



MUSEUMS
ASSOCIATION

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INSPIRING MUSEUMS TO CHANGE LIVES

MANIFESTO 2017



THE MUSEUMS SECTOR IN THE UK

There are over 2500 museums across the UK, covering a huge variety of national, local authority, university, military and independent museums.

Our museums play a vital part in local, regional and national life. They preserve and promote our collective memory, knowledge and history; they bring important cultural, educational, social and scientific ideas to life; and they create better places to live, work and visit.

Museums are loved and trusted by the public. 52.5% of English adults have visited a museum in the past year, and museum attendance has increased across all regions over the past decade.

However, our museums also face a number of important challenges. Museums need support from the next government in:

- Securing a stable financial future during a period of public funding cuts.
- Diversifying museum audiences to ensure that the largest number of people are able to experience museums.
- Working with government and public bodies to deliver a range of policy goals, particularly in education, health and wellbeing, science and research, tourism, cultural diplomacy and social services.
- Ensuring that museums are able to thrive as welcoming and diverse institutions post-Brexit.



We believe that the priorities for the new government should be:

1. MAINTAIN FREE ENTRY TO MUSEUMS

Free entry to national museums in England has been one of the major cultural policy successes of recent times. Since free entry to national museums was reintroduced in 2001, attendance has more than doubled on average. Free entry delivers a huge range of cultural and educational benefits, as well as substantial economic benefits. The policy has also inspired many non-national museums to offer free entry.

Protecting free admission to national museums was a manifesto pledge of all the major political parties at the last general election. The new government should commit to maintaining free entry for national museums.

2. SUSTAIN PUBLIC INVESTMENT IN MUSEUMS

The new government should commit to sustaining public investment in museums. In England, local authorities now spend 31% less in real terms on museums than they did in 2010, resulting in a loss of skills and expertise from the sector, reduced opening hours and, in some notable cases, museum closures. The new government should commit to working with local authorities to sustain their funding, and should mitigate the impact of cuts by increasing Arts Council England's National Portfolio scheme funding so that a larger number of museums can benefit. There are a number of potential sources of funding for this work, including the growing receipts from gambling taxes. In addition, while we recognise that museum policy is a devolved responsibility, we believe that any new government funding settlements should allow devolved administrations to maintain their funding for museums.

3. NEGOTIATE A BREXIT DEAL THAT WORKS FOR MUSEUMS

Throughout the Brexit process, museums will seek to maintain a positive regulatory, customs and tax environment for their activities. We believe that the next government should commit to delivering a deal which results in:


- a) No additional barriers to inbound tourism from other EU Member States
- b) No new barriers to the exchange of expertise amongst UK and EU museum staff, and protections for existing museum staff from other EU countries
- c) No additional customs, regulatory or tariff barriers to the exchange of museum objects or specimens with other EU Member States

4. DELIVER THE MUSEUMS REVIEW

DCMS has carried out a wide-ranging review into England's museums sector over the past year, originally due for publication in May 2017. We believe the next government should commit to continuing the work conducted by the Museums Review Team, and should publish a strategy for the museums sector quickly in the new parliament.

5. SIMPLIFY BUSINESS RATES

Many museums have suffered from a sharp increase in rates due to a number of recent developments in the local tax system. We believe the new government should commit to simplifying and reducing the burden of business rates on museums.



Please contact us to find out more on the points in this document.

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ABOUT THE MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION

The Museums Association is the independent membership organisation representing museums and galleries in the UK and the people who work for them. It was formed in 1889 and is a not-for-profit charity that champions the value of museums to society and supports and develops the people who work in them.