

Wessex Museums Trust (charity number 1171104)
Trustees Report
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

Administration

Charity name	Wessex Museums Trust
Registration number	1171104
Principal address	Poole Museum 4 High Street Poole Dorset BH15 1BW
Names of charity trustees:	Julia Findlater (resigned September 2021) Glyn Coy David Dawson Adrian Green Dr Jonathan Murden (resigned March 2022) Elizabeth Selby (appointed March 2022) Gillian Smith Michael Spender Susan Wills (appointed March 2022)
Partnership manager	Kristina Broughton
Accountants	Albert Goodman LLP Goodwood House Blackbrook Park Avenue Taunton Somerset TA1 2PX

Structure, governance and management

The Wessex Museums Trust is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered with the Charity Commission in January 2017 (No. 1171104). The Trust is governed by its constitution last updated in January 2017.

The Wessex Museums Trust Board consists of four nominated and three appointed trustees. The four nominated trustees are appointed, one each, by the four appointing bodies (Poole Museums – BCP Council, Dorset Museum, Salisbury Museum, Wiltshire Museum). Nominated trustees are appointed for a three year term. The three appointed trustees are independent and selected on the basis of the skills, knowledge and experience they can bring to the effective administration of the Trust Board. The three appointed by the trustees serve for a term of three years.

Trustees are elected at a meeting of the Trustee Board, usually the AGM.

The trustees may serve for up to three consecutive terms.

The charity trustees are responsible for managing the affairs of the CIO. They also oversee the management and delivery of the Wessex Museums Partnership's National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) programme funded by Arts Council England (ACE). Currently the funding agreement for the NPO is between Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council (BCP Council) and ACE, as the Wessex Museums Trust was not yet constituted as a legal entity at the time the NPO grant application was awarded. However BCP Council has given the Wessex Museums Trust delegated authority for the management of the grant funding and programme, through a legal partnership agreement. It is the Trust's ambition to novate the NPO grant from BCP Council to the charity in 2022-23.

The day-to-day operations of the Trust are managed by the Partnership Manager and a team of two further central staff members who work across the consortium: a Fundraising & Development Manager and a Marketing & Digital Officer. All three posts are funded by the consortium's NPO grant, which as described above, is held by Poole Museums – BCP Council. As a result, the three staff members are currently employed by BCP Council, but work on behalf of the Wessex Museums Trust.

The Wessex Museums Trust Board meets quarterly. The Board invites an 'observer trustee' from the meeting host partner museum to ensure engagement with the partner museums' boards. The minutes of the Wessex Museums Trust Board meetings are also distributed to and form a regular agenda item on the boards of each of the partner museums.

Trustees give their time freely and receive no remuneration or financial benefits.

The Wessex Museums Partnership maintains a risk register in respect of delivery of its NPO programme and the charity's affairs. This includes organisational risks in respect of the Wessex Museums Trust as the governance and management body of the NPO. The risk register is reviewed at every Board meeting.

Objectives and activities

The objects of the Wessex Museums Trust are set out in its constitution and are summarised as follows:

- To support for the benefit of the public the building, establishment and maintenance of accredited museums in Dorset and Wiltshire, their artefacts, art, specimens, documents and other associated material, including the collection, storage, research and conservation of all such material; and
- to advance the education of the public (in particular but without limitation to those living in Dorset and Wiltshire and those geographic, ethnic, disabled and other communities who do not traditionally attend museums) in particular (but not limited to) by providing information about the history, heritage and culture of Dorset and Wiltshire and support to the provision and improvement of the facilities, collections, exhibitions, formal and informal learning opportunities, public events and other educational activities, including in digital form, available to the public in museums in Dorset and Wiltshire and within the communities of Dorset and Wiltshire and across the internet.

The Wessex Museums Trust is a thriving partnership of the four leading museums across the counties of Dorset and Wiltshire: Poole Museums Service, Dorset Museum, Salisbury Museum and Wiltshire Museum.

Wessex Museums exists to build the resilience and relevance of the museums in our partnership and others across the region. Our mission is to support museums to connect, inspire and add value to people's lives.

Achievements and performance

The achievement and performance of the Wessex Museums Trust are set out in our Annual Impact Report for 2021/22 (Appendix A).

Financial review

During the year the charity generated income of £97,625 from a combination of grants, sponsorship, donations and sale of merchandise. Against this there were costs for the operation of the charity, as well as programme and project delivery costs. The surplus in the year of £19,129 included £18,724 of restricted funding and £405 of unrestricted funding, leaving closing reserves at the year end of £6,898 unrestricted funds (2021 - £6,493) and £53,569 of restricted funds (2021 - £34,845).

Reserves policy

The Trustees consider, in line with the Charity Commission advice, that the Trust should have unrestricted reserves equivalent to at least one year's core costs. The Wessex Museums Trust currently has no staff, buildings or other assets, as these are provided for by the partner museums. Therefore there are currently no specific core costs for the charity. As such at present it is not necessary for the charity to retain reserves. However the Trustees will actively seek to build up an appropriate level of reserves as the funding for the charity continues to diversify and grow.

The reserves policy for the Wessex Museums Trust will be reviewed annually and/or at such time as the circumstances in relation to the charity's assets/core costs changes, and revised accordingly in line with the Charity Commission advice.

Declaration

This Trustees report for the Wessex Museums Trust for the year ended 31 March 2022 was approved by the trustees on 18 October 2022 and signed on their behalf by:

Glyn Coy

Wessex Museums Trust

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees
For the Year Ended 31 March 2022

**Independent examiners report to the Trustees of Wessex Museums Trust**

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts for Wessex Museums Trust ("the charity") for the year ended 31 March 2022

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the charity you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the 2011 Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

1. accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the 2011 Act; or
2. the accounts do not comply with these records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Michelle Ferris BSc (Hons) FCA DChA

Albert Goodman LLP
Chartered Accountants
Goodwood House
Blackbrook Park Avenue
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 2PX

Date: 27 October 2022



CHARITY COMMISSION
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Wessex Museums Trust

1171104

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

01/04/2021

To

31/03/2022

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 £
A1 Receipts					
NPO Grant	-	51,700	-	51,700	12,600
Donations	405	23,060	-	23,465	402
Sponsorship	-	-	-	-	2,000
NLHF Grant	-	-	-	-	41,550
Sale of Merchandise	-	-	-	-	86
Art Fund income	-	22,460	-	22,460	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	405	97,220	-	97,625	56,638
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	405	97,220	-	97,625	56,638
A3 Payments					
Accountancy	-	1,164	-	1,164	384
Insurance	-	460	-	460	396
Professional fees	-	1,722	-	1,722	1,722
Salary/ contractor costs	-	54,805	-	54,805	18,785
Project Costs	-	216	-	216	420
Training Course refund	-	-	-	-	35
Wildlife in Red event speaker	-	-	-	-	100
Hardy exhibition	-	3,635	-	3,635	-
Research	-	2,000	-	2,000	-
Subscription	-	280	-	280	-
Fundraising regulator	-	50	-	50	-
Climate Emergency	-	4,329	-	4,329	-
Training	-	1,728	-	1,728	-
Evaluation	-	8,107	-	8,107	-
Sub total	-	78,496	-	78,496	21,772
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	-	78,496	-	78,496	21,772
Net of receipts/(payments)	405	18,724	-	19,129	34,866
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	6,493	34,845	-	41,338	6,472
Cash funds this year end	6,898	53,569	-	60,467	41,338

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 £
B1 Cash funds	Barclays	6,898	53,569	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
	Total cash funds	6,898	53,569	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	Details	-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
		-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
			-	-
B5 Liabilities	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
	Accountancy fees	Unrestricted	960	
			-	
			-	
			-	
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval	
	G Coy	Glyn Coy	18/10/2022	



Impact Report

2021-2022

Introduction to Wessex Museums

Wessex Museums is a thriving partnership of museums across Dorset and Wiltshire – Dorset Museum, Poole Museum, The Salisbury Museum and Wiltshire Museum.

We believe that by working together we can...

- Strengthen the cultural offer of our museums and our region.
- Push out of our comfort zones to do things in new ways.
- Share important stories from across our region from a range of perspectives.
- Share and learn from successes and mistakes, build relationships, and enhance our reputation with partners and stakeholders.
- Increase our organisational resilience.

Our charity, the Wessex Museums Trust (WMT), exists to build the resilience and relevance of the museums in our partnership and across the region.

Our mission is...

To support museums to **connect, inspire** and **add value** to people's lives.

Our vision is...

Museums thriving through collaboration.

A Message from our Co-Chairs

Gill Donnell & Glyn Coy

As our world returned to a new normal, Wessex Museums Trust (WMT) has continued to take advantage of the new opportunities that the pandemic forced upon so many of us.

Many of these have been digital, allowing us to broaden and increase our skills in providing online content, with engaging online talks on the climate emergency as well as natural history objects, building upon the related exhibitions *My World My Future* and *Wildlife in the Red*.

We have been ably assisted by two MA student placements to strengthen our digital reach, resulting in a considerable rise in our social media engagement as well as development of our first podcast series on Thomas Hardy, the subject of our 2022/23 partnership wide exhibition. As a result, our online content is enabling us to reach new and global audiences and providing an additional income stream for the partnership.

Financially, WMT has had its most successful year yet, raising more than £87k, including over £5k through our first Crowdfunder campaign, proving our ability to fundraise for our important collaborative programmes across the partnership.

The hard work of the WMT Team comes to fruition later this year with the exciting, collaborative exhibition and engagement programme for our exhibition across all four partner museums, *Hardy's Wessex: the landscapes that inspired a writer*. Additionally, embedding our excellent EDI and Environmental Responsibility frameworks across our organisations remains a priority.

As a Board we are committed to ensuring that, in the coming year, we can take steps to bring our whole staff team into an independent, viable organisation, which will continue to find ways to extend our partnership, to support and collaborate with more museums across our region, and to co-create with underserved audiences.

Reflections from our Partnership Manager,

Kristina Broughton

In many ways, 2021/22 was a year about getting back on track, both for our partner museums, who cautiously reopened post pandemic, and for the delivery of our Wessex Museums collaborative programme. We've all had to adjust for the 'new normal' but positively this has led to innovation, collaboration, and a renewed sense of purpose for the Wessex Museums partnership.

We started the year with a review and realignment of our priorities to better support our partner museums during these times of continuing uncertainty. These included more purposeful work in the areas of EDI, decolonisation, and environmental responsibility. The early results of this work can already be seen in the *My World My Future* project where underserved young people took the lead to talk about the climate emergency in their local areas, through our collections and museums.

2021/22 was also a year of 'firsts' for the partnership including a podcast series, a successful *Crowdfunder* campaign, a curatorial collaboration with hundreds of university students and our first attempt at Instagram Live. Clearly, innovation and collaboration remain at the heart of what Wessex Museums does.

It has certainly been a year of intense work for the partnership, bringing our ambitious partnership exhibition, *Hardy's Wessex*, to fruition, and keeping a firm eye on our future as a partnership and an NPO. We look forward to sharing the outcomes of this work in our impact report next year.

2021/22 Key Achievements



Professional mentoring provided
to support decolonisation
practice in our partner museums



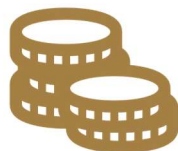
Launch of our new
strategic plan and EDI
framework



Contemporary collecting project
and co-curated exhibition with
underserved young people,
My World My Future



First ever crowdfunding
campaign exceeds target.



Over £87k of funding raised to
support the Wessex Museums



Partnership's first podcast
series created -
Interrogating Hardy



25 senior leaders and
trustees attended the EDI
training series.

Our Funding & Income

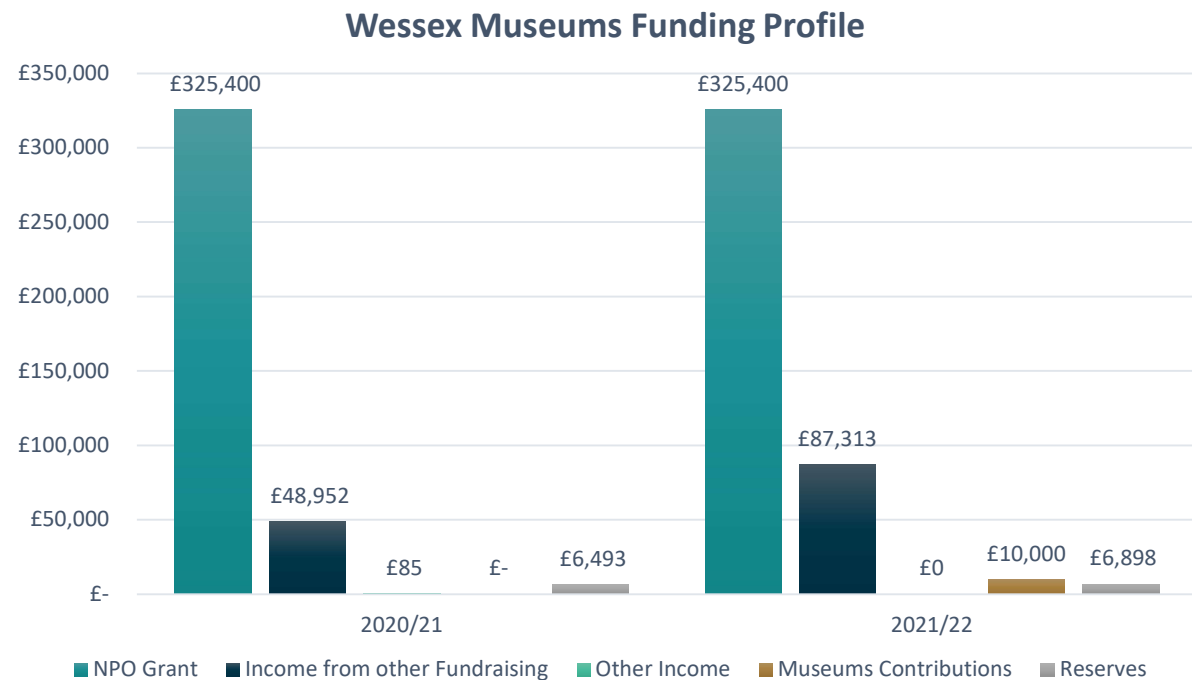
Wessex Museums continues to operate a mixed financial management structure at present, whereby the partnership's funding and income is managed across two organisations:

Bournemouth Christchurch & Poole (BCP) Council holds the funding agreement with Arts Council England (ACE) for the partnership's National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) grant. Wessex Museums Trust (WMT) holds the partnership's reserves and funding raised by the charity.

In 2021/22, the partnership's turnover (excluding match funding and in-kind support) across both organisations was:

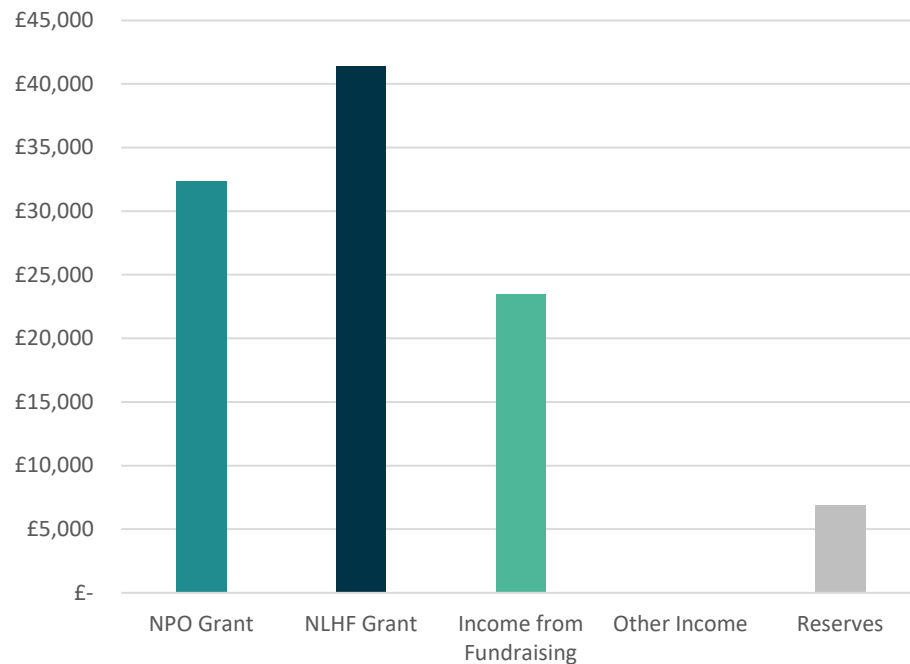
£429,611

This is a **13%** increase from the previous financial year, largely as a result of successful fundraising for the *Hardy's Wessex* exhibition and the reintroduction of partner museums' contributions to the partnership.

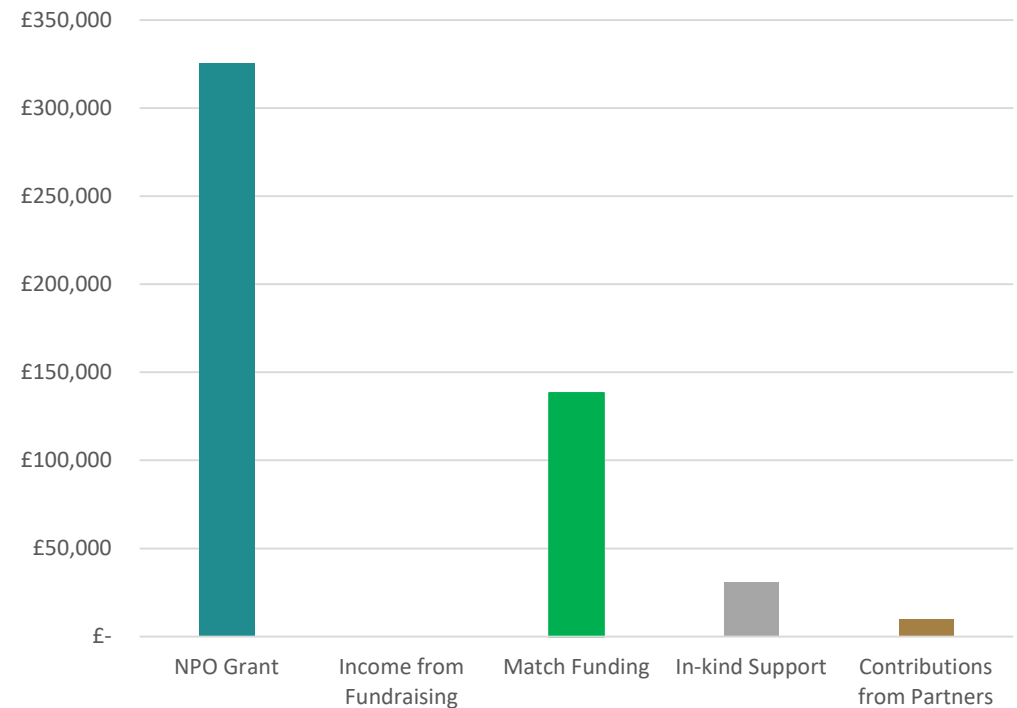


The **NPO grant made up around 76% of the partnership's income**, a reduction as compared to 87% in 2020/21. In 2021/22, **Wessex Museums Trust raised more than £87k** for the *Hardy's Wessex* exhibition. This demonstrates the charity's ability to fundraise for the collaborative programme and thus diversify the partnership's funding profile. WMT fundraising has significantly increased match funding for the partnership's NPO programme of activity during 2021/22, helping to ensure that the partnership's collaborative programme is fully funded.

Wessex Museums Trust Funding Profile 2021/22



Wessex Museums NPO Funding Profile 2021/22



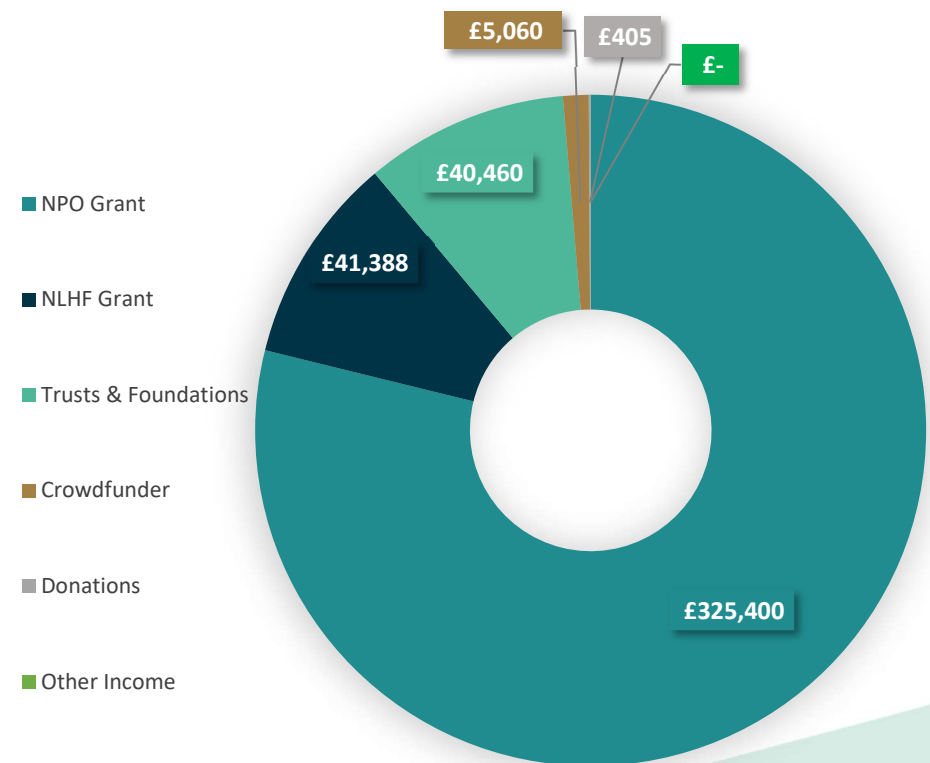
Summary of Fundraising & Income Generation for the Year

During 2021/22, Wessex Museums achieved more than **£87k in fundraising** from a variety of sources, including sponsorship, a Crowdfunder campaign and public donations. This represents a **56% increase in fundraising income** from the previous financial year.

Sources of income from fundraising have included:

- Over **£400** in public donations from our *Wildlife in the Red* online lectures.
- More than **£40,000** raised through **Trusts & Foundations** in support of the *Hardy's Wessex* exhibition and public engagement programme.
- Over **£5000** raised through WMT's first successful **Crowdfunder campaign** for the *Hardy's Wessex* exhibition.

Wessex Museums Income 2021-22



Delivering our Strategic Plan

In May 2021 we formally launched our new Strategic Plan for Wessex Museums.

As set out in last year's Impact Report, the events of 2020 led WMT to reconsider our partnership priorities, starting with our mission and values, through to the activity we deliver through our collaborative programme. Alongside this, Arts Council England published its new 10-year strategy, *Let's Create*, which aligned with our emerging strategic thinking. In response, WMT undertook a complete overhaul of our strategic plan in recognition of the crucial role of museums in collecting, interpreting, and engaging people in these extraordinary times, as well as rebuilding the cultural fabric of society in our region as we emerge into a post-pandemic world.

Our new strategic plan for the period 2021-23 has a sharper focus on:

- Engaging underserved audiences in our local areas.
- Improving access to our world-class collections.
- Delivering excellence through our partnership programming.
- Developing digital content that supports different models of engagement and income generation.
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) and environmental sustainability.
- Workforce development.
- Building an evidence base for the impact of our work as a partnership.



Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

As part of our new Strategic Plan, in 2021, Wessex Museums also committed to a new intersectional EDI framework which moves us and our partners to take stronger, practical action to dismantle prejudice and discrimination in our organisations.

Aligned to the framework, Wessex Museums has developed and published its EDI action plan.

Key achievements against our Wessex Museums EDI action plan for the year:

- EDI training based on lived experience of racism and discrimination delivered online to senior leaders and trustees across the partnership.
- History of Inequality training provided to learning and engagement staff in the partner museums.
- EDI training audit completed and will be used to inform on-going EDI training programme.
- Diversity Champions from the partner museums were fully integrated into the Diversity Working Group.
- Diversity Working Group now includes a representative from an underserved community.
- Decolonisation mentoring programme delivered with our partner museums to support them to undertake small pilot projects to begin their decolonisation practice.
- Access & Inclusion Advisor, herself disabled, appointed to support the museums with work placements for disabled young people as part of the Bridging the Gap programme.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION FRAMEWORK

OUR OVERARCHING AIM

To **dismantle** prejudice and discrimination in our organisations

OUR COMMITMENTS



Connecting with Communities

The establishment of the Learning and Engagement Exchange network (LEX) across the partner museums has focussed on building confidence and skills for engagement and co-production work with underserved communities.

Museum colleagues have participated in a range of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training sessions led by the Wessex Engagement Lead and specialist trainers. A key focus during this period has been on developing skills and knowledge in collecting and interpreting data, and gathering outcomes-linked evidence for our community engagement work. Working closely with an external evaluator, we co-produced an Evaluation Framework that sets out six outcomes from which to measure the impact of our work. Other CPD sessions have focused on embedding EDI into our practice, understanding the needs of disabled audiences and a greater awareness of working with young people who have behavioural problems.

Throughout the pandemic, community curators continued to engage with other underserved community groups to develop meaningful and co-created programmes. Projects included an intergenerational oral history project, pottery workshops with women from refugee backgrounds and workshops exploring how adults with learning disabilities coped with isolation and loneliness during lockdown. Each project and its outcomes were exhibited in community spaces in the museums.

Create & Collect for Climate Change

From this basis, we set out to identify, consult and work with underserved audiences as identified in our delivery plan. The *Create and Collect for Climate Change* project was a co-created project and exhibition led by young people across the four museums. It platformed the voices of diverse young people across Dorset and Wiltshire about the greatest challenge facing their generation - the climate emergency. Using an intersectional approach, participants were recruited from a broad range of backgrounds via local networks and social media groups, including uniformed Scout and Girlguiding groups, young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and through social media sites such as Facebook.

A key outcome of this project was to ensure that children and young people felt they could contribute to the work of museums. To this end, objects and creative responses were chosen to be accessioned into each museum's permanent collection as part of a contemporary collecting initiative and were showcased in a display in each museum. Poole and Dorset Museums also engaged the young people in the *Kids in Museum Takeover Day* on the theme of the Climate Emergency.

Key Achievements:

- Evaluation Framework developed with six clear outcomes and guidance for LEX colleagues to review impact of museum work with underserved audiences.
- Over **40** young people, many from underserved backgrounds who are new to museums, participated in the *Create & Collect for Climate Change* project.
- Museum learning transitioned into spaces where children and young people spent time with each other, such as green spaces in their neighbourhoods.

Building Resilience

Novation

Novation has been a long-term ambition of WMT. With support and advocacy from BCP Council, WMT has agreed an outline position on novation with the Council which will enable the transfer of the current NPO funding agreement and NPO funded staff to Wessex Museums during the financial year 2022/23, subject to ACE approval. Novation will enable WMT to continue to grow and thrive as an independent organisation and provide greater equity for the museums in the partnership.

Environmental Sustainability

In 2021/22 the partnership formed an Environmental Responsibility Working Group to lead a full review of our approach to environmental sustainability across all areas of our work, drawing on best practice from the sector, the government, and the UN. The result was a new Environmental Responsibility Framework for Wessex Museums, which was adopted in March 2022.

Wessex Museums Environmental Responsibility framework is a strategic document that sets the ambition for the partnership and provides a framework through which each partner museum can develop an action plan for their organisation.

The framework is based on the three areas where we believe we can have most impact:

- **People (our organisations)**
- **Place (our local area)**
- **Programme (our communities)**

The framework acknowledges the global issues resulting from the climate crisis and seeks to join regional efforts to achieve Net Carbon Zero. It is also pragmatic and acknowledges that small changes in all areas of our work will make an accumulative

difference. As a result, it advocates that all members of our organisations should be given the opportunity to respond to the climate emergency within their own area of work.

Key to delivery of the framework is training in carbon literacy, which will begin in 2022/23. To support this, the framework advocates for the adoption of the Carbon Literacy Toolkit for Museums developed between Arts Council England and The Carbon Literacy Project. Training, certification, and accreditation to this scheme will provide a useful measure of our impact.

Digital

Our digital exhibitions and the partnership-wide Thomas Hardy exhibition gave us the opportunity to extend and experiment with our digital outputs, helping to diversify our audiences, extend our reach and encourage museum visits, as well as explore new business models for generating income. Alongside this we were able to provide placements for two MA students.

- Created the Hardy exhibition webpages (travel trade and general public) and the Hardy events calendar. over **1k** unique page views from launch to end March 2022.
- Delivered our first Crowdfunder campaign, engaging high profile patrons and generating extensive media coverage.
- Set up subscriber e-newsletters on Mailchimp platform. Internal and external versions with **1039** subscribers in total.
- Researched the concept, technology, and production process for the 'Interrogating Hardy' podcast series (released May 2022)
- Devised our first cross-partnership social media plan (Thomas Hardy exhibition).
- Recruited and mentored two MA placement students, one for the Hardy podcast series and one as digital marketing assistant. One has already led to a full-time paid position in the sector.
- Digital activities resulted in a substantial increase in our followers on social media (Twitter + 420, Instagram + 200 and Facebook +277).

Our Programming

Thomas Hardy Exhibition

In 2021/22 our partnership-wide exhibition, *Hardy's Wessex: the landscapes that inspired a writer*, came to fruition after a year's delay due to the pandemic. The exhibition is supported by a programme of talks, podcasts, workshops, and family activities.

The exhibition explores how the Wessex landscapes inspired the author Thomas Hardy. It spans the four venues, each exhibition focussing on a different social theme, from animal welfare to women's equality.

The project enabled over 200 objects to be displayed to the public, 100 of which were part of the UNESCO Memory of the World registered Thomas Hardy Memorial Collection. 135 of these objects were on display to the public for the first time, including the earliest known depiction of Hardy with his mother Jemima and several key letters concerning Hardy's burial and death, which were acquired during lockdown.

Key Achievements:

- Assessment and conservation of **31** exhibition objects, plus specialist conservation cleaning of a further **12**
- Organised **4** major loans from national museums, with support from the Weston Loans programme.
- Creation of **9** Hardy walks with the Thomas Hardy Society, Ramblers and local youth groups.
- Collaboration with Arts University Bournemouth to engage over **120** young people in co-creation of exhibition elements.
- Distribution of **1000** 'Wessex Words' booklets, to encourage reading of Hardy across local libraries
- Satellite exhibitions in **8** smaller venues across the Wessex region.
- Exhibition guidebook - '*Hardy's Wessex*' - authored by the exhibition curator.
- Online talks programme developed for release over the summer.

My World My Future

My World My Future is a digital exhibition, launched in March 2022. It showcases the voices and creative responses of underserved young people in Dorset and Wiltshire through engagement work carried out with our four partner museums on a project called *Create and Collect for Climate Change*. It expresses their concerns on environmental issues and the climate emergency and focuses on their ideas for positive action to mitigate the impact of climate change.

Key Achievements:

- Webpages attracted **255** unique page views
- 2 online talks, attended by 52 people live, and 51 on YouTube.
- Working together with Students Organising for Sustainability, we hosted our first Instagram Live talk.
- Produced 9 related YouTube videos, attracting **418** unique page views.

Wildlife in the Red

Following the launch of the *Wildlife in the Red* exhibition in October 2022, we devised a programme of online talks, enabling us to reach out to new and global audiences. These talks contributed to a considerable rise in social media engagement across all our platforms and provided a welcome income stream in the form of donations, for the Wessex Museums Trust.

Key Achievements:

- Total of **662** people attended nine online talks
- Almost **2k** unique page views on the *Wildlife in the Red* webpages: 830 on homepage, and 1074 on booking page
- **17** videos uploaded to YouTube, with **1.4k** views

Our Collections & Interpretation

Contemporary Collecting

Linked to our *Connecting with Communities* workstream, during 2021/22 the museums engaged with communities of young people in a contemporary collecting project on the theme of climate change - *Create and Collect for Climate Change* project (see p.10). Working with young people from underserved communities, the museums accessioned items into their collection relating to the theme around climate change important to the young people they worked with. *Create and Collection for Climate Change* culminated in small temporary displays in each partner museum, an online exhibition *My World My Future* (see p.15) and a series of short films, to platform the project and the voices of young people in and beyond our museums on this important issue of our times.

Decolonisation

During 2021, our partner museums had professional mentoring to begin the practice of decolonising their collections and interpretation. Working on a display and/or objects from their collections, or examining their founders, the museums put decolonisation into practice through defined pilot projects. The pilot projects will conclude in 2022/23, but the museums are committed to embedding decolonisation into their general practice. A decolonisation working group will be formed for the partnership and led by the Collections Manager funded by Wessex Museums. Colleagues will be undertaking further training and development to support decolonisation work, including it is hoped, through the Museums Association's decolonisation confidence & skills programme.

Virtual Collections

Across our museums, we have almost **500,000 objects catalogued** and have **exceeded our target of 100,000 digital images**. We continue to get more of our collections online, creating a Virtual Wessex Museums Collection, enabling us to share our collections, promote research and develop innovative exhibition programming.

Wessex Museums is poised to **procure an open-source system to enable cross-searching and display of data from the collections management systems of the four Wessex Museums partners**. This is supported by funding from Arts Council England (ACE). The intention is to export data from the museum collections management systems into a data repository, to create interfaces to enable search and presentation of object records and to use those object records to create online exhibitions.

The Virtual Collection was planned in the context of FAIR principles, the AHRC Towards a National Collection initiative and the work of the Collections Trust. As these initiatives come to fruition, it is intended that the open-source tools developed through this procurement can be adopted by a wide range of museums to reduce the barriers in enabling online access to collections. This procurement will be managed by Wiltshire Museum, in partnership with the Wessex Museums Trust during 2022/23.

Looking Ahead

2022/23 will start with the long-awaited launch of the partnership's most ambitious collaborative project to date, *Hardy's Wessex*, and conclude with Wessex Museums Trust as a fully-fledged organisation.

The partnership is entering a new and exciting phase and Wessex Museums' plans will continue to support the relevance and sustainability of our partners, particularly as we embed the EDI and Environmental Responsibility frameworks across our organisations. Evaluation and advocacy will also be focal points in 2022/23, as we reflect on our achievements over the past five years as an NPO and we hope, begin planning in earnest for another three years of NPO investment.

Our plans for 2022/23 include...

- **Hardy's Wessex** - delivery of the partnership's ambitious, 4-venue exhibition and associated public engagement programme, running from end May to end October 2022. We will be developing plans to tour the exhibition to venues beyond the Wessex partnership.
- **Work placements for disabled young people** in our partner museums, encouraging young people who face particular barriers to undertake meaningful work matched to their interests and gain professional experience in our museum spaces.
- **Evaluation Framework for Bridging the Gap** - a common approach for evaluating the impact of work with communities of young people, sharing common evaluation data and promoting peer-to-peer learning across the partnership.
- **EDI Training with linked video tutorials** for staff and volunteers across the partnership, with a focus on lived experience.
- **Environmental Responsibility Framework** - We will embed our new Environmental Responsibility framework across our organisations, undertake Carbon Literacy training and put in place organisational action plans to help us meaningfully reduce our impact on the environment.
- **Virtual Wessex Collections** - We will create an online, searchable database of our museums' collections and open-source tools that are freely available to other museums.
- **Digital Learning Platform** - Launch an online suite of learning resources for KS3 and with a focus on STEAM (Science, Technology, Arts, Engineering and Maths).
- **Advocacy events** including a Learning Showcase, a regional conference, and presentations and events with regional and national sector organisations.
- **Securing NPO funding for 2023-26** with WMT as the funded organisation and **extending our partnership** to collaborate with more museums.
- Developing Board succession plans and **sustainable governance** for WMT.
- Bringing our **staff team into the employment of WMT**.

Wessex Museums

Sharing • Collaborating • Enhancing



wessexmuseums.org.uk



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Impact Report 2020/21