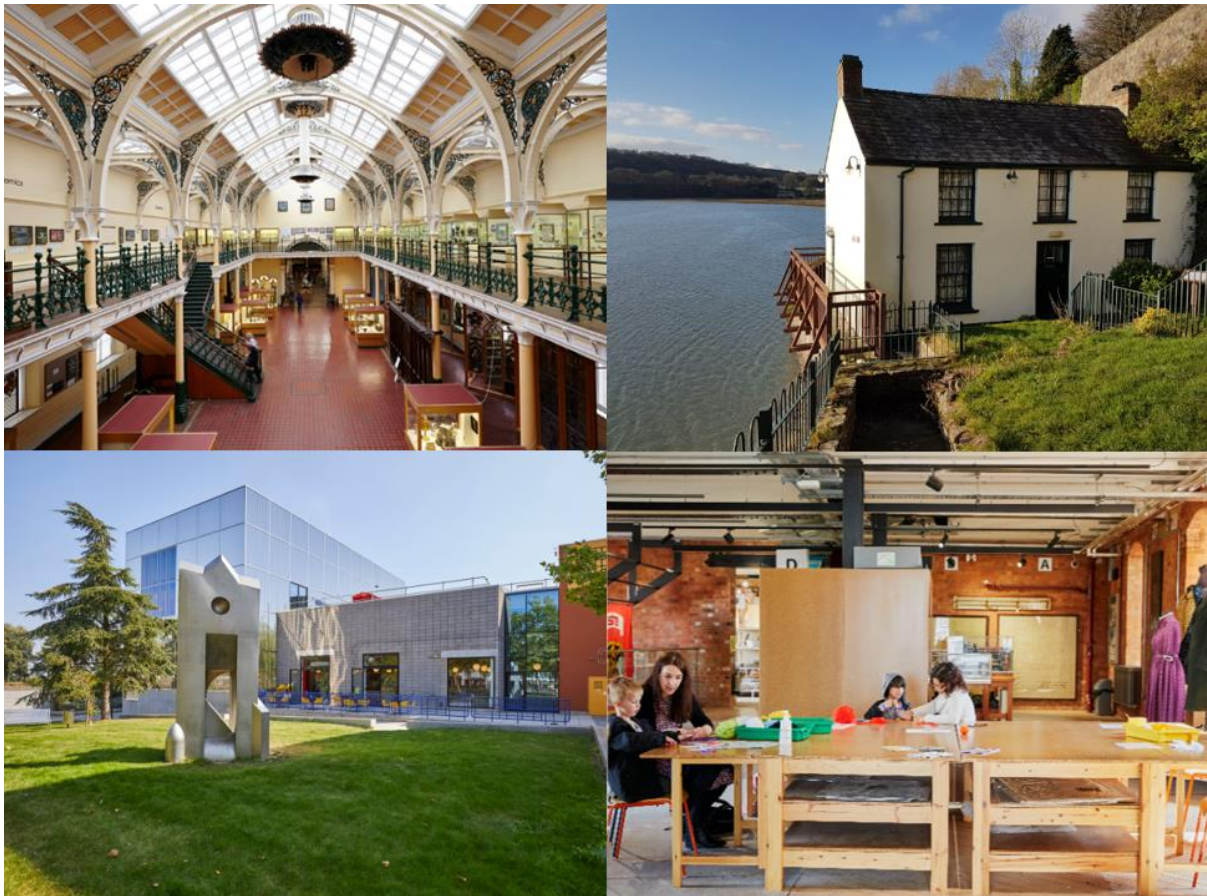


PRESS RELEASE

EMBARGOED UNTIL: 09:00 Thursday 31 October 2024

ART FUND AWARDS £1 MILLION TO SUPPORT LOCAL MUSEUMS AND CALLS FOR URGENT ACTION TO ADDRESS FUNDING CRISIS

- Local museums awarded £1m in grants from Art Fund
- Recipients including The Museum of Making in Derby, Birmingham Museum Trust and The People's Palace in Glasgow will work in partnership with organisations across education, health, environmental and other sectors on new projects to serve communities
- Yet following an Art Fund survey revealing two thirds of museums are worried about their future, and a lack of direct support for civic museums announced in the Autumn Budget, the national charity is continuing to call for emergency funding for civic museums



Press images: <https://tinyurl.com/ReimagineGrants2024>

EMBARGOED UNTIL 09:00 Thursday 31 October 2024: Art Fund, the UK's independent charity for art, today announced a total of £1 million in funding to support local museums and galleries across the country in response to the growing local authority funding crisis. Recipients include the Museum of Making in Derby, Birmingham Museum Trust and The People's Palace in Glasgow.

Over £800,000 has been awarded to 20 museums and galleries through Art Fund's Reimagine grants programme, developed in consultation with museums in response to their most urgent needs, with an additional £200,000 distributed through Museum Development UK (MDUK) to support museums and projects. This investment has been made possible with the backing of Art Fund's members and supporters, including The Headley Trust and over 850 donors through the charity's recent fundraising campaign, Making Connections.

Projects include sensory exhibitions for disabled and neurodivergent adults at MK Gallery; behind-the-scenes tours for rurally isolated groups at Fermanagh County Museum; Manchester Art Gallery loaning artworks to local schools to improve visual literacy amongst children; and creative workshops for men accessing mental health support services at Hartlepool Art Gallery.

The grants have been designed to support museums to build resilience for the future by working in partnership with organisations, including those beyond the cultural sector such as education providers, mental health support services and community organisations. The new projects demonstrate the vital support civic museums offer communities and the major contribution they make to education, health and well-being, civic pride, economic growth and environmental sustainability.

Yet with local authority budgets stretched to breaking point, many museums are facing imminent threats to their operations. Art Fund's [Museum Directors Survey 2024](#) revealed that financial strain on civic museums has worsened following a decade of austerity, the pandemic and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, with two thirds of museum directors concerned about funding shortfalls, a rise from half in 2022.

The charity is therefore supporting the English Civic Museums Network (ECMN) in their urgent ask for the government to make £20million in emergency funding available to save the most at-risk civic museums from closure. Art Fund has also called for an enquiry into regional museum funding, and local authority settlements that enable sustained support for these vital institutions. Without additional Government funding, these vital civic museums are at serious risk.

Jenny Waldman, Director, Art Fund, said:

"We're extremely pleased to offer £1million in support to local authority-reliant museums and galleries across the UK – from Carmarthenshire to County Fermanagh – through this latest round of Reimagine grants. The projects showcase the incredible value local museums have for communities and demonstrate their remarkable ambition, resilience and entrepreneurial spirit in the face of growing challenges.

"While we're pleased to see that the Government has committed to increase core Local Authority spending power by around 3.2% in the Autumn Budget, and promised some much-needed support for the National Museums and Galleries through increased grant-in-aid funding, and capital investment, the Budget falls short of addressing the urgent and long-term challenges facing the sector, particularly for civic museums.

"Three quarters of UK adults say having a local museum adds value to their area. Museums play a central role in rebuilding communities, bringing people together and inspiring audiences through

their collections. We will continue to make the case for long-term investment in all UK museums to safeguard these vital spaces of inspiration for communities both now and in the future. ”

Key projects funded in this round of Reimagine grants include:

- **Birmingham Museums Trust has been awarded £49,728 for *Collections in the Community*** – to advance Birmingham Museums Trust’s (BMT) 10-year *Dynamic Collections* programme, aimed at opening up access to the city’s nationally significant collections. The funding will help to strengthen existing relationships and create new partnerships, including the establishment of a Community Partner Panel. This will enable BMT to further embed a truly democratic approach at the heart of its organisation by actively involving underrepresented groups and giving them a meaningful role in the care and management of its collections.
- **Derby Museums has been awarded £45,000 for a “wool takeover” at the Museum of Making** – bringing together manufacturers, young people, industry experts and consumers to spark discussion on sustainable fashion. The collaboration will produce an on-gallery takeover and workshop programme at the Museum of Making, engaging young people, families and wider audiences – including Looked After Children (LAC) – in creative solutions to the climate emergency and inspiring careers in textiles and making.
- **The Dylan Thomas Boat House in Laugharne, Carmarthenshire, has been awarded £39,643 to reimagine it as a Creative Hub** – Through activities and events, the Dylan Thomas Boat House, once home to Wales’s most famous poet, will become an inclusive Creative Hub for children, young people and families. This project – a partnership between CofGâr (the name for Carmarthenshire County Council’s Museums & Arts Service), Kids in Museums, and Carmarthenshire’s Education Service – will connect a younger audience with literary, creative, and expressive arts inspired by Dylan Thomas.
- **Fermanagh County Museum in Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland has been awarded £42,000 for *Art In Our Hands*** – to reimagine how Fermanagh County Museum’s collections are enjoyed through a participatory programme of creative activities that empowers and uplifts the community. In partnership with the Oak Healthy Living Centre, the project will use art and artefacts to enhance wellbeing for rurally isolated groups, people with health conditions or have experienced trauma. Museum staff will lead workshops with museum artefacts, behind-the-scenes visits and tours, culminating in a co-curated exhibition at Enniskillen Castle.
- **Hartlepool Art Gallery in Tees Valley has been awarded the £17,445 for *Beneath The Surface*** – an innovative mental health initiative uniting council teams with mental health practitioners to address the low engagement of men with mental health support services. Central to the programme is the gallery’s collection of works by postwar artist John Wilson McCracken, expelled from the Slade School in 1959 following a schizophrenia diagnosis. Men accessing mental health services will be invited to participate in creative workshops inspired by McCracken’s art, leading to a collaborative exhibition which aims to promote future sessions while highlighting mental health resources available.

- **Manchester Art Gallery has been awarded £45,000 to develop the Rutherston Loan Scheme for the 21st Century** – to explore new ways to loaning artworks from the Rutherston Loan Collection, a 100-year-old collection of paintings, print and sculptures, to schools and colleges across Manchester. In collaboration with primary, secondary and further education providers, the project will remove barriers to accessing art and promote visual literacy for children and young people in Manchester’s most deprived areas.
- **MK Gallery in Milton Keynes has been awarded £40,000 for *Sensory Exhibition Engagement*** – building on MK Gallery’s innovative approach to tour programming, *Sensory Exhibition Engagement* will increase opportunities for disabled and neurodivergent adults, children, and young people to access and engage with exhibitions. The project will strengthen MK Gallery’s partnerships with community and educational organisations, while fostering new collaborations with local support and advocacy groups.
- **The People's Palace in Glasgow, Scotland has been awarded £10,000 for *Reimagining the People's Palace*** – Glasgow’s social history museum is home to a collection of visual art spanning over 200 years. The museum is currently closed for a major redevelopment and redisplay of the collection. The People’s Palace will hire an Assistant Visitor Studies Curator to work with communities during the closure, using co-curation to involve residents, visitors and local organisations in shaping the Palace’s future.

Art Fund is continuing its partnership with Museum Development UK into 2025. £200,000 of the total £1million has been awarded through MDUK to smaller museums and projects. In the first year of the partnership 2023-4, over £290,000 was distributed in small grants to 110 museums, with two programmes in Scotland and Wales reaching a further 36 museums. With funding from Art Fund and The Headley Trust, along with almost £100,000 of match funding from the Museum Development, MDUK is delivering a range of complementary accessible grant and training programmes to support museums and galleries.

Launched in 2020, the Reimagine programme is designed to inspire creativity and increase stability and resilience in museums, supporting organisations to develop or refresh their work in response to their current situation.

Reimagine grants are funded by Art Fund and made possible with support from The Headley Trust, alongside other generous trusts and supporters of the Making Connections campaign, and the 135,000 members who buy the National Art Pass.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Spokespeople available on request.

High-res images available for download: <https://tinyurl.com/ReimagineGrants2024>

The full list of successful recipients of the 2024 round of Reimagine grants:

ORGANISATION	PROJECT NAME	LOCATION	GRANT (£)
Birmingham Museums Trust	Collections in the Community	Birmingham, England	£49,728
Bristol Museums	Towards New Ecologies	Bristol, England	£40,000
CofGâr (Dylan Thomas Boathouse)	Dylan Thomas Boathouse Creative Hub	Laugharne, Carmarthen, Wales	£39,643
De La Warr Pavillion	Transforming Heritage: Community, Creativity and Skills.	Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, England	£45,000
Derby Museums (Museum of Making)	Reimagining partnerships through a wool takeover at the Museum of Making	Derby, England	£45,000
Fermanagh County Museum	Art In Our Hands	Enniskillen, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland	£42,000
Gallery Oldham	Our Beautiful Oldham	Oldham, Greater Manchester, England	£46,000
Hartlepool Art Gallery	Beneath The Surface	Hartlepool, County Durham, England	£17,445
Ikon Gallery	Ikon Creative Health	Birmingham, England	£44,000
Manchester Art Gallery	Developing the Rutherston Loan Scheme for the 21st Century	Manchester, England	£45,000
MK Gallery	Sensory Exhibition Engagement	Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, England	£40,000
Museum of Wigan Life	New Perspectives – reframing Wigan collections in the digital sphere	Wigan, Greater Manchester, England	£39,986

Museums Northumberland (Hexham Old Gaol)	Reimagining England's first purpose-built Gaol in partnership with Hexham's Communities and illustrator, Jonny Hannah	Hexham, Northumberland, England	£40,000
RCT Heritage Service	Partnership working in Rhondda Cynon Taf: Developing a sustainable Heritage Forum	Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales	£40,000
Tees Valley Museums	Collections inspired playscapes	The Tees Valley, England	£30,450
The Bowes Museum	Re-imagining The Bowes Museum's story with our local communities	Barnard Castle, County Durham, England	£49,989
The People's Palace	Reimagining the People's Palace	Glasgow, Scotland	£10,000
Turner Contemporary	Turner Contemporary Young Environmental Leaders	Margate, Kent, England	£50,000
Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums	Community Forum	Tyneside, England	£41,550
Your Trust Rochdale	Side-by-side	Rochdale, Greater Manchester, England	£45,000

Art Fund

Art Fund is the independent UK charity for art, helping museums and people to share in great art and culture for 120 years. Art Fund raises millions of pounds every year to help the UK's museums, galleries and historic houses. The charity funds art, enabling the UK's museums to buy and share exciting works, connect with their communities, and inspire the next generation. It builds audiences with its National Art Pass opening doors to great culture; and it amplifies the museum sector through the world's largest museum prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year, and creative events that bring the UK's museums together. Art Fund is people-powered by 135,000 members who buy a National Art Pass, and the donors, trusts and foundations who support the charity.

The National Art Pass provides free or discounted entry to over 400 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and Art Quarterly magazine.

www.artfund.org