total, 22 museums were supported through ‘micro consultancies’, with 12 receiving support in 2014/15. Site visits were carried out and museums received individual reports with practical recommendations for improvements based on their present retail offer, staffing and financial capacity.

We asked participating museums to review their experiences of involvement in the programme and all those that responded said they had begun to implement changes. These included shop re-fits, new buying strategies and the introduction of new performance measures. All respondents said their organisations had benefited from the support and all reported an increase in their average spend per visitor and overall retail income since participating.

Case study: Retail Assessment Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>KINGSBRIDGE COOKWORTHY MUSEUM</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What was your experience of participating in the programme?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The whole programme was a really worthwhile experience. It was great to have a written report with feedback that we could share with stakeholders, particularly the front of house stewards. This report enabled us to make changes to the shop and provided an external expert opinion justifying why the changes were needed. It was a very thorough process, discussing lots of options for the shop that fitted with the museum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How has your museum improved as a result?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The biggest change is having the shop manned at all times for the first time in many years by changing the route around the museum. We now record transaction numbers for sales and have new signage for the shop and for stock. The layout of the shop was altered to ensure it looked smarter and more appealing based on the suggestions from the assessment. Despite a slight decline in visitors, our sales are markedly higher than last year. Our spend per visitor has risen from 64p to £1.25 (from March-August 2015).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you have any plans to improve your retail offer further?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We plan to continue to implement suggestions from the report. We have just introduced an in-house printed guide that is already selling well with plans to produce a more detailed guide in the next couple of years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Museum sustainability programme

The programme began in 2013/14 with the aim of supporting museums to understand, explore and implement ideas and practice around organisational sustainability and resilience.

Six museums were chosen to participate in 2014/15 each with their own set of challenges. The museums worked with their MDOs, peers and a Sustainability Mentor through a process of organisational self-assessment and review. This enabled them to identify strengths and opportunities which lead to the development of two year improvement plans. Museums were then supported to apply for funding to implement their plans, primarily through our small grants scheme.

Following the completion of the programme an independent evaluation was commissioned. This highlighted the effectiveness of the programme in enabling museums to identify strategically important actions that would move them forward in a more sustainable way. For 2015-18, the framework will continue to form part of the toolkit used by MDOs to support museums that are at a particular point of challenge, opportunity or major change.

The process of self-assessment was particularly valuable and enabled a group of trustees, the Sustainability Mentor and the MDO to come together. The opportunity to have time to think about our vision, aims and objectives and to work through a SWOT process enabled us to identify four key organisational goals in our improvement plan.

Through the Improvement Plan we have been able to define our vision and develop clear long-term aims and objectives. These have provided the foundation for our Accreditation documentation and our Forward Plan. We are now conscious of the need for the development of better communications, particularly with those of our trustees who are not involved on a day-to-day basis with the management of the museum. The recognition of the need for clear roles for the museum workforce.

We will continue to revisit the framework with our MDO and Sustainability Mentor on a regular basis to ensure that we are making proper progress on the key issues identified and working towards a wider vision for the future.

The Museum Sustainability programme has enabled us to proceed towards our Accreditation as a small independent volunteer-run museum with much greater clarity. It has given us confidence, not only for the completion of the planning necessary for our Accreditation, but also for our future development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case study: Museum Sustainability Programme</th>
<th>RICHARD JEFFERIES MUSEUM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What was your experience of participating in the programme?</strong></td>
<td>The process of self-assessment was particularly valuable and enabled a group of trustees, the Sustainability Mentor and the MDO to come together. The opportunity to have time to think about our vision, aims and objectives and to work through a SWOT process enabled us to identify four key organisational goals in our improvement plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What have been the outcomes for your museum?</strong></td>
<td>Through the Improvement Plan we have been able to define our vision and develop clear long-term aims and objectives. These have provided the foundation for our Accreditation documentation and our Forward Plan. We are now conscious of the need for the development of better communications, particularly with those of our trustees who are not involved on a day-to-day basis with the management of the museum. The recognition of the need for clear roles for the museum workforce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How will you use this framework in the future?</strong></td>
<td>We will continue to revisit the framework with our MDO and Sustainability Mentor on a regular basis to ensure that we are making proper progress on the key issues identified and working towards a wider vision for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Any other comments you would like to share?</strong></td>
<td>The Museum Sustainability programme has enabled us to proceed towards our Accreditation as a small independent volunteer-run museum with much greater clarity. It has given us confidence, not only for the completion of the planning necessary for our Accreditation, but also for our future development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Small Grant Big Improvement

Our small grants scheme provides funding of up to £2,000 for museums to address a broad range of development needs in order to improve their services, encourage innovation and diversify income generation.

All projects were required to address at least one of the Arts Council’s five goals with a focus on Goal 3: Resilience for grants over £500.

There were 36 awards made to museums, totaling £32,073 in 2014/15. The scheme funded projects supporting vital conservation and collections care, digitisation of collections, audience development, fundraising initiatives, income diversification and outreach projects with children. To maximise the impact of the scheme and encourage museums to be ambitious, grants over £500 required 25% match funding and £18,326 was successfully leveraged as match to support museum projects.

For 2015-18 a new grant strand offering up to £5,000 will be made available for projects that involve partnerships of two or more museums. Awards for 2015/16 were made in April this year and there were 55 applications received with £44,176 awarded to 38 projects, including four partnership projects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total Grant Awarded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>£3,985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devon</td>
<td>£6,120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorset</td>
<td>£4,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somerset</td>
<td>£7,862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucestershire</td>
<td>£2,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West of England</td>
<td>£4,906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiltshire</td>
<td>£1,850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Case study: Small Grant Big Improvement

**MUSEUM OF DARTMOOR LIFE: GRANT £1,750**

**What were the aims of the project?**

The aim of this project was to purchase and use new IT equipment to improve and develop customer service and the museum’s front of house operations which include visitor admissions, the museum shop and the provision of tourism information.

**Describe your project:**

The context for the project was participation in the Retail Assessment programme and the museum taking over the provision of tourism information in the Okehampton area. Purchasing IT equipment and training the volunteers to use it effectively was regarded as critical to ensuring that the full potential of these exciting developments could be realised. The volunteers’ pre-existing IT skills varied widely and the Museum Manager provided training tailored to the needs of each volunteer, with the more experienced IT users mentoring those who needed more support.

**How has your museum improved?**

Volunteers are better trained and have developed new skills and confidence. This has enhanced the volunteer experience and contributed towards increasing volunteer recruitment and retention. The number of visitors to the museum has increased by some 20% this year and it is felt that the improved visitor information service assisted by the new IT and volunteer training is making a significant contribution to this.
South West Museum Skills programme

Through our investment we aim to build the skills, self-reliance, leadership and diversity that museums need to operate effectively and thrive.

The Museum Skills programme is a highly valued part of the South West Museum Development programme, offering free training for everyone working in the museums and heritage sector across the region. The training is delivered by the South Western Federation of Museums and Art Galleries and is vital in enabling a workforce that is predominantly voluntary to access sector specific training.

Sessions are organised around three subject areas; organisational health, collections and communities. They provide expert, focused training and best practice across all aspects of running a museum. In 2014/15 there were 26 sessions delivered across the region, attended by 401 delegates from 116 different organisations and resources produced by the programme were made available online.

Volunteer development

Volunteers make up a crucial part of the workforce in museums in the South West. There were over 12,000 active volunteers in Accredited museums in 2013/14 and 25% of the Accredited museums are entirely volunteer-run.

In 2014/15, we commissioned research into volunteering in the region exploring current regional and national trends, priority needs for support, emerging best practice and mechanisms for measuring the impact of volunteering.

This research has formed the basis of a new volunteering advisory service for the period 2015-18 which will be led by a new Sustainable Volunteering Officer. The service will provide support to museums to embed good practice, broker partnerships, develop skills sharing networks, diversify their volunteer base and explore new opportunities such as micro or distance volunteering.

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**MUSEUM SKILLS KEY FACTS 2012-15**

**Attendance**

- 1,038 Delegates benefitted
- 68 Training events delivered
- 238 Organisations represented

**Value for money**

- 75% Of venues hosted sessions free of charge
- 80 Speakers gave their time at no cost
- £29,550 Worth of in-kind costs contributed
Museum Mentors

Museum Mentors are museum professionals who support smaller museums without access to an appropriately qualified member of professional staff. This support ensures those smaller museums are able to maintain the Accreditation standard.

The South West has the highest proportion of museums in the UK that do not have access to a museum professional, with almost half of Accredited museums requiring a Museum Mentor to maintain the Accreditation standard. Last year we undertook significant consultation with Museum Mentors and their employers in the region. The consultation examined the operational context of the scheme in the region, exploring key drivers for mentoring and its future potential. Specifically it looked at improvements that could be made to ensure sustainable provision and increased visibility in the sector. The findings have provided a baseline of evidence which will inform how we promote and support the Museum Mentor scheme over the period 2015-18.

Museums and Mentoring conference

In February 2015 we hosted a Museums and Mentoring conference which was held in partnership with the South East Museum Development programme and the Museums Association. The event was held to provide an opportunity for those involved in mentoring programmes across the museums sector to network, share experiences and exchange good practice.

Satisfaction and Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>99%</td>
<td>Rated sessions good or excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93%</td>
<td>Felt better informed about the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67%</td>
<td>Learnt new skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64%</td>
<td>Would do things differently as a result of attending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63%</td>
<td>Improved existing skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Felt able to share skills learnt with their colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75%</td>
<td>Were inspired to find out more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collections care training at a Museum Skills session
This year has seen significant success for museums increasing their engagement with children and young people. There were record numbers of museums participating in Kids in Museums Takeover Day and Museums at Night in the South West. More museums are now participating in Arts Award, the qualification that helps young people develop their creative talents.

It is primarily through our work and partnership with Real Ideas Organisation (RIO), the Arts Council Bridge Organisation for the South West, that we support museums to engage with and develop their offer for young people and children. RIO’s role is to make strategic connections between work, schools, youth settings and cultural organisations to connect young people with great art and culture. So far, the partnership has seen museums benefit from training sessions on achieving meaningful engagement with young people, support to develop as Arts Award supporters and in some cases receive consultancy support to develop their youth offer.

### Case study: DEVELOPING YOUTH VOLUNTEERING AT NO 1 ROYAL CRESCENT, BATH

#### What happened?

Our Sustainable Volunteering Officer and local MDO were successful in securing support from Real Ideas Organisation (RIO) through their Bridge Innovation Programme. The programme provides an intense period of support with the aim of making a real difference to the way people work and the cultural offer to children and young people. Working with the Sustainable Volunteering Officer, MDO and RIO consultants the focus of the piece of work was to look at ways of increasing young people’s participation in the museum’s services, particularly through volunteering.

RIO researched ways in which the museum could engage with its local universities and colleges to encourage students to volunteer as room stewards. The museum benefited by getting:

- Information on key contacts, term dates and participation schemes.
- Tailored advice on young people’s motivations to volunteer.
- Practical pointers on how to adapt the existing volunteering offer to make it flexible enough to suit student lifestyles.

The brokerage and facilitation provided by our Sustainable Volunteering Officer ensured the Bridge Innovation Programme met the museum’s needs in terms of developing a volunteering model which met recognised standards and provided a practical, useable final report.

#### What was the outcome?

As a result of the consultancy, the museum has used the key contacts provided in the report to register on three local university online volunteer portals and has received a positive level of interest so far. Additionally the museum has developed a “fast-track” training offer for student volunteers in order to train them more quickly and begin a mutually beneficial volunteering relationship. This idea was based on recommendations in the report that a young person’s enthusiasm and engagement should be captured as soon as possible after first contact in order to retain their involvement.
One of the most significant achievements for museums in Cornwall last year was the success of the Cornwall Museums Partnership in securing Arts Council Major Partner Museum (MPM) funding for the period 2015-18. This new MPM funding will enable the museums to work towards achieving the strategic aims set out in the Cornwall Museums Strategy 2012-17. The ambition of the three year Cornwall MPM programme will be to build on the strengths of the Cornwall museums network and maximise the potential of collaborative working to boost the resilience of smaller organisations. The model will encourage team working across museums and with organisations from the wider cultural, business and voluntary sectors to ensure that all museums have access to the skills and resources they need to deliver excellence.

Our MDOs facilitated a number of partnership projects last year including the HLF funded Cornwall Young Ambassadors programme. This innovative project paired three schools with their local museums and gave students the opportunity to collaborate with museum staff and artists to devise displays and interpretation that would make the museums more attractive to younger audiences. This lead to a fantastic array of creative outcomes from surfboards made to be interactive with iPads to graffiti art inspired by the Berlin Wall. This project formed part of a wider programme of work with RIO to develop shared learning provision across Cornwall, with 12 museums now either offering Arts Award or activities which help young people working towards their Arts Award.

The last year saw a change in MDO provision, with the previous freelance arrangement being replaced by a full-time MDO in February 2015. The new arrangement will align with the wider support provided by the Cornwall Museums Partnership in order to integrate the Museum Development and Major Partner Museum activity programmes in Cornwall. This new approach will also help ensure that all museums across Cornwall can access the benefits of Arts Council investment. Special thanks go to the former Cornwall MDOs, without whom, much of the success in recent years would not have been possible.
There are over 75 museums in Devon, 41 of which are Accredited, and the majority of these are small, volunteer-run charities that receive little or no public funding. Over half do not have access to a museum professional so the support provided by Museum Development is critical in enabling museums to develop the skills and access the resources they need to meet national standards and build resilience.

Teignbridge
Following their successful application to HLF in 2013 for funding to develop an income generation strategy, the volunteer-run Dawlish Museum has been supported by their MDO to implement the strategy’s recommendations. One of the recommendations was that the museum should provide more things to “do” rather than being a place to “see”. With the support of the MDO, the museum successfully applied to our small grants scheme to develop a range of activities to make the museum more family friendly. In addition, the MDO worked with the museum to secure a grant from the Association of Independent Museums to continue to implement the strategy’s recommendations.

East and West Devon
Over the last year the MDO has worked with both Axminster Museum and Axminster Heritage to support them through the process of combining into a single charity and transferring ownership of the collections to the new charity. As part of the merger the museum has moved into new premises. With the support of the MDO, the museum is now formally working towards Accreditation and planning to submit an HLF application to complete the development of the new museum building.

The MDO worked closely with Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre as it also began to formally work towards Accreditation. The MDO has provided ongoing advice and support to the museum to develop its policies and procedures, including its Forward Plan and Collections Development policy.

North Devon & Torridge
Ilfracombe Museum participated in our Museum Sustainability programme which supported the museum to address its future resilience. Through a process of organisational self-assessment that involved staff, trustees and volunteers and was supported by a Sustainability Mentor and their MDO, a two year improvement plan was developed. The MDO facilitated the self-assessment and worked closely with the museum to draw up its improvement plan. Since participating, the
museum has implemented a number of improvements including developing more defined trustee roles and responsibilities, providing training for trustees and establishing a fundraising group. The volunteer-run Combe Martin Museum has seen visitor numbers double in recent years, however the number of young visitors has remained relatively low. To develop their engagement with young people their MDO supported them to secure HLF Young Roots funding for a project working with a group of young volunteers from the Combe Martin Silver Mine. The group created a film and touring exhibition to share their experiences of the mines with other young people and the wider community.

**South Hams**

Both the Kingsbridge Cookworthy Museum and Dartmouth Museum successfully applied to participate in our Retail Assessment programme. The support provided by the retail consultant through site visits and recommendation reports has enabled both museums to make significant improvements. As a result, both museums have seen spend per visitor more than double and have introduced new performance measures to support future decision making.

“It (the Sustainability Programme) enabled key issues in the museum to be raised across the museum workforce and not just reserved for trustees, which has created a greater feeling of solidarity and ownership.”

Curator, Ilfracombe Museum.

“The whole experience has been really beneficial to the museum. There have been lots of positive comments from visitors and stewards about the changes made to the shop and sales have increased.”

Curatorial Assistant, Kingsbridge Cookworthy Museum, retail assessment participant.

*Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre, now formally working towards Accreditation*
It was a busy year in Dorset, with the MDO for Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole providing support to a range of museums to unlock vital development funds. Dorset County Museum secured an HLF Stage 1 pass and Dorset County Council financial support for a transformative £13 million Collections Discovery Centre project. Lyme Regis Museum has now secured over £1 million for its Mary Anning Wing, which will provide new visitor facilities and enhanced displays and Bridport secured £100k HLF development funding for a complete museum refurbishment and interpretation overhaul.

The MDO also worked with museum colleagues across West Dorset on an advocacy campaign to demonstrate the individual and collective impact of the four important independent museums, currently grant-aided by West Dorset District Council (WDDC). Utilising the Association for Independent Museums toolkit, it was calculated that the four museums supported by WDDC generated a total gross visitor impact of just under £3 million in the local economy over the last 12 month period. Together, the museums also supported over 400 volunteers to undertake 32,000 hours of work, equating to a financial impact of over £1.6 million. Producing this impact report was incredibly helpful in demonstrating the cultural and economic value of the museums to key stakeholders and has been used regularly throughout the year.

The MDO has supported a project to develop the governance arrangements at the Russell Cotes Museum & Art Gallery to ensure they are fit for purpose within the context of the Museum’s Strategic Plan and the current local authority operating environment. It is planned that a new management committee will become operational in 2016 and will be in a position to take the museum forward over the next few years.

In Dorset, work with museum networks has continued to be an important strand of activity and the North Dorset Museums Group have worked together on a range of subjects and activities, with the ambition to submit a collective funding application in 2016. A county wide learning network has been initiated by the MDO, in response to local demand, and it is hoped that this will flourish during 2015/16. This year also saw the coming together of the Wessex5 Museums Partnership, comprising Poole Museum, Russell Cotes Art Gallery & Museum, Dorset County Museum, Wiltshire Museum and Salisbury Museum. Supporting the delivery of the partnership’s Arts Council Resilience funded Game Changers project will be a key priority for the MDO over 2016.
Somerset

Somerset museums were the most successful of any county in applying for Small Grant Big Improvement funding in 2014/15, securing a total of £7,862 alongside match funding contributions of £4,126. One of these museums, Community Heritage Access Museum (CHAC) in Yeovil, received £2,000 to develop a calendar featuring historic photos from their collections. The calendar was sold across Yeovil and the proceeds will now provide a self-sustaining income stream for the future, along with a new series of greetings cards and postcards.

Weston-super-Mare Museum was one of the museums that participated in our Museum Sustainability programme. Following the successful £1 million HLF application to re-develop the museum, the programme was used as a means to bring the whole organisation, including local Councillors, together and develop an improvement plan to take the museum forward. Wells and Mendip Museum also participated in the Sustainability programme using the process to work with their Sustainability Mentor to develop a recruitment plan for new trustees and volunteers.

In recent years, the Somerset MDOs have led on the development of the Somerset Learning Forum. In April 2014, its first meeting took place at the Museum of Somerset on the new Primary History Curriculum. Covering the historic county of Somerset, the focus of the Forum is to explore approaches to delivering formal and informal learning and support museums to develop their learning offer. This enables participants to share experience through case studies and facilitated sessions. Over the last year the Forum has explored family learning, community engagement, and working with schools.

“The whole Museum Sustainability project helped to acknowledge the need to work more cohesively as a team, taking forward the museum as a heritage based business.”

Curator, Weston-super-Mare Museum.
The Gloucestershire MDO has provided significant support in the last year to a number of museums, helping them to secure funding that will enable the museums to make important step changes towards greater resilience. Three museums were successful in securing Arts Council Resilience funding for 2015/16; Dr Jenner’s House, Museum and Garden, Gloucester City Museums Service and the Holst Birthplace Museum.

Dean Heritage Centre were a significant beneficiary of support through the Arts Council funded West of England Museums Economic Sustainability project, facilitated by the MDO. The project enabled the museum to work with specialist consultants to define a vision focused on the museum’s key selling points and create a development plan to optimise revenue potential that would sustain recent commercial growth.

The MDO supported Gloucestershire Archives to develop For the Record, a project which will enable the service to build more specialist storage space, develop ways to look after 'born digital' documents and provide better on-site facilities. The project will also support local people to document, care for, interpret and share their personal and community archives. The project has received an HLF development grant of £123,300 to progress plans with a second round application expected to be submitted later in 2015.
Over the last year the B&NES and Swindon MDO has focused on the delivery of two projects; the Museum Sustainability Programme and the West of England Museums Economic Sustainability project.

The MDO provided intensive support to facilitate the involvement of the Richard Jefferies Museum and the Museum of Bath at Work in our Museum Sustainability programme. The museums worked with peers, a mentor and the MDO through a process of self-assessment and review to develop a two year improvement plan. As a result, these museums are building more sustainable and resilient futures, while the plans now provide a framework through which our programme can deliver more targeted support to the museums.

**West of England Museums Economic Sustainability project**

Led by three MDOs across the West of England and Wiltshire the project partnered six small museums with expert professionals to assess their economic situation and create tailored economic development plans. Bath Postal Museum, Museum of East Asian Art and Radstock Museum participated, each faced with their own unique set of challenges. Alongside the creation of development plans, the museums received support through workshops to build the skills and capabilities necessary to deliver their own economic development plans.

The University of Bristol Theatre Collection also participated and received consultancy support to undertake an options appraisal and develop plans that would secure their future against a backdrop of Higher Education cuts. The museum now has a clear route map for the future focusing on increasing external income and a strong base to negotiate ongoing funding with the University. Learning from the project has been disseminated through case studies and a toolkit for writing an economic development plan published online alongside a conference in March 2015.

**Bristol and South Gloucestershire**

As well as leading the delivery of the West of England Museums Economic Sustainability project, the Bristol and South Gloucestershire MDO worked closely with the New Room and the Bristol Aero Collection Trust as they embarked on major HLF funded developments. The New Room will benefit from a completely revamped museum alongside new education and archive facilities. The £16 million Bristol Aerospace Centre project will see the establishment of a new museum at Filton, the birthplace of the British aviation industry, which will tell the story of the region’s world-class aerospace industry.
**Wiltshire**

Over the last year we have reinforced our partnership working the Wiltshire Conservation and Museums Advisory service which provides support to all museums across heritage organisations across the county. A particular success has been the continued expansion of the Wiltshire Museum Group. The group has performed an important role in enabling museums to share good practice, work together, develop collaborative projects and secure funding.

One such success has been *Wiltshire at War: Community Stories*, a five year HLF funded project, which has brought together a partnership of museums, libraries and communities. Highlights this year include the start of *Call to Arms* the first of five touring exhibitions telling different aspects of the Wiltshire at War story. The project will also include a touring schools exhibition with accompanying educational activities, a series of library talks and a programme of community engagement sessions inviting people to share their stories about their families’ experiences of the First World War.

The last year also saw a change in MDO provision with a new MDO, Heather Perry, beginning in November 2015. Special thanks go to the former MDO, Tim Burge, without whom much of the success in recent years would not have been possible.
Financial summary
1st April 2014 - 31st March 2015

Local Museum Development Officer Provision
£271,652 was invested in our network of MDOs (7 FTE) including £104,761 contributed by local authorities. MDO provision in mid-Devon and Wiltshire is directly funded by the local authorities and not included in this figure.

Conservation and Collection Care
This year the full-time CDO supported 84 museums.

Workforce, Skills and Heritage Volunteering
This included funding a part-time Sustainable Volunteering Officer (0.4 FTE), the South West Museum Skills programme and Heritage Volunteering Forum.

Regional Projects
Regional projects engaged 40 museums in 2014/15 supporting museums with audience development, digital engagement, retail and organisational sustainability.

Small Grant Big Improvement
Funding was awarded to 36 museums in 2014/15.

Regional Coordination and Communications
For the period 2012-15 the SW Fed was commissioned to establish and maintain a communications network for the region’s museum and heritage sector.

Programme Management and Advocacy
The central team (1.8 FTE) coordinate the programme across the region, support the delivery of regional projects and work with museums to advocate their social and economic value to local authorities and other stakeholders.

Underspend

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South West Museum Development Programme 2014/15
Museums supported through the South West Museum Development programme 2012-15. With thanks:

American Museum In Britain
Bath Abbey
Bath Postal Museum
Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution
Bekford’s Tower and Museum
Building of Bath Museum
Combe Down Heritage Museum
Fairfield House
Fashion Museum
Hrchel Museum of Astronomy
Holburne Museum
Museum of Bath Art Work
Museum of East Asian Art
No 1 The Royal Crescent
Pior Park
Raddick Museum
Ralph Allen Cornerstone
Salford Brass Mill
Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust
The Roman Baths
Victoria Art Gallery
Arnos Vale Cemetery
Blaize Castle House Museum
Bristol Museum and Art Gallery
Clifton Suspension Bridge
Gloucester House
Glenside Hospital Museum
Ken Stradling Collection
M Shed
Red Lodge
Royal West of England Academy
ss Great Britain
The New Room
University of Bristol Department of Archaeology
University of Bristol Geological Collection
University of Bristol Library
University of Bristol Theatre Collection
Antony House
Bodmin Town Museum
Borlase Smart John Wells Trust
Bude Castle Heritage Centre
Callington Museum
Charles Causley Trust
Constantine Museum
Cornwall’s Regimental Museum
Cotelle House
East Pool Mill
Elliott’s Shop Saltash
Elmton Art History
Fowey Museum
Geevor Tin Mine
Godolphin House
Grampus with Creed Heritage Centre
Harvey’s Foundry Trust
Helston Folk Museum
King Edward Mine
Lanhydrock House
Lawrence House Museum
Leach Pottery
Lerryn History Society
Levant Mine
Liskeard and District Museum
Looe Museum
Lostwithiel Museum
Lydford Gorge
Marazion Museum
Messagery Folk Museum
Minack Theatre
Mount Edgcumbe House
Museum of Witchcraft
National Maritime Museum Cornwall
Newlyn Art Gallery
Newquay Old Cornwall Society
Padstow Museum
Penlee House Gallery and Museum
Pentryn Museum
Peranzabuloe Folk Museum
Polperro Museum
Portherazu Telegraph Museum
Prideaux Place
Redruth Museum
Royal Cornwall Museum
Saltash Heritage Centre
St Agnes Parish Museum
St Agnes W.I. Archive
St Austell Museum
St Hilary Heritage Centre
St Ives Museum
Stuart House
Tarradale Protection Society
Trelissick
Trenance Cottages Newquay
Treine
Trewyddeth Society
Weal Martyn
St Hilary Heritage Centre
Wadebridge Museum
Wayside Folk Museum
A La Ronde
Allhallows Museum
Appledore Museum
Arlington Court
Ashburton Museum
Ax Valley Heritage Museum
Axminster Heritage
Bampton Heritage Centre
Bickleigh Castle
Bishopstogton Museum of Rural life
Bovey Tracey Heritage Centre
Braunton and District Museum
Britannia Royal Naval College
Brasham Heritage Museum
Buckland Abbey
Bunton Art Gallery
Castle Drogo
Coldharbour Mill
Coleton Fishacre
Combe Martin Museum
Credon Area History Society
Dartmoor Prison Museum
Dartmouth Museum
Dawlish Museum
Devon and Cornwall Constabulary
Devonport Collection
Dingles Fairground Heritage Centre
Ermouth Museum
Falmouth Museum
Fremington Quay Heritage Centre
Friends of Hooe Oak Cottage
Great Torrington Museum
Greenway
Holdsworthy Museum
Ilfracombe Museum
Killerton House
Kingsbridge Cookworthy Museum
Knightshayes Court
Ludleigh Archives
Lyn and Exmoor Museum
Moretonhampstead Heritage Centre
Morte Hoe Museum
Museum of Barmaglo and North Devon
Museum of British Surfing
Museum of Dartmoor Life
Newton Abbot and GWR Museum
Oldway Mansion
Overbecks Museum
Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery
Robey Trust
Royal Albert Memorial Museum
Saltash House
Sidmouth Museum
South Devon Railway Museum
South Molton and District Museum
Tavistock Museum
Teign Heritage Centre
The Valiant Soldier
Tiverton Museum of Mid Devon Life
Topsham Museum
Torquay Museum
Torre Abbey
Totnes Elizabethan House Museum
Totnes Fashion Museum
Torre Abbey Image Bank
University of Exeter Archaeology
Collection
Whimple Heritage Centre
William Fergusson Cave Studies Trust
Bill Douglas Cinema Museum
Salcombe Maritime Museum
Beaminster Museum
Blandford Fashion Museum
Blandford Forum Museum
Bournemouth Natural Sciences Society
Bridport Museum
Corfe Castle Museum
Dorset County Museum
Gold Hill Museum and Garden
Highcliffe Castle
Keep Military Museum
Kimmeridge Fossil Museum
Kington Lacy
Lyne Regis Museum
Museum of Design in Plastics
Museum of Electricity
Poole Museum
Portland Museum
Priest’s House Museum and Garden
Purbeck Mining and Mineral Museum
Purbeck Stone Museum
Red House Museum
RNLI Collections Poole
Royal Signals Museum
Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum
Shaftesbury Abbey Museum
Sherborne Museum
Sturminster Newton Museum
Swanage Museum
Swanage Railway Museum
Tank Museum
Wareham Museum
Weymouth Museum
Clouds Hill
Blockley Heritage Centre
The Wilson
Cornwall Museum
Cotswold Motor Museum
Court Barn Museum
Dean Forest Railway Museum
Dean Heritage Centre
Dorset Heritage Centre
GCHQ museum
Gloucester City Museum and Art Gallery
Gloucester Folk Museum
Gloucestershire County Cricket Museum
Holst Birthplace Museum
Dr Jenner Museum
Jet Age Museum
John Moore Museum
Kelmscott Manor
Museum In The Park
Nature In Art
Snowhill Manor
Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum
Tetbury Police Museum
Tewkesbury Museum
The Waterways Museum
Winchcombe Folk and Police Museum
Woodchester Mansion
World War One Museum
Wotton Heritage Centre
Xerox Museum
Alfred Gillett Trust
Ashridge and District Museum
Bishops Lydeard Mill
Bishops Palace
Blake Museum
Blue Anchor Railway Museum
Bruton Archive
Bruton Museum
Chard and District Museum
Combe Martin Heritage Centre
Crickhowell and District Museum
Dawes Twin Works
Dulverton Heritage Centre
Dunster Castle
Dunster Dolts Museum
Dunster Old House Museum
Glastonbury Abbey
Haynes Motor Museum
Helicopter Museum
Lytes Cary Manor
Marmaduke Craddock Trust
Milverton Village Archive
Minhead Museum
Monmouth House
Muchelney Abbey
Museum of Somerset
Porlock Methodist Church
Somerset and Dorset Railway Museum
Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society
Somerset Brick and Tile Museum
Somerset Cricket Museum
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Somerset Rural Life Museum
The Shoe Museum
Wintersfield
Wootton Bassett
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Worthington Museum
Watch Market House Museum
Wells Museum
Wells and Mendip Museum
West Pennard Court Barn
Weston-Super-Mare Museum
Wettonzoyland Pumping Engine Museum
Willows and Wetlands Visitor Centre
Wincanton Museum
Wimborne Museum
Blandford Forum Museum
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