

SHARE Museums East

# 2015-16 Annual Review



# 2015-16 AT A GLANCE



We supported **199** museums with training, advice, support and grants

**£416,592**

Invested in museum development from Arts Council East (ACE) funding

**£158,400**

Invested from ACE's Small Scale Capital Grants scheme in **5** museums



We ran **86** events including training courses, conferences and meet-ups

Events were attended by over

**1,400** people



**93%** of our events received an excellent or good rating

Nominations for our inaugural Volunteer Awards came from

**46**  museums



Over **1,500** people received our monthly e-newsletter

“**We consider the SHARE network to be invaluable.**”  
British Schools Museum.

# INTRODUCTION

At the heart of the SHARE programme are partnerships. The willingness of the museum sector in the East of England to contribute and work in partnership allows SHARE to deliver a programme which is second to none. It ensures our core funding from Arts Council England is used for maximum impact and has created a sector which is better networked and supported than ever before. We work with staff and volunteers in every county across the region to deliver our development programmes, grants and networks to the widest possible range of museums.

And through the generous input of those museums, the SHARE programme is unrivalled in its breadth and value for money. Staff and volunteers freely contribute their expertise and time, helping us shape our activities to meet the needs of the region, and many venues are made available without charge. This ethos has been part of the programme since its inception in 2009.

And it is paying dividends. In 2015-16 we reached out to over two-thirds of the Accredited museums across the region. 93% of attendees at our training sessions rated them excellent or good. Our Benchmarking performance survey shows that museums have steadily increased their visitors year-on-year, with a core group showing an 18.5% increase since 2009.

Arts Council England's funding is supplemented by the investment of our partners in their own museum development programmes, and by the sector's contribution to SHARE.

Thank you for your input into SHARE. Together we achieve so much more.

**Steve Miller**

Acting Assistant Director Community and Environmental Services (Cultural Services & Lifelong Learning), Head of Norfolk Museums Service, Head of Norfolk Arts Service

# ABOUT US

SHARE Museums East manages the East of England Museum Development Programme. It is delivered by a team of five through Norfolk Museums Service in collaboration with Cambridgeshire County Council, Essex County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Suffolk County Council and via their Museum Development Officers; with Luton Culture in Bedfordshire; and with the University of Cambridge Museums.

Our mission is to support excellence, resilience and cooperative working in museums in the East of England.

## Our funding

For 2015-16, Arts Council England (ACE) awarded SHARE £416,592 to deliver museum development services for the 165 Accredited museums across the region.

In addition SHARE received £158,400 from ACE to administer the Small Scale Capital Grants scheme in the region, to enable Accredited museums to receive significant loans, building their long-term resilience and increasing their audiences.

## Our programme

Our programme has been developed in consultation and collaboration with the sector. It is flexible, responds to need and is for museums of all sizes.

SHARE supports museums to develop their skills and resilience, and we place skill-sharing and peer-to-peer learning at the heart of our programme. We aim to encourage best practice and build pride in, and awareness of, museums in the East of England.

Fifteen self-managing forums support museum development, have links to national specialists and help plan and deliver training and other initiatives.

## Our networks

Co-production Network

Conservation Network

Costume & Textile Network

Digital Development Forum

Front of House Forum

Heritage Engineering Network

Historic Buildings Network

Maritime Heritage East

Money & Medals Network

Natural History Network

Regional Learning Network

Reminiscence Network East

Retail Forum

Rural Museums East Network

Volunteer Co-ordinators Forum

# GOAL 1 Excellence

**Aim** To support the region's museums in the development of excellent collections practice in conservation, care, storage, knowledge and access.

## Highlights

Over **160** staff and volunteers attended **17** free courses that covered everything from emergency planning to documentation basics.

**SHARE** facilitated **6** collections networks and delivered specialist training, e.g. training on assessing and repacking military uniforms.

**59** delegates from across the region attended the Collections Care Conference, with a theme of *Use not Abuse*.

## Project focus

### Collections Care

We continued to deliver a high quality range of training that directly supports the Collections Care Syllabus, a downloadable guide aimed at museum staff and volunteers, developed by SHARE and the Collections Trust. As well as web-based resources, SHARE ran a range of training sessions that supported elements of the syllabus including environmental monitoring, object handling and packing. The Collections Care Conference's theme of *Use not Abuse* covered the balance of enjoying and learning from our material past and long-term preservation.

"Really interesting mix of talks that addressed the topics from a range of perspectives... Well thought out and planned, with some excellent ideas to learn from."

*Conference delegate*



## GOAL 2 Audiences

**Aim** To ensure that the region's museums are broadening their audiences, widening access to participation in their work and providing a source of inspiration to as many people as possible.



### Highlights

The Front of House Forum delivered **4** events attended by **97** people, on subjects from a warm welcome to security.

A seminar on *Working with Different Audiences* shared examples of projects with people with dementia, young offenders, homeless people, people with autism, looked after children and foster carers.

The Co-Production Network was established for museums interested in working with their audiences to co-produce and co-create exhibitions, events and more.

### Project focus

#### Mystery Shopping Scheme

We are working to raise the profile and standard of visitor services in our region's museums. The Mystery Shopping Scheme is a reciprocal programme in which participating museums undertake mystery shopping visits to each other's venues and feed back findings. SHARE co-ordinates the training, allocation of visits, data collection and feedback to participating museums.

The scheme enables participating museums to gain insights and understanding, develop front of house teams, improve visitors' experiences, learn from other museums and generate ideas and income. During 2015-16, 18 museums across the region took part, enjoying and benefitting from 102 mystery shopping visits.

**"The Mystery Shopper scheme has helped greatly to improve our customer service for our visitors by having our museums looked at objectively by 'shoppers' who are asked to comment on all aspects of their visit."**

*Mystery Shopper Scheme participant*

## GOAL 3 Resilience

**Aim** To support museums to anticipate and adapt to economic, environmental and social change by seizing opportunities, identifying and mitigating risks, and deploying resources effectively in line with their mission.



### Highlights

**SHARE** became responsible for providing the Accreditation technical advice service in the region and a new project officer joined the team as Regional Accreditation Advisor.

**19** people attended a Retail Forum training event on *Selling Skills* and *Sound Retail Practice*.

**SHARE** ran a training and networking session for Museum Mentors, museum professionals who support independent museums with Accreditation.

### Project Focus

#### Developing Forward Plans

Following widespread consultation we introduced Forward Planning grants in 2015 to give museums the flexibility to develop plans in a way that suited them best. Six organisations were awarded grants. All chose to employ experienced consultants to review their operations and provide an objective external analysis. The results have been transformational, leading to much better clarity of vision and purpose, and plans which are shared across all staff and volunteers working in the organisations.

**"... it was very useful to be guided through the procedure ... having the skills of a professional leader enabled us to produce a workable document to which everyone was able to contribute."**

*Forward Planning Grant recipient*

## GOAL 4 Leadership

**Aim** To equip museum professionals and key volunteers with the ability to perform their role effectively; develop their workforce; establish and maintain positive professional relationships; and to lead change and innovative initiatives.



### Highlights

A total of **86** courses and training opportunities were delivered by **SHARE** and our contributors to over **1,400** museum staff and volunteers in the East of England.

Our first annual region-wide Volunteer Awards scheme was developed in partnership with the University of Cambridge Museums, receiving nominations from **46** museums.

**138** sector professionals and volunteers attended the 5th annual **SHARE** conference, on the theme of advocacy and partnership.

### Project focus

#### Volunteer Awards

We launched the first SHARE Volunteer Awards for Museums in the East, in partnership with the University Museums Cambridge. Nominations were received for 87 individuals and 19 teams from 46 different museums, and 8 individuals and 1 team won awards. The winners were announced at a special celebration evening at the Athenaeum, Bury St Edmunds.

The awards recognised the immense input volunteers make to the East's museums, large and small. They highlighted how important volunteers are to museums, showcasing the range of roles they undertake, and the diversity of the people who offer their time as volunteers. In addition we used the awards to highlight best practice in both volunteering and volunteer management.

**“The awards celebration was a huge success, in no small part because of the amazing support that thousands of volunteers contribute to the Eastern region’s museums on a regular basis.”**

*Volunteer Awards Steering Group*

## GOAL 5 Children and Young People

**Aim** To support the region's museums in the development of excellent provision for children and young people and to broaden ways in which they work in partnership with them.



### Highlights

**13** training courses were run, including on *Arts Award*, *Learning from Objects*, *Making Museum Trails* and *Safeguarding in Museums*.

**5** museums in West Suffolk and Essex worked on a project to develop a cost-neutral holiday club model for museums, to be piloted over summer 2016.

**10** museums attended a day exploring the overlap of informal learning with visitor engagement, looking at how to guarantee a consistently high standard of visitor experience.

### Project focus

#### Children and Young People Conference

65 people attended our annual Children and Young People Conference, run in collaboration with the two Bridge organisations in our region (The Festival Bridge and the ROH Bridge). Entitled *Object Lessons 3 – Digital Delights and Dilemmas*, the conference addressed Coding and the Curriculum, Digital Badges, HLF and Young People, Arts Mark, Arts Award and Young Cultural Leaders. For the first time it took place at a school – Honywood School in Essex was chosen because of its digital learning specialism, and delegates also heard from some of the pupils at the conference.

**“Great theme for the conference – digital learning is very topical and relevant. The conference was very useful and thought provoking.”**

*Conference delegate*

# BEDFORDSHIRE

## County snapshot

9 Accredited museums

304,449 total visits to museums\*

£3,108,577 value of visits to museums for the economy\* \*\*



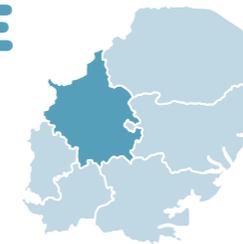
# CAMBRIDGESHIRE

## County snapshot

35 Accredited museums

1,491,429 total visits to museums\*

£30,840,294 value of visits to museums for the economy\* \*\*



## Highlights

- £18,500 Museum Development Grant.
- 12 Accredited museums and museums working towards Accreditation were supported directly by the Bedfordshire Museum Development Officer.
- Two grants were awarded in a small grants programme to support museum provision for schools for a total of £1,500.
- 7 training courses were held across Bedfordshire.
- The Bedfordshire Museums Group was developed, including the creation of a logo and a survey of members about the future direction.
- John Bunyan Museum was supported with a Collections Review project and with its basement development project, resulting in the basement opening and new storage rooms created for some of the collection.
- ROH Bridge funded a Learning Mentoring project in which 4 Bedfordshire museums were supported by the Luton Culture learning team to develop provision to schools.

## Case study

### Summer Passport Scheme

A Summer Passport scheme was developed as a pilot project with Essex County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, and Epping Forest District Museum, with £2,000 funding from SHARE. Following a reported decline in family audiences in summer months at some museums, it was developed to encourage families to visit more sites than they might usually and to visit new museums for the first time within these counties.

The aim was for participating museums to cross-promote each other for families to visit several sites, getting their passports stamped at each location and completing 'missions' to be awarded a certificate.

22 museums took part from 18 museums services across the three counties. Feedback showed the passports improved the quality of visits at participating museums and developed staff skills in engaging with visitors.

## Highlights

- £35,000 Museum Development Grant
- 20 Accredited museums and 3 museums working towards Accreditation were supported directly by the Cambridgeshire Museum Partnership Officer.
- £11,287 was awarded to support 15 museums in small grants of up to £1,000.
- £50,000 was awarded to Peterborough Museum as part of the ACE Small Scale Capital Grants scheme.
- 19 training courses were held across Cambridgeshire.
- Cromwell Museum was assisted in preparing to transition from a local authority-run museum to one managed by a new trust.
- The Cambridgeshire Museum Partnership Officer worked closely with Wisbech Museum to ensure its survival.

## Case study

### Small Grants Scheme

Small grants of up to £1,000 were awarded to 15 museums across Cambridgeshire including Ely Museum, Centre for Computing History, Ramsey Rural Museum and Whittlesey Museum. The projects could be for any aspect of the museums' operations which fitted with ACE's five goals and their own Forward Plans, but could not be used to cover core costs.

A grant was awarded to Cromwell Museum to facilitate loans from other museums, such as an exhibition from Epping Forest and objects from the Norris Museum. This helped the museum to sustain its education and outreach programme as its management was being transferred from Cambridge County Council to the Cromwell Museum Trust.

Ely Museum was also awarded two grants: to help the museum with collections conservation advice in anticipation of a redevelopment project, and to fund a project between the Museum and Littleport School, commemorating 200 years since the Littleport and Ely riots of May 1816.

# ESSEX

## County snapshot

**31 Accredited museums**

**373,375 total visits to museums\***

**£5,536,142 value of visits to museums for the economy\* \*\***



Image courtesy of Pippa Smith, Handling The Past.

## Highlights

- £25,000 Museum Development Grant.
- 29 Accredited museums and 2 museums working towards Accreditation were supported directly by the Essex Museum Development Officer.
- £27,382 was awarded to Southend Museums as part of the ACE Small Scale Capital Grants scheme.
- 11 training courses were held across Essex.
- A pilot peer mentoring scheme was developed with 14 participants recruited and matched into pairs and threes.
- Quarterly 'tweet-ups' were held featuring social media specialist Louise Winters and museum blogger Claire Madge ("Tincture of Museums") who spoke about her experiences campaigning against the closure of Bromley Museum and as Blogger-in-Residence at the RAF Museum.
- The Museum of Power was supported with a governance review, recruitment of a mentor and with the recruitment and work with two local primary schools as part of Takeover Day.

## Case study

### Digital Learning Project

A county-wide digital learning project was run with five museums, to develop new ways of engaging children and young people with collections using digital media. Participating museums could access funding of up to £500 each for the project.

For example, Essex Police Museum used iPads to recreate a historic crime-scene digitally and to enable young people to investigate. Epping Forest and Lowewood Museums ran digital training for their youth panel, who incorporated it into a temporary exhibition.

As a result of the project, the Essex Museum Development Officer has a digital equipment library for museums to use in developing and delivering learning and engagement workshops, events and projects which includes 12 iPads, 2 MaKey Makeys, a Raspberry Pi Starters Kit and littleBits Electronics Deluxe Kit.

# HERTFORDSHIRE

## County snapshot

**24 Accredited museums**

**388,883 total visits to museums\***

**£5,046,032 value of visits to museums for the economy\* \*\***



## Highlights

- £24,000 Museum Development Grant.
- 22 Accredited museums and 2 museums working towards Accreditation were supported directly by the Hertfordshire Museum Development Officer.
- £20,386 was awarded to Epping Forest and Lowewood Museums as part of the ACE Small Scale Capital Grants scheme.
- 10 training courses were held across Hertfordshire.
- 14 museums were awarded grants totalling £4,000 from a Small Grants Scheme for activity directly linked to museums' Forward Plans.
- A Collections Care Grant scheme was launched, with 8 grants totalling £7,000 awarded.
- 6 Hertfordshire museums took part in the Passport Scheme (see Bedfordshire page).
- The first *Hertfordshire Association of Museums on Tour* event was held to promote member museums at a library event, thanks to joint working with Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies.

## Case study

### Training Sessions for Curators Group

Two training sessions were held for the Hertfordshire Association of Museums Curators Group: the first on *Emergency Planning*, with attendees sharing knowledge, examining and discussing case studies and taking part in a practical session. The curator from Stevenage Museum presented lessons learned from a flood, in which torrential rain had left the museum with extensive flooding and the daunting task of drying the museum and cleaning, unpacking, drying and repackaging thousands of objects. Feedback included "*The case studies were helpful and overall the session provided an opportunity to think about an important subject out of the office and away from other distractions.*"

The second training session was in *Improving Access*, led by Vision4Growth. The day covered sight loss, the terminology of disability, training on sighted guiding techniques and case studies.

# NORFOLK

## County snapshot

**32 Accredited museums**

**537,237 total visits to museums\***

**£8,687,764 value of visits to museums for the economy\* \*\***



# SUFFOLK

## County snapshot

**35 Accredited museums**

**443,268 total visits to museums\***

**£6,534,275 value of visits to museums for the economy\* \*\***



## Highlights

- £16,000 Museum Development Grant.
- 13 Accredited museums and 2 museums working towards Accreditation were supported directly by the Norfolk Museum Development Officer.
- £34,000 was awarded to Sheringham Museum as part of the ACE Small Scale Capital Grants scheme.
- 10 training courses were held across Norfolk.
- Learning Development Grants totalling £1,100 were awarded to 4 museums for a range of activity including interactives aimed at families, illustrations and activity sheets for children.
- A summer training and networking event was attended by 21 members from 12 museums.
- The Museums Norfolk group was supported to develop its leadership role in the independent museums sector in Norfolk, in particular to improve public engagement in museums.
- Diss Museum was supported to review its governance structure and as a result has started a move towards CIO status.

## Case study

### Audio Guides

£1,700 funding and support was provided for three museums to develop low-cost sustainable audio guides to improve interpretation and visitor engagement. The Museum of the Broads created several simple audio installations around the museum which it plans to update annually; Sheringham Museum developed in-house audio systems using Raspberry Pi computers; and St Seraphim's developed an audio guide with a professional voice recording by Sheringham Little Theatre.

Sheringham Museum demonstrated some of their work at the SHARE Children & Young People Conference and their evaluation report noted:

*"The museum now has a more engaging and appealing visitor experience – the sound effects make the exhibits feel more real, rather than just being static displays. Initial visitor feedback is very positive to the new audio... This project has added a whole new dimension to the museum and has helped people understand the displays better."*

## Highlights

- £35,000 Museum Development Grant.
- 35 Accredited museums and 5 museums working towards Accreditation were supported directly by the Suffolk Museum Development Manager.
- £20,386 was awarded to Moyse's Hall as part of the ACE Small Scale Capital Grants scheme.
- 26 training courses were held across Suffolk.
- A website was developed and launched for the Association of Suffolk Museums: [www.suffolkmuseums.org](http://www.suffolkmuseums.org).
- 30 museums took part in the Summer in Suffolk Museums project, a collaborative marketing initiative which helped promote 67 family-friendly activities and events in museums over the school summer holidays. The initiative also helped support a new category in the Suffolk Museum of the Year Award – the Suffolk Family-Friendly Museum of the Year.
- A county museum education network event was attended by 25 people.

## Case study

### Suffolk Museum of the Year

The Suffolk Museum of the Year campaign was organised to raise the profile of local museums, develop stronger formal partnerships with the media and University College Suffolk, and develop the marketing awareness and skills of some museums. It launched on BBC Radio Suffolk and in the East Anglian Daily Times and members of the public were invited to nominate their favourite museum. Seven museums were shortlisted (two of them first time competition entrants) and a panel of judges then picked the winners.

The Museum of East Anglian Life won, with judges praising *"its excellent visitor experience, warm and helpful staff and exquisite Victorian walled garden."*

\*Figures from SHARE Museums East Annual Survey of Museums 2015-16 (72% response rate).

\*\*Based on The Association of Independent Museums' Economic Impact Toolkit.

## The SHARE Team 2015-16

### Museum Development Manager

ANNETTE FRENCH (April – December)

JAMIE EVERITT (from February)

### SHARE Coordinator

SIMON FLOYD

### Museum Development Project Officer

(Children & Young People and Audience Development)

KATHRYN MOORE

### Museum Development Project Officer

(Collections) and Regional Accreditation Advisor

RUTH BURWOOD (from February)

### Museum Development Assistant

LIZ ELMORE (to January)

JOSEPH HOYLE (from March)

## Contact us

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