

North East Museum Development Programme Evaluation: April 2015 –November 2016

For Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums





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Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	2
1.1 OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH	2
1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	2
2. MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT NORTH EAST	4
2.1 BACKGROUND TO MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT NORTH EAST	4
2.2 MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT NORTH EAST ACHIEVEMENTS APRIL 2015 - NOVEMBER 2016	4
2.3 MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT NORTH EAST IMPACTS APRIL 2015 - NOVEMBER 2016	5
3. CASE STUDIES	11
4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	15
4.1 ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS	15
4.2 CHALLENGES FOR MUSEUM DEVELOPMENT	19
4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS	20

1. Introduction

Summary:

- The North East Museum Development (MDNE) Programme, delivered by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM), provides an essential role, not only in supporting and advising museums but also in creating links between them.
- TWAM has been uniquely placed to deliver a breadth of programmes that enable museums to strengthen their offer.
- Key themes emerging from the interviews with stakeholders were:
 1. Museum development plays a crucial role;
 2. Museum development funding is a lifeline for museums in the region;
 3. Development opportunities are upskilling the North East museum sector;
 4. Museum Development is enabling museums to develop and improve their sustainability, resilience and business strategies.
- The MDNE programme has been well received and its success is reflected in the number of museums that have engaged in a wide range of the support offered.
- There is a constant drive for improvement in the North East museum sector. As museums have been upskilled and become more confident they have been more ambitious in the exhibitions and activities they aim to deliver which has then led them to engage further with the Museum Development Programme, to enable them to achieve their goals.

1.1 Overview of the research

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) commissioned TBR to undertake an evaluation of the North East Museum Development Programme for the period April 2015 to November 2016 (as part of the 2015-18 programme).

Specifically, the evaluation aimed to address the following questions as set out by TWAM in its invitation to tender:

- What has been the impact of museum development support on organisations?
- How effective/relevant is the programme model?
- What are the priorities of the North East museum sector for the next 5-10 years?

1.2 Research methodology

The evaluation study used two methods of evaluation to understand the impact and effectiveness of the North East Museum Development Programme, as well as the future priorities of the North East Museum Sector.

1. Data Review

The consultants collated and reviewed monitoring data provided by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums between April 2015 to November 2016. This included: The 2015-18 funding application, programme plan, quarterly programme activity updates, an overview of small grants awarded and an end of year report prepared for Arts Council England (ACE).

2. Consultation

In total, 11 in-depth interviews, representing 14 museums from across the North East, were carried out. By speaking to a range of museums, including volunteer-run, local authority and independently run, the evaluation was able to capture a range of views from across the North East museum sector and to understand their future priorities.

This table lists the museums that were interviewed as part of the consultation exercise.

1.2.1 List of museums consulted:

Museum	Area	Type
Seven Stories	Tyne and Wear	Independent
Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens	Tyne and Wear	Local Authority
Bowes Railway Museum	Tyne and Wear	Independent (volunteer-run)
Kirkleatham Museum	Tees Valley	Local Authority
Preston Park Museum and Grounds	Tees Valley	Local Authority
Head of Steam	Tees Valley	Local Authority
Durham Castle Museum / Museum of Archaeology	Durham	Durham University
Durham Museum and Heritage Centre	Durham	Independent
Bailiffgate Museum	Northumberland	Independent (volunteer-run)
Lady Waterford Hall and Heatherslaw Corn Mill (Ford & Etal Estates)	Northumberland	Independent
Berwick Museum / Morpeth Chantry Bagpipe Museum (Woodhorn Trust)	Northumberland	Independent

The feedback from the interviews informs the majority of this report. Two museums, Bailiffgate Museum and Kirkleatham Museum, were then chosen as case studies (see Section 3).

2. Museum Development North East

2.1 Background to Museum Development North East

Following a successful bid to Arts Council England (ACE) in May 2014, Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) has responsibility for providing museum development support in the North East region for the period April 2015 - March 2018. TWAM is one of nine museum development providers nationally that are funded through ACE to drive development and deliver sustainability, resilience and innovation in England's regional museums. They deliver responsive and strategic support directed by the needs of the North East museum sector and underpinned by the requirements of the Accreditation Standard.

The North East Museum Development Programme provides a single point of access for professional advice and guidance and delivers a range of support and opportunities to ensure that all Accredited museums, as well as those working towards Accreditation, no matter what their size or scope, can maximise their benefit to audiences and communities.

The programme delivers five key areas of support:

1. Advice and guidance
2. Programmes of activity aligned to Arts Council England's five strategic goals
3. Regional initiatives
4. Small Grants Scheme
5. Accreditation advice and support

TWAM seeks to deliver a Museum Development Programme that is comprehensive, effective and collaborative, responding to the needs of museums and the communities that they serve. It aspires to ensure that museums deliver excellence in the management and interpretation of their collections, understand and respond to the needs of their various audiences, increase the size and reach of their engagement and are resilient and sustainable.

The programme is designed to stimulate and embed new approaches by drawing on expertise and learning from within and outside the sector which develop economic resilience and build confidence and ambition within museums. Skills and workforce are a key focus of Museum Development, supporting the development of paid staff and volunteers in the sector, as well as improving engagement with children and young people and developing provision for this age group.

Through partnership working it is envisaged that museum development activity will drive improvement and seek to create a sector that is resilient, vibrant and relevant. Partnership working is central to the programme, aiming to facilitate this both within and outside the sector, encouraging museums to work together wherever appropriate.

Another aim is to advocate the value of museums, and to seek additional funding to extend opportunities. In order to allow this, one full-time officer prioritises and delivers this work. A part-time assistant has been appointed to provide support for communications and events, small grants administration and maintaining the client database. The museum development profile has been raised through strategic partnerships, and regional communications, including a fortnightly e-bulletin, website and advocacy material.

2.2 Museum Development North East achievements April 2015 - November 2016

In this section we present and discuss the impact that museum development has had on museums in the North East, based on 11 in-depth interviews and representing 14 museums.

To provide background to this, TWAM provided monitoring data on the activities carried out so far during the 2015/16 Museum Development Programme, summarised below:

- Engaged with 82% of museums (eligible for Museum Development support) through advice and guidance, strategic development support and grants schemes.
- Supported 33 museums to improve collections care.
- Awarded £18,036 in small grants funding to 20 museums.
- Provided bespoke support to 5 museums as part of the *Enterprising Museums* programme.
- Delivered Accreditation advice and support to 23 museums through training events, surgery sessions and an enquiry service.
- Assisted 7 museums across 5 local authority areas to undertake visitor research and increase knowledge about their visitors to better inform planning and programming as part of the *Understanding Audiences* programme.
- Delivered 'Secret World of Schools' training days in partnership with Culture Bridge North East.
- Administered ACE's Small Scale Capital Grants Scheme, awarding an additional £60,000 to regional museums.
- Delivered network days for volunteer-run organisations¹.

The rest of this section demonstrates what impacts these activities have had on museums across the North East.

2.3 Museum Development North East impacts April 2015 - November 2016

Emerging from the interviews with museums were four key themes:

1. Museum development plays a crucial role
2. Museum development funding is a lifeline for museums in the region
3. Museum development is upskilling the North East museum sector
4. Museum development is enabling museums to develop and improve their sustainability, resilience and business strategy

2.3.1 Museum Development plays a crucial role

An overarching theme emerging from the interviews was the crucial role that the Museum Development (MD) Programme plays, not only in supporting and advising museums but also in creating links between them and other sectors. For example, the MD Programme has co-ordinated opportunities to network with the Higher Education sector facilitating a new partnership between Kirkleatham Museum and Teesside University. They are now working collaboratively on an exhibition about the local steel industry.

The MD programme provides a unique offer that effectively supports a variety of museums (including: volunteer-led, local authority managed and large independents) across the region and facing a range of challenges individual to them. Bowes Railway Museum felt that the one-to-one support and training they had received through the MD Programme had been "*a significant help*" in their progress towards full Accreditation.

From speaking to interviewees, it became clear that the MD programme was the only source of continuous support for museums and was filling an expanding gap in the market created by funding cuts.

¹ All from TWAM End of Year Summary Report 2015/16

"The MD programme has enabled [us] to move forward in the right direction to attract national visitors and make Kirkleatham an upcoming museum and visitor attraction"

Kirkleatham Museum

The museums interviewed all recognised the benefits of the MD programme and made the most of the opportunities available (subject to internal resourcing issues).

"If [MD] wasn't available it would leave a big hole and make things more difficult"

Bailiffgate Museum

Whilst there is a range of support available through the MD programme, museums have found TWAM's responsiveness to be key to the support they have received. The MD Manager, in particular, is named as someone they "trust" and who "goes above and beyond" to support museums to improve their offer and to become more sustainable.

"I do not worry whether or not it will be a waste of time and trust [the Museum Development Manager's] judgement in steering [the museum] towards valuable training"

Preston Park Museum

Echoing the comments of many museum interviewees, one stated that they "would not hesitate to call and ask" for support even if it was something not currently within the MD's programme. Having someone available to provide advice or to signpost to specialist support works for the museums and the programme's model is clearly effective.

Museums welcome opportunities to network. Interviewees noted that events co-ordinated by the MD Programme, including Regional Gatherings and the Volunteer Organisations' Network (VON), are the only opportunities that remain for museums to meet with others in the sector to discuss the challenges they face and to share good practice.

"It is one of the few organisations that enable professional networking across the sector"

Seven Stories

2.3.2 Funding is a lifeline

By offering both small grants funding and capital funding (through *Ready to Borrow*, previously the Small Scale Capital Grants Scheme) the MD Programme provides a 'lifeline', particularly for smaller museums. A recurring theme throughout the interviews was the challenging funding environment museums have found themselves operating in. Smaller museums have to focus on day-to-day budgeting, particularly as running costs have increased over the years and therefore they do not have funds to spare.

"Funding and finance underlines virtually everything we do. Whilst we have good governance and the desire to do things – we just lack the funding"

Bowes Railway

It was repeatedly emphasised that whilst equipment, such as display cases and environmental monitoring equipment, were *"not very interesting"* to funders they are *"an essential investment"* and have enabled museums to develop their facilities and visitor offer. Examples of improvements museums have made as a result of MD Programme funding include:

- Kirkleatham Museum was successful in securing Small Scale Capital Grants Funding in 2015/16 to purchase new display cases. This has enabled the museum to display national loans as part of *The Extraordinary Gertrude Bell* exhibition. Visitor surveys have shown an increase in visitors from outside of the region since the exhibition has opened.
- Durham Museum and Heritage Centre hosted a 40th birthday open day, to promote the museum and raise its profile within the local community.
- Bowes Railway Museum received a small grant to work with design students from Durham University to draft a layout of their existing railway system. This is currently being turned into a scale model and will act as an educational tool for museum staff/volunteers to educate visitors on their rope pulled wagon system.
- Heatherslaw Corn Mill has been able to develop its offer for schools and families by introducing hands-on baking experiences, supported with funding from the Small Grants Scheme. Since introducing this scheme, there has been a year-on-year increase of 700 people visiting the mill with a family ticket in 2016. The museum is planning to build on this success by extending its engagement to Scouts/Cubs that stay at a camp nearby.

"The Small Grants Scheme has been the only way to do any development. We would not have been able to carry out work without it"

Durham Castle and Museum of Archaeology

Building on recent developments, like the examples above, many museums interviewed were either awaiting the outcome of funding applications or were already in the process of planning for future opportunities that they anticipated would become available through the North East MD programme.

For example, Berwick Museum & Art Gallery is currently awaiting the outcome of their *Ready to Borrow* application which, if successful, will enable security improvements to be made to the building in order to meet the requirements of the Government Indemnity Scheme. This will enable the museum to capitalise on opportunities to display loans from national museums such as the Royal Armouries.

2.3.3 Upskilling the North East museum sector

The upskilling of staff has resulted in building their confidence and ambition to deliver challenging new programmes and events. There has been a breadth of development opportunities with over 30 events delivered on a range of topics including: collections care, funding, Accreditation, learning, volunteering, audience development, income generation and the Higher Education sector. Museums have found that the training/events provided through the MD programme *"have been supportive and challenging"* i.e. MD provides assistance, but also encourages museums to think differently and develop the way they work.

Volunteer-run museums have benefitted from the Volunteer Organisations' Network (VON), a forum for volunteer-run museums that meets three times a year. Museums welcome this ongoing support for volunteers and being able to continually tap into the network for advice and to share information. The support and advice received from the Conservation Advisory Network (CAN) in particular has been cited as being critical in this area. All interviewed museums had engaged with CAN and utilised its expertise to develop staff skills. Larger museums accessed CAN to train new members of staff.

[ongoing support is needed on top of training as] *"no one can become a conservator following a one week course"*

Bailiffgate Museum

Accreditation support has not only been well received, it has been essential as the Accreditation application process would be difficult for museums without this support. One museum stated that the support they had received was *"invaluable as [the Accreditation process is] hard"*. The process for applying for the first time or submitting an Accreditation Return can be daunting, particularly for those museums that do not have experience of going through the formal process, or where staff that had previously overseen the application have now left.

The Audience Agency, through the *Understanding Audiences* programme, has provided support to museums to improve the way they collect data about their visitors. All Tees Valley local authority museums are now using the same methodology (Audience Finder) so that they have a comparable data set. Training for front of house staff has helped to increase understanding of why data collection is important and embed the practice within daily operations.

The MD Programme is working in partnership with Culture Bridge North East to deliver *Secret World of Schools* (SWOS), a series of demand-driven workshops that gives practitioners a way to maintain their knowledge of education sector priorities.

Whilst development opportunities are invaluable for museums, resourcing issues can often make it difficult to commit to training events/workshops. This is particularly true of volunteer-run museums where turnover of volunteers is high. It was felt that access to specialist knowledge, particularly through CAN, was highly beneficial and the *"drip feeding of information resulted in the upskilling"* of staff.

Several volunteer-run museums highlighted that whilst they had no shortage of volunteers offering their time this was generally on a short-term basis. As a result, skills gained through training were lost as volunteers left, as was the momentum for driving projects forward. This impacted on their ability to become sustainable and embed skills, demonstrating the need for ongoing support for organisational capacity.

Examples of museum staff being upskilled include:

- Berwick Museum & Art Gallery received training from the Regional Conservator to enable them to repair valuable Chinese artefacts, making these available for future exhibitions and displays. Understanding the importance of, and having the confidence to, update exhibits and their presentation in order to maintain a new and current audience offer will be important for museums as they become more commercially aware.
- Through advice and support provided by the Museum Mentor scheme, Bailiffgate Museum has partnered with their mentor (Seven Stories, the National Centre for Children's Books) to host a major Harry Potter exhibition in 2017, featuring illustrations and sketches by Jim Kay from the illustrated Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.
- Through specialist training museums are now applying for/have gained/maintained Accreditation. The new curator at Lady Waterford Hall cited how support provided by the MD programme enabled the museum to submit its Accreditation Return.
- Seven Stories has accessed SWOS sessions to induct new team members. Their Learning Manager is due to have a guest blog published on Culture Bridge's website, which will provide more details of Seven Stories successful involvement in SWOS.

2.3.4 Developing and improving sustainability, resilience and business strategy

"Black Radley helped by bringing the team together, listening to them and giving credence to what they were saying. The group work and the support really brought the team together, gave us new direction and clarity on what we should be doing"

Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens

The training and support provided through the MD Programme covers all aspects of museum operations and management and provides strategic development support which is enabling museums to:

- better understand their audiences (*Understanding Audiences* programme)
- develop national and international partnerships
- build relationships with the higher education sector
- increase their business confidence and commercial activity (*Enterprising Museums* programme).

All of which is contributing to the sustainability and resilience of the sector. In the current funding environment, museums are becoming more commercially minded and are increasingly looking for income generation activities, MD is invaluable in supporting this change.

"[Enterprising Museums] provided a platform to share experiences to confirm and develop the philosophy that allowed museums to be more in control and to develop the attitude that they could survive. That it was "not all doom and gloom" and was an opportunity to do things differently"

Preston Park Museum

Many small, volunteer-run museums highlighted that whilst the MD programme's activities are relevant they could only focus on one activity per year to ensure it was fully implemented before moving onto the next challenge and priority.

One museum noted that whilst they have a national remit and outlook it was very hard for them to attend sessions in London and beyond. They felt the MD Programme had *"an important role to play in disseminating strategic knowledge and translating it into regional terms"* for the NE museum sector.

Strategic development support resulted in the following outcomes:

- Head of Steam (through the *Understanding Audiences* programme) has improved their systems for collecting audience data. They are now using this data to inform a targeted marketing plan for 2017-18.
- Through their resilience work with Black Radley (*Enterprising Museums*) Sunderland Museums and Winter Gardens have become more commercially minded and have begun to target audiences to generate income. For example, a fee is charged for family walking tours which were previously free.
- Preston Park Museum implemented a new management system and their own set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in April 2016, they are more tailored to the individual museum than previous Local Authority KPIs. These KPIs are not only a useful indicator, but they also enable the museum to focus their planning and have a record of positive impacts, which include:
 - Visitors; A record August with over 50,000 visits during the six week summer holidays. New and creative exhibitions, such as a temporary beach installation and children's events, contributed to this.

- Visitor spending; Admissions income per visitor averages £0.61, which is more than the planned £0.50, which is indicative of new visitors. Secondary discretionary spending was greater than the previous year thanks to a more effective retail and theatre offer, as well as temporary themed retail offers around events. Discretionary spending per visitor is still below the target, however seeing year-on-year increases and the other positive KPIs gives the museum the ambition and confidence to develop further.
- Schools; Between April and August 2016, school visits were 567 ahead of target and income from school visits was £1,285 ahead.

3. Case studies

Bailiffgate Museum and Gallery, Alnwick

Bailiffgate Museum and Gallery takes visitors on a journey spanning 10,000 years of heritage, celebrating the rich and turbulent history of the local area. It is based in a historic building in Alnwick's Castle Quarter and is home to the town's distinctive heritage, special exhibitions and a varied range of events for the whole family.

Challenges

The Museum is volunteer-led and there is a limited number of core volunteers. This has resulted in limited resources in terms of staff and time to implement a variety of changes. Challenges have to be prioritised as they cannot all be addressed at once.

"We have a stalwart of keen volunteers who are not museum professionals, so we need access to specialist advice"

Funding is a key concern. Whilst they receive small amounts of funding from Northumberland and Alnwick Council, it is not guaranteed.

The building that the museum occupies is very old and the potential cost of repairs is *"the biggest threat"* to their existence. Through Heritage Lottery Funding, they were recently able to commission a building survey and as a result, a maintenance plan was created detailing all the work that is needed to be carried out over the next 20 years.

Museum development engagement

"To have support from [the Museum Development Manager] has been a lifeblood for us and has been incredibly supportive and useful"

Bailiffgate has accessed the following museum development support:

- *Enterprising Museums*
- Accreditation support (including support provided by their Museum Mentor)
- Volunteer Organisations' Network (VON)
- Small Grants Funding
- Conservation Advisory Network (CAN)
- *Ready to Borrow* capital grant funding

Impact on museum operations

"Museums are not a business but you have to be business minded"

Through their involvement in the MD programme Bailiffgate has experienced the following impacts:

- Upskilling of new trustees in relation to the Accreditation process, in preparation for their renewal in 2017. Without access to this specialist training they would have struggled with the process.
- Becoming more audience focussed through working with the Audience Agency to analyse and understand their target audiences. Prior to this they thought that their target audience was mostly older couples. Through analysis they found that this changed during the summer holidays when more families visited Alnwick. Temporary exhibitions were previously based on what the

volunteers thought would be of interest to others. They have now developed a 2 year exhibition plan to better target their visitors.

- Through participation in *Enterprising Museums* the museum is now operating more strategically by splitting key responsibilities (e.g. customer service, facilities management etc.) between the trustees and by using KPIs to manage performance.
- The support has been "*effective and relevant*". Direct access to both the Museum Development Manager and the Regional Conservator (through CAN) has enabled the volunteers to learn via 'the drip feeding of information' so that they have all been upskilled without impacting on the museum's resources.

"If [MD] wasn't available it would leave a big hole and make things more difficult for Bailiffgate"

- As volunteers have increased their knowledge they have become more confident. As a result, plans are being made to deliver more ambitious exhibitions to further increase their audience. They are currently planning to host a fine arts exhibition in 2019.
- Through attending MD events, such as VON, Bailiffgate has been able to network with similar organisations which has been beneficial for ideas and sharing good practice.

Through the support of their Museum Mentor they have gained advice on accessing sponsorship and are hosting a Harry Potter exhibition in 2017, in partnership with Seven Stories.

Future ambitions

As Bailiffgate's confidence has grown through their engagement with the MD Programme, they will need to continue accessing advice and support in order to further upskill volunteers to deliver more ambitious programming.

Bailiffgate Museum's future development priorities are:

- Renewing Accreditation at the end of 2017
- Reducing their reliance on third party funding by increasing visitor numbers (and therefore admissions income) through the delivery of more ambitious projects
- Delivering ambitious exhibitions, such as the planned Harry Potter and Fine Art exhibitions
- Working in partnership with similar attractions, such as Alnwick Castle, to increase and diversify their audience.

Kirkleatham Museum, Redcar

Kirkleatham Museum is the local history museum for the borough of Redcar & Cleveland. Set on three floors within a 1710 Queen Anne Building, the museum features a range of semi-permanent displays covering local and social history, maritime and industrial heritage.

The museum hosts a range of family events, musical performances and seasonal activities.

Challenges

Like all museums in the sector, funding is a challenge for them, particularly as a local authority venue that has been affected by local government cuts.

Museum development engagement

"What haven't we been involved in? The MD programme has added to Kirkleatham's visitor offer and visitor programme, making it stronger"

Kirkleatham Museum has accessed the following museum development support:

- *Enterprising Museums*
- Accreditation support
- Small Grants Funding
- *Ready to Borrow* capital grant funding
- Conservation Advisory Network (CAN)
- *Understanding Audiences*
- Higher Education partnerships

The MD Programme has also supported the museum to successfully engage with Arts & Heritage's Meeting Point (funded through Arts Council England's Resilience funding). This was an opportunity for Kirkleatham to work with a contemporary artist, which resulted in an exhibition.

Impact on museum operations

"Kirkleatham has moved forward...MD has totally worked for us and has come at the right time with local authority budget cuts"

Through their involvement in the MD programme Kirkleatham Museum has experienced the following impacts:

- Development of a partnership with Teesside University, following their attendance at a HE seminar. They are currently working together in partnership, sharing expertise and knowledge to put together a Heritage Lottery Fund bid to host a steel stories exhibition.
- An increased understanding of their target audiences through their work with the Audience Agency and an improved methodology for visitor data collection.
- The purchase of display cases through the *Ready to Borrow* Scheme has enabled the museum to showcase national loans as part of The Extraordinary Gertrude Bell exhibition.
- Through their engagement with Arts & Heritage and the *Meeting Point* programme, the museum was able to target new audiences and increase visitor numbers.
- Through attending MD events they have been able to network with other museums and share best practice.
- Submitting their Accreditation Return with advice and support from the Regional Accreditation Adviser.

- Upskilling staff through their engagement with the Conservation Advisory Network (CAN). The Regional Conservator has also provided expertise and support to the Collections Officer. The training has resulted in increased staff confidence and knowledge that they are approaching collections care in the right way.

Future ambitions

Kirkleatham Museum's future development priorities are:

- Working closely with Black Radley (*Enterprising Museums*) to improve their sustainability and business plans. These were identified as their top priorities.
- Seeking funding to employ a Documentation Officer.
- Forward planning for exhibitions and tours to tap into new audiences, including national audiences.
- Continuing to develop partnerships and contacts through MD networking opportunities.
- Seeking out funding opportunities.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

This section summarises the evaluation findings and key learning points, and reports against the three research questions outlined in Section 1. In section 4.3, recommendations for the future of MD provision in the region are presented.

4.1 Answering the research questions

4.1.1 What has been the impact of museum development on organisations?

Headlines:

- Delivering *Enterprising Museums* to address resilience has had a positive impact. The commercial expertise has enabled museums to identify and implement income generation opportunities, whether opening a shop for the first time or charging entry to popular exhibitions.
- Expert training and advice to understand audiences has enabled museums to segment and target their audiences for the first time, influencing who they market to and what exhibitions are displayed.
- Small Grants Scheme described as “necessary and really essential” in enabling museums to improve their facilities and offer and to capitalise on resilience and audience development.
- Networks have been established which provide ongoing support. The Conservation Advisory Network (CAN) is a first port of call for museums who need collections care advice. The access to networks and knowledge sharing that the MD Programme provides gives museums confidence to innovate and seek new ideas.
- However, small museums often only have the capacity and resources to focus on one priority at a time. So, even if opportunities for change are identified, with the support of museum development, these might not yet be implemented.
- There is ambition to continue to change and develop, and to implement new ideas. Museums at different levels and starting points want to keep learning and growing and need museum development to achieve this.

There is an evident drive to improve across the North East museum sector. As museums have been upskilled through their engagement with the MD Programme, and gained confidence in the work they are undertaking, it is clear that they have become more ambitious about the programming they wish to deliver in future years. To achieve these ambitions, museums state that they will continue to require access to support and advice to build their skills and develop strategies in order to work towards new goals.

Development, and the MD programme itself, could be seen as a ‘ladder’ with some museums having taken just their first few steps in terms of improving collections care and upskilling staff/volunteers, whilst others are nearing the top and working on more advanced sustainability and resilience strategies. Some museums have been able to tackle several steps at once, while some have had to focus on one step at a time as they work their way up.

The programme has strengthened the network of museums in the North East and has resulted in several partnerships and mentoring relationships, as well as opportunities to collectively solve challenges affecting the region’s sector. Museums highlighted that there were no other opportunities for them to network with others in the region and felt that this was one of the main benefits of the North East MD programme. For example, Durham Museum & Heritage Centre said that they are able to *“share knowledge and best practice*

to help each other and offer reassurance through the Volunteer Organisations' Network. This is a sentiment echoed by other volunteer-run museums.

Several museums were unable to directly attribute some impacts (e.g. rises in visitor numbers) to the MD Programme, although they did feel the support had contributed greatly to staff confidence, commercial development, audience development and their overall sustainability.

4.1.2 How effective & relevant is the programme model?

Headlines:

- The current programme model has been well received and is effective. This is reflected in the number of museums that currently benefit from museum development support.
- Some training courses have been packaged in a way which means museums have had to make time to attend several sessions. Some museums reported that not all elements of the sessions were relevant and therefore they did not commit resources to signing-up, meaning that they missed individual sessions that they could have benefited from.
- Communication, particularly via email, to notify museums of opportunities has been very effective. However, smaller organisations noted these were sometimes missed.
- Museums have greatly benefitted from being able to pick up the phone or email the Museum Development Manager and the other specialist consultants for advice and support.
- The roadshow approach, whereby events are hosted at different venues across the region, has been well received by most participating museums; however, several of the smaller museums still found it difficult to attend due to resources.

The programme and support that the MD Programme offers is very relevant. The programme delivers strategic development support (e.g. commissioned expertise supporting small cohorts of museums across priority areas) and responsive activity (e.g. CAN, Small Grants Scheme, training). It is important that the programme continues to provide museums with both strands of support so that they are able to continue to develop strategically as well as improving day-to-day operations and their visitor offer.

Museums accessing MD support trust the recommendations and judgements made by the Museum Development Manager, as they know that thorough research will have been carried out and that it will benefit them to take up the opportunity.

The current programme model that is used by TWAM has been well received and TWAM are encouraged *"to keep doing what they are doing"*. Museums have found it to be *"very relevant"* and this is reflected by the range of areas that museums are engaged with, across the MD Programme.

Through their participation in the MD Programme museums have gained an understanding of what their priorities are and what they need to do to become more sustainable. Having ongoing access to specialist advice and support, as well as funding to enable change, has made a significant impact on the museums' abilities to achieve their priorities.

Communications, particularly the bi-weekly Museums North East e-bulletin, were broadly reported by museums as being very useful and containing valuable insights and stories. Museums felt they were well-informed and aware of the opportunities on offer. Seven Stories highlighted that they had successfully advertised job vacancies through the e-bulletin.

Conclusions and recommendations

Being able to pick up the phone to the Museum Development Manager to receive support and signposting to specialist advice was seen to be of particular benefit. Museums in the region would welcome more opportunities to come together to network and discuss shared challenges, however it is recognised that there are large constraints on resources (time, staff and money) that would impact on further engagement in this way.

The flexibility of the MD programme has enabled the Museum Development Manager to react and respond to the museums' individual needs and all have benefited from one-on-one support whether in person or via email and/or telephone contact

It was often not due to a lack of interest or relevance that museums had not taken part in opportunities, but rather a lack of capacity to do so. One volunteer-run museum stated that only a few of their volunteers were engaged on a day-to-day basis. It was therefore *"difficult to take everything on offer on board"*. Similarly, another museum felt that there had been a small number of training events where they could not identify benefits to their organisation and they *"do not have the luxury to send staff if it's not going be directly relevant"*. Other museums reported that some of the activities were of less relevance to them. For example, one museum felt that any work they could carry out on sustainability was precluded by the Grade 1 listed building the museum inhabited.

The Museum Development Programme covers a wide range of museums across the North East, with varying levels of skills and need. One of the key challenges for the programme is to ensure that what is on offer is pitched at the correct level for those involved. Several of the larger and more established museums reported that some of the activities on offer had been pitched at too low a level for them and was more relevant for volunteer-run museums.

They did, however, point out that they required Continuous Professional Development in areas such as collections care and felt that the MD programme was a suitable vehicle to deliver this. Museums felt that the MD Programme should continue to focus on practical core skills, which enable them to address day-to-day challenges within their museums.

Museums participating in the Secret World of Schools programme valued the support they received in order to work with schools effectively. This programme is delivered in partnership with Culture Bridge North East.

"The team have been accessing Secret World Of Schools for some time. It has been very helpful as part of the induction of new team members (including me) and as top-up CPD and networking for other team members."

Seven Stories

4.1.3 What are the priorities of the North East museum sector?

Headlines:

- Funding is a major concern for all museums and impacts not only upon their day-to-day work, but also their ability to implement change and think about the future.
- Museums are keen to become sustainable and resilient. Developing income generation strategies and business models were identified as priorities going forward.
- Becoming 'digitally savvy' and understanding the needs of future generations was another priority for museums. Communications and marketing support to reach and attract new audiences via social media was identified as a need.
- Whilst some museums have already benefited from partnerships with the higher education sector it was acknowledged that there were more untapped opportunities, but they struggled to develop them.
- Museum staff require training that suits their needs. Whilst volunteer-led museums will continue to require core training, individuals with more established careers required access to CPD. High on the agenda for all museums was ongoing collections care training.
- Museums value the opportunity to share ideas and good practice with other museums. Whilst all museums were open to more networking opportunities, it was felt that this would detract necessary resources from smaller organisations, reducing the benefits of these opportunities.

Funding is and will continue to be a major concern for museums in the North East. The vital role of the funding on offer through the MD Programme is clear, and the difference it makes is evident from the impact it has had on the recipient museums and should continue.

There were key questions raised about the potential loss of European Funding as a result of the EU Referendum. It was acknowledged that applying for funding is a skill in itself, particularly for larger grants, and that the competition is only set to increase.

Another priority for museums is to improve their resilience and sustainability so that they are no longer reliant on ad hoc funding opportunities. Museums recognise that it is important to be aware of developments within the sector that could impact on their business model, yet many are struggling with the day-to-day running of their museums and lack capacity to translate what this means for them individually. The MD Programme is in a unique position to be able to draw together and disseminate this information, whilst also being able to plan MD activities to tackle any challenges arising.

Commercial savviness is not only about remaining up-to-date with the latest sector developments, but it is also about understanding your audience and expanding your offer. Museums noted that their commercial strategy not only needed to successfully attract today's audiences but also needed to look to the future to anticipate the needs of the next generation. With this in mind, many museums felt that their key priorities were digital access to collections and engaging with an increasingly digital audience.

Several museums also mentioned potential opportunities to work with the higher education sector. It was felt that there was no shortage of expressions of interest from universities to collaborate and to support research, yet the expectation from them was that access to collections would be made available for free.

In essence, the priorities for the future of the sector and the support required align with those identified by the MD Programme. These fall into four broad areas, listed below:

1. **Investing in the audience offer:**
 - Facilities, collections and exhibitions
 - Small grants are essential
 - Ongoing support from the Regional Conservator (CAN) important for queries and advice.
2. **Targeted audience development:**
 - *Enterprising Museums* style support to be more commercially focussed and to develop opportunities for income generation.
 - *Understanding Audiences* style support to segment and identify existing and potential visitors in order to focus exhibitions/collections to meet their needs.
3. **Marketing:**
 - The important next step to capitalise on new audiences and to target future audiences by improving what museums are offering when and for whom
 - Vital area of support for small & volunteer-led museums
 - Skills – what, where and how to promote the museum
 - Resources – funding for marketing campaigns and materials.
4. **Training and CPD:**
 - All museums would value future staff training. Although there are differences in priorities in terms of the level of training which are dependent on where a museum is on the 'development ladder', common feedback from museums is that collections and conservation, education and business skills will be most important.

4.2 Challenges for Museum Development

There are a number of challenges facing the successful delivery of the North East Museum Development Programme.

It became apparent through the interviews that museums were often unable to separate activities being delivered and funded through the MD Programme from other 'development support' delivered by national organisations (also funded by Arts Council England). This meant that the MD Programme was not always given full credit or vice versa for the work they had undertaken. For example, one museum noted that there were limited places on a training course that should be accessible to all. It is unclear whether this comment related to the North East MD Programme or a wider national offer.

Whilst all museums would like to see the programme expand its activities (further highlighting the success of the MD Programme) there were concerns raised about the sustainability of this approach as TWAM's team at present is very small.

Museum development is effective as it reaches decision makers in museums. There was one exception, where a museum's retail operation was managed by the local authority in a department with a wider remit than just museums. This meant that although the work with Black Radley identified opportunities for developing the museum shop, the museum was unable to fund the required investment as budget to do so was not granted.

4.3 Recommendations

This section presents recommendations which have emerged from the research and interviews with museums. These are split into recommendations for the remainder of the 2015-2018 delivery period and for longer term delivery.

4.3.1 Key recommendations for 2017-2018

1. **Recommendation:** The current programme model is effective. TWAM should continue the current delivery model. i.e. a single point of access, providing specialist skills as appropriate through commissioning and by aligning to MPM activity and expertise in the region.
2. **Recommendation:** The MD Programme should ensure that training is pitched at the correct level to ensure the offer is taken up across the North East sector, offering opportunities for Continuing Professional Development. There will be a need to repeat certain sessions as museums progress "up the development ladder", as well as the need to deliver more advanced training for those that wish to build upon their skills. This is most applicable to commercial skills, marketing, and collections management.
3. **Recommendation:** Continue to communicate with museums via the bi-weekly e-bulletin and include more recruitment and volunteering opportunities, to support volunteer-run museums. This would support the retention of skills within the North East museum sector.
4. **Recommendation:** The *I like museums* website could be prominently promoted via each individual museum's marketing material. This would then alert visitors to individual museums' webpages and to places they may not have previously visited or know about.
5. **Recommendation:** Where training occurs, attendees should be encouraged to return to their museums as 'champions', with responsibility for disseminating learning to upskill their colleagues. This would prevent knowledge loss when an individual left the organisation and enable others to step in to ensure a project was able to continue.
6. **Recommendation:** Continue to provide small grants funding and provide expert advice/training on applying for larger funding (noting that some smaller museums do not fit the criteria for some larger funds), to better equip museums to do this themselves in the future.
7. **Recommendation:** The MD Programme should remain informed about issues, news and opportunities facing the sector, both regionally and nationally, acting as a focal point for disseminating updates to those museums who may not otherwise be aware of them.

4.3.2 Recommendations for 2018 and beyond

1. **Recommendation:** An online forum where museums can discuss issues they are facing, share good practice and identify opportunities for partnership working. This would enable museums to contribute to conversations without an impact on resources.
2. **Recommendation:** Whilst the work of the Museum Development Programme was well thought of and utilised by museums in the region, museums often did not attribute the work carried out to the programme itself. Whilst this does not affect the delivery and impact for museums, TWAM may wish to further develop the programme branding for training and promotional materials to raise awareness of the programme.
3. **Recommendation:** Duplicate workshops at different times of year and in different parts of the region, to enable all museums to find time to attend and to do so when the opportunity is most relevant to them.

Conclusions and recommendations

4. **Recommendation:** The MD Programme should promote further skill-sharing opportunities through peer-mentoring, to upskill the sector as a whole and enable networking to identify partnership opportunities.
5. **Recommendation:** The MD Programme should deliver or commission activity for museums, to enable them to develop an equal partnership model for working with the Higher Education sector, which takes account of the financial costings involved in working together.
6. **Recommendation:** Roll out *Understanding Audiences* and *Enterprising Museums* programme models to support a new cohort of museums. The MD Programme should implement progress goals and KPIs based on the experience of current participants. This would enable the programme to quickly identify museums struggling to implement change and to provide additional support where necessary.