



## **Chairman's Report 2024/25**

**AGM 6 June 2025**

This is the first year of the new arrangements for the delivery of museum development in Essex following the ending of the hosting of the Essex Museum Development Officer (MDO) post by Colchester City Council, through Colchester and Ipswich Museums, in March 2024. Despite the transfer of the Essex MDO Sarah Sinka to Museum Development South East (MDSE) close contact has been maintained with Museums Essex. As your chair, I have met regularly with Sarah and been kept up to date with developments in the county's museums.

During the last year Sarah has continued to establish links between the MDO and museums and heritage sites in Essex, having visited over 20 museums to meet staff, see the venue and provide support as needed.

I have been fortunate to be able to visit the following museums for various exhibitions and events during the year: the Fry Art Gallery, Museum of Chelmsford, Braintree Museum, the Munnings Art Museum and Frinton and Walton Museum. It has been both pleasurable and informative to see how much good work is going on in the county.

One of the key tasks of the MDO is providing advice relating to Accreditation, whether to those considering becoming Accredited museums or those in the process of submitting an Accreditation return. During the year, two members have successfully retained their Accredited Museum status; Saffron Walden Museum and the Museum of Chelmsford. Both are to be congratulated on their success. The Southend Pier Museum has submitted their Accreditation return in the last month and are waiting to be assessed.

There have been four members's meetings of Museums Essex during the year: at the Museum of Power (AGM), the Fry Art Gallery (Saffron Walden), Epping Forest District Museum and online. The charity's trustees have met on two occasions in 2024 online and in January 2025 in person at Braintree District Museum. Pauline Skerrett joined the trustees during the year.

Our membership is holding very steady and is currently at 52 organisations covering 69 sites. It is more than double the figure of five years ago.

The charity's finances continue to be in a very healthy state thanks to the prudent management of our treasurer Gordon Cummings. As a result the decision has been taken to create a Museums Essex Special Fund to which members have the opportunity to apply for financial assistance outside the normal small grants scheme in exceptional circumstances. I must add that I am very grateful to Martin Gruselle for acting as the charity's independent examiner for several years.

During the year Museums Essex funded the 'Wheels of Time' project to assess the likely take up of this initiative designed to raise awareness of local history and heritage amongst children aged 5 to 11 through earning badges by visiting museums. The scheme originally began in Kent in 2015 and is now spreading to other English counties. Nineteen Essex museums signed up to the scheme which was formally launched at an event at Brightlingsea Museum in June 2024. 'Wheels of Time'

was judged a success but there are capacity issues in continuing it into a second year and the trustees have decided to pause involvement in the scheme for now.

The Essex Museum Development newsletter was discontinued during the year but members continue to receive regular emails and social media posts from MDSE to ensure that the county's museums receive up to date information on the latest developments in the museum sector. The Museums Essex website at [museums-essex.org](http://museums-essex.org) contains sections on membership, individual members, the Small Grants Scheme, case studies and contacts. Further contributions from members are always welcome.

Museums Essex occasionally provides training sessions for members and at our March meeting we had a presentation on museum security from Stephen Armson-Smith followed by a tour of Epping Forest District Museum.

A twelfth round of the Small Grants Scheme was opened during the year with a focus on income generation, in response to a request from the membership. This resulted in the largest number of applications to the scheme that we have ever had. Grants were made to nine museums: Harwich Museum, Maldon Museum in the Park, Southend Museum, Frinton & Walton Museum, Museum of Power, Southend Pier Museum, St Osyth Museum, the Munnings Art Museum and Brightlingsea Museum. The grant programme has continued to be managed by a Sub-Committee chaired by Philip Wise (CIMS) supported by Dr Mark Curteis (ex. Museum of Chelmsford) and Dr Sarah Demelo (University of Essex) whose institutions are not eligible for grants whilst on the Sub-Committee. Museums Essex continues to believe these grants are an important benefit for its members and it is intended that a further round will be launched in the Autumn of 2025.

Just before Christmas we learnt of the Government's plans for devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, followed in February 2025 with confirmation that Greater Essex, comprising the local authority areas of Essex Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council, had been accepted into the Government's Devolution Priority Programme. Museums Essex is very concerned that the social, educational and economic benefits of museums, galleries and heritage organisations within Essex may not be considered in the creation of the successor local authorities. As a result, insufficient funding and other resources may be allocated to the provision of museum services within those new authorities. In response to this initiative, an open tender process for a consultant to undertake a survey of Essex museums was held and I am delighted to announce that Dr Harriet Foster has been appointed.

Archaeological archives continue to be a challenging topic for some member museums. Museums Essex have set up an informal archaeological network (MEAAN – Museums Essex Archaeological Archives Network), including a representative from Essex County Council's Place Services team, to share information and continue to seek a way forward. The need for a collaborative approach has become even more pressing as a result of the Government's plans for local government reorganisation in Essex.

I am very grateful to Sarah Sinka for providing administrative support to Museums Essex, including preparing the agendas, producing the minutes and technical support during our online meetings. This assistance is much appreciated and has ensured that things have run smoothly during the year.

I would also like to thank my fellow Trustees for their contribution to the work of the charity: the Vice-chair Dr Sarah Demelo, the Treasurer Gordon Cummings, Rob Sharp, Pauline Skerritt, Polly Redman and Dr Mark Curteis.

Looking ahead to the coming year, Museums Essex aims to continue to support and develop membership benefits through an affordable fee based on income; support museum development in Essex, including working in close collaboration with the MDSE team and the Essex MDO; provide

advocacy for the heritage sector of Essex in partnership with MDSE; provide a Small Grants Scheme; enable free membership of the Harwell Disaster Recovery Service for small and medium-sized museums; create opportunities for networking and provide Inspirational case studies of museum development at our meetings, whether virtual or at member museums.

Finally, I am standing down as your Chair at this AGM. I have been involved with Museums Essex and its predecessors, the Essex Museum Workers Group (EMWG) and the Museums in Essex Committee (MIEC), for well over twenty-five years. Indeed one of the very first things that I did when arriving in Essex in September 1998 was to attend a meeting of EMWG at Braintree Town Hall. Over the years I have been very fortunate to work alongside many excellent museum colleagues on committees and visit most, but not quite all, of the museums in the county. It has been a very rewarding and stimulating experience and has contributed very greatly to the enjoyment that I have had whilst working at Colchester. However, the time has now come for me to move on as I prepare to retire from professional work and I am delighted that Polly Redman has agreed to be nominated as my successor. I am confident that Polly will be an excellent chair and I know that you will support her in the same splendid way that you have supported me.

Philip J Wise MA (Cantab) FSA MCIfA AMA  
Chair: Museums Essex

Museums Essex is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registration number: 1152493



CHARITY COMMISSION  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

MUSEUMS ESSEX

1152493

## Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period  
from

1st April 2024  
01/04/2024

To

31st March 2025  
31/03/2025

### Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
<b>A1 Receipts</b>					
Subscriptions	5,895	-	-	5,895	4,410
Interest	3,107	-	-	3,107	1,979
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</b>	<b>9,002</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9,002</b>	<b>6,389</b>
<b>A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total receipts</b>	<b>9,002</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>9,002</b>	<b>6,389</b>
<b>A3 Payments</b>					
AIM Conference	-	-	-	-	338
Harwell Recovery	2,030	-	-	2,030	1,980
Meetings	79	-	-	79	28
Postage	65	-	-	65	54
Website costs	61	-	-	61	167
Small Grants Round 10	-	-	-	-	1,326
Small Grants Round 11	-	3,417	-	3,417	2,200
Wheels of Time Project	-	-	-	-	432
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>2,235</b>	<b>3,417</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,652</b>	<b>6,525</b>
<b>A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)</b>					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Sub total</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Total payments</b>	<b>2,235</b>	<b>3,417</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,652</b>	<b>6,525</b>
<b>Net of receipts/(payments)</b>	<b>6,767</b>	<b>- 3,417</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,350</b>	<b>- 136</b>
<b>A5 Transfers between funds</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>A6 Cash funds last year end</b>	<b>60,746</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>60,746</b>	<b>60,882</b>
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>67,513</b>	<b>- 3,417</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>64,096</b>	<b>60,746</b>

## Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B1 Cash funds</b>	Co-op Bank Current Account	4,096		
	Hampshire Trust Bank Easy Access a/c	5,000		-
	Hampshire Trust Bank Fixed Deposit	55,000		
	<b>Total cash funds</b>	<b>64,096</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	Agreement Error	Agreement Error	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
<b>B2 Other monetary assets</b>	Details			
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
<b>B3 Investment assets</b>	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
<b>B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use</b>	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
<b>B5 Liabilities</b>	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	