

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

STRATEGY TO 2012

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Executive summary

Background

The British Museum has just completed one of the most successful years in its history. This was a consequence not only of the hugely successful *The First Emperor* exhibition, but also the growing benefits of work in recent years to focus activities, improve operations and build international engagement. The Museum's reputation is high, and its plans ambitious, as it enters a challenging but highly exciting new chapter in its development. The financial position is sound and confidence high, which underpins an aspirational strategic plan for the years to 2012.

The external environment has changed. Economic conditions in the UK and the USA are deteriorating. Lower economic growth and inflationary pressures will not be helpful to fundraising or cost control. The strain on public finances may influence decisions on government funding beyond 2010. Against this the Museum may become more attractive to locals and tourists whose discretionary spending is reduced. Also, there will be new opportunities for funding from Asia and the Middle East.

The British Museum can now credibly set higher aspirations for the next five years. It must flourish internationally to function effectively locally. Developing a more diverse and sustainable revenue stream will be essential to reduce overdependence on government funding. Investment will be required to build the world's leading museum in the digital and online world. Greater freedom to manage our affairs will be essential but this will only come if the Museum becomes financially more self-reliant and if its international role is acknowledged and supported. In the period to 2012 the British Museum has the opportunity to become firmly established as the best museum in the world. The strategic priorities set out here are consistent with that ambition.

A museum of the world for the world

The British Museum was founded as a national institution with an international frame of reference. Two and a half centuries later it is one of the few and perhaps the only single collection in the world where the history of mankind can be told through material culture over a span of two million years; where the nature of objects may be investigated and understood from many different perspectives; and where connections with the past may illuminate the present and show the potential of the future.

The Museum is:

- The greatest collection representative of human cultural achievement, ancient and modern, in the world.
- A space 'not only for the 'learned and curious' but also 'for the benefit of the general public' – a centre of research and inquiry at all levels.
- A collection preserved and held for the benefit of all the world, present and future, free of charge.

- A forum for the expression of many different cultural perspectives.
- A place to increase understanding of the cultural connections and influences linking Britain and the world.
- A place where the UK's diverse population can explore its common inheritances.

Strategic Direction

In order to ensure that it continues to be successful the Museum has re-evaluated its five-year plan to take account of factors such as the development of ideas regarding the Cultural Olympiad; a new funding agreement; and the decision to develop the north-west area of the Museum. The Museum has identified four key objectives that it will need to deliver in the next five years to further develop its world-class status:

- **To manage and research the collection more effectively**

The Museum will improve the documentation of the collections through the Merlin Plan and Collections Online, building to 1m images and 2m records online from 2011. It will enhance its storage of the collections by seeking to ensure that 85% of collection storage space is of a very high standard by 2012, building to 100% within ten years.

- **To enhance access to the collection**

The Museum will develop the capacity to accommodate 6m visits per annum and deliver improvements to the visitor experience; the Museum in Britain programme will develop five key partnerships; and the international programme will provide opportunities for people in Africa, East Asia, India, and the Middle East to share skills and build capacity.

- **To invest in our people**

The Museum will deliver an integrated human resources approach that links career review to training and development, to succession planning and talent management.

- **To increase self-generated income**

The Museum will increase self-generated income from £13.8m to at least £24m by 2012 through growth from exhibition, retail, hospitality, international touring exhibitions, Membership, and fundraising programmes.

These are ambitious objectives and the Strategy to 2012 sets out how, in four key areas, the Museum will meet them. Each Strategic Area has clearly defined measures of success and programmes that will deliver the objectives.

In addition, the Strategy details two projects that are essential in meeting the objectives:

North West Development

This project is of fundamental importance in delivering the Museum's four objectives. The project will address inadequacies in space for special exhibitions, conservation and science, logistics and collections storage.

A History of the World

The Museum is developing a programme of which the central spine will be *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, 100 15-minute episodes, based on the British Museum's collection, to be broadcast on BBC Radio 4. In turn this will be the platform for a nationwide distributed programme of activity working with partner museums across the UK. Beyond the initial broadcast the British Museum and a number of other museums will present in 2012 substantial 'histories of the world' as exhibitions from their own collections.

Collection

‘Researched, documented, housed and conserved to the highest standard for the benefit of all’

Significant progress has been made in recent years to ensure that the opportunity for engagement with the collections is maximised, in particular through research and public display. However, there are aspects of collection activity that require greater investment and focus.

Priorities

Conservation

The preservation of the collection for future generations is the Museum’s primary statutory duty. The work of the Conservation and Scientific Research Department is therefore of critical importance. The department is internationally recognised for its ground-breaking work, which brings new knowledge and creates new techniques which are shared with museums throughout the world to help them preserve their objects. However, the Museum’s existing facilities have not been upgraded for ten years and fall well below standard; they are neither operationally nor financially efficient and the poor facilities and working conditions are the cause of high staff turnover. The North West Development Project includes plans for an International Conservation and Science Centre to open in 2012. The Centre will bring together in modern laboratories the conservation studios, workshops and offices of the Conservation and Scientific Research Department, consolidating the leading international position of the Museum. It will enable improvements in the following areas:

- **Preservation of the collection**

The combination of new storage areas and improved science and conservation facilities will reduce the rate of decay in the collection to below the rate at which objects can be restored by the Museum’s conservators. This is the highest priority.

- **Productivity**

The new facilities will provide working conditions conducive to the retention and development of high quality staff and support comprehensive training and development programmes. Adjacent work spaces will enable an improved use of both Conservation and curatorial staff time and accommodate a centralised system for delivery and supply of materials. Consequently, efficiency and productivity will improve.

- **Conservation techniques and international engagement**

Higher productivity will mean the department has more time to devote to developing new techniques and sharing expertise with other museum professionals around the world. The British Museum must be the international leader in conservation science.

Research

Carrying out original research, and supporting others to conduct their own research, is central to the Museum's purpose. The Museum is a major research institute in its own right, regularly running over 100 different research projects, often in collaboration with external partners, and publishing on average over 140 academic publications a year.

The Museum will:

- Develop a number of large-scale research projects that address major cross cultural questions and involve collaborations between different departments and with external institutions.
- Develop new research projects that can support the Museum's international strategy.
- Continue to build on the Museum's leading position in Heritage Science.
- Significantly increase the level of external funding from Research Councils and other Trusts and Foundations.

Collection Management

The British Museum has a statutory duty to safeguard the collection. After decades of under-investment, there has, in recent years, been a renewed focus on improving the storage and security of the collections. An important move in 2007 has been the creation of the Collections Services department bringing together for the first time the loans, storage, photographic, heavy object handling and documentation teams. Priorities for the next five years include:

Storage improvements

There must be a significant change in the quality of the care of the collection. By 2012, 85% collection storage space will be of A, B or C standard, equipped with efficient facilities and appropriate environmental controls. The Museum will seek to increase this to 100% over a ten-year period. This will be delivered through ongoing storage improvements and the North West Development.

Collection documentation and imaging

The Museum has added over 300,000 images to the collections database, and through the Merlin Plan is scanning existing catalogue text to improve the object descriptions. Over the next three years 600,000 more images and 250,000 object records will be added. In late 2007 the first phase of the online collections database was released and this will continue in stages with full release to be achieved in 2011, making 2m object records and 1m images available to the public.

Loans

In recent years the Museum has begun to centralise its loan management with resulting efficiencies and an improved service, in particular for those institutions borrowing objects from across the collection. A comprehensive Loan Strategy will be agreed in the near future to direct loan activity for the next five years.

Publications

A priority over the medium term is to ensure that the programme of publications is integrated more closely with both the scholarly and public activities of the Museum and that the Museum

is better-placed to highlight these activities through its publications. In addition, the Museum must ensure that it is best-placed to take advantage of emerging publication technologies.

Acquisitions

The Museum continues to develop and grow its collection, however, this is becoming increasingly difficult given the economic and financial framework within which the Museum operates. Although the Museum has made the generation of additional income a key priority, it will also need to be more proactive in finding other ways to add to the collection, making the most of gifts, bequests and private treaty sales. This will require legislative changes for which the Museum will work hard in concert with government and other cultural institutions.

Measures of Success

- External research funding to be doubled, approaching £1m by 2012.
- Agreement and implementation of integrated approaches on loans, and publications during 2009.
- New legislation to make lifetime gifts more tax efficient for the donor.
- 85% of collection storage space is A, B or C category by 2012.
- 2m object records and 1m images available online by 2011.

Audiences

‘Touching a worldwide audience, the cultures they represent and the stories that can be told through them’

Priorities

The Museum has identified strategic priorities for our audiences, with a particular focus on developing the capacity of the building to comfortably accommodate more visits; improving the quality of a visit; and increasing the depth of engagement with the collections. Our aim is to provide a memorable experience for 6m visits per year.

Public Programming

The Museum will show exhibitions from around the world throughout the next five years, including in the early years *Hadrian: Empire and Conflict, Babylon, Shah 'Abbas, Montezeuma, Italian Drawings, Ife Art and Book of the Dead*. This exciting programme provides an opportunity for the Museum to improve and increase people's depth of knowledge of the world's cultures through the exhibitions themselves, associated programming and the web site.

The Museum will raise the profile of its permanent collections through the gallery development programme, which in 2008/09 will see the opening of the Time Gallery, Clocks Gallery, Medieval Gallery, Nebamun Gallery, and the Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery for the Percival David Foundation Ceramic Collection. This programme will be developed further to provide a clear timeline of redisplay and reinterpretation of the collections through to 2012, linking with the A History of the World and Cultural Olympiad programmes.

Visitors

Historically the Museum has had approximately 5m visits each year, two-thirds of which are from abroad. In addition the activities that the Museum undertakes in Britain reach in excess of 15m people, particularly through broadcasting. This, together with international loans and exhibitions, partnerships, research and the re-launched web-site mean that the Museum can truly claim to be the museum of the world for the world.

Due largely to the popularity of the *The First Emperor* exhibition the outturn for 2007/08 was just over 6m visits. This cannot be sustained in the short term but will be built to being the norm when the Museum has a dedicated special exhibition space. This total is expected to include at least 3.5m overseas visits, 1m from London and an additional 1m from the rest of the UK. The increased capacity provided by the North West Development will ensure that the number of visits to the Museum to see a specific exhibition increases to, and is maintained at 0.5m per annum.

These increases in the number of visits will be delivered through a focus on the redisplay and interpretation of the permanent collections, with appropriate levels of marketing and media support. In parallel, the Museum will implement its Audience Development Strategy, offering

new and focused learning programmes aimed at four priority groups: adult Londoners, families, schools and Black, Asian, minority ethnic and refugee (BAMER) communities in London.

Alongside new and improved galleries the Museum will greatly enhance the visitor experience. Elements of this programme include improvements to: signage; lighting and seating; hospitality and retail; and potentially the North and South entrances. The Museum's front of house team will focus on superior customer service to make sure that visitors to the Museum receive the best possible welcome and support to their visit. This should lead to a greater number of people making repeat visits to the Museum during the course of a year, particularly the audiences drawn from London and the South East.

Museum in Britain

Building on the Museum's successful framework for national engagement, 'Partnership UK', the Museum will develop a series of deeper relationships with five key partner institutions across Great Britain to enable a closer relationship with specific regional audiences and communities. This will enable the Museum to link the work of UK museums with diaspora communities to wider national and international strategies. The Museum will also extend its programme of Spotlight Tours, touring exhibitions and loans.

Digital Media

Digital media will be central to increasing engagement with the Museum's collections. This extends and enhances a physical visit to the Museum: before, during and after a visit, as well as providing virtual access to the collection for people who would never be able to come to the Museum. By 2012, the Museum's physical presence in London will be complemented by a globally accessible media resource, including multimedia products, digitised archives and broadcast programmes which will make the Museum's world-class collections available to a global audience. As a result, visits to the Museum's main web site should double to over 14m by 2012. This will require at least one and maybe multiple partnerships with world-class media or technology companies.

International Activity

The Museum's extensive international programme includes exhibitions and loans, research projects, training and capacity building and the web. This programme will be extended and deepened with particular focus on Africa, East Asia, the Middle East and India.

Following the successful programme of partnerships with museums, universities and cultural institutions in Africa, and financial support from the UK Government and the Ford Foundation, the Museum will secure a further £1m per annum in funding. In East Asia the Museum will focus on strengthening its position in China, developing a wider set of relationships, in particular across the provincial cities, thereby widening access to the collections and helping to facilitate a greater opportunity to explore Chinese culture in the UK. Building on the Museum's long engagement with the ancient and Islamic-period cultures of the Middle East, the Museum will build new partnerships in the region, including extended loans and a programme of special exhibitions. A wider engagement with India will be developed, to include a number of Indian exhibitions in London, building on the research activities already being undertaken by curators, and seeking to develop new sustainable partnerships.

World Collections Programme

The Museum's international activities will be strengthened by the World Collections Programme, funded by the DCMS and chaired by the Director of the British Museum. The programme will use the collections of the member institutions (British Museum, the British

Library, the Natural History Museum, the Royal Botanic Gardens (Kew), Tate, and the Victoria and Albert Museum) to foster engagement with institutions and publics in Asia and Africa. The project has a budget of £1m per annum for three years and commenced on 1 April 2008.

The programme will broker relationships; establish partnerships; facilitate staff exchanges; establish mechanisms to share expertise and conservation technology; and help enable loans in key geographical areas.

Measures of Success

- A capacity of 6m on-site visits p.a. including 0.5m to special exhibitions and 1m visits from London.
- Five key 'Museum in Britain' partnerships in place.
- 14m visits to the British Museum website and at least one major technology partnership in place.
- New funded partnerships (£3-5m) in Africa, East Asia, India and the Middle East.

People

‘Staff make this a great place to work and a great place to visit’

The Museum will upgrade its investment in people with structured programmes for career development, learning and training and internal communications. Diversity will continue to be a priority across the Museum for staff and Trustees.

Priorities

Learning and Development

The Museum has recently introduced a new career review process which shifts the focus from the appraisal to a broader consideration of the individual’s career. Over the coming years this will be built on with a new Training and Development programme. The programme focuses on three areas:

Succession planning

Succession planning will encompass a range of initiatives including the documentation of information and procedures, improved records management, training and mentoring and the development of recruitment processes. The aim is to ensure that there is continuity in knowledge and experience, and continued focus on sustaining the flow of talent.

Talent Management

The Museum’s success depends on its ability to preserve, foster and develop talent. To retain talented people it will actively need to provide opportunities for them to advance their careers either within their current role, by allowing exposure to other areas of Museum activity, or by encouraging them to consider other roles within the organisation.

Leadership

The Museum will define clearly and succinctly the leadership qualities required across the Museum and then pursue a focused programme to strengthen leadership skills. It will also develop a programme for secondments to and from industry and government.

Diversity

Broad diversity among staff, executive and Trustees is essential to the effective running of the Museum. This must be achieved without compromise to the quality of leadership and standards of governance. The Museum will draw widely from the diverse communities in London and the UK. It will also involve curators from source and diaspora communities to curate the collection and develop the public programme, whether as permanent members of staff or as part of a secondment or exchange opportunity. The Museum has been involved in the Arts Council Inspire programme and will be actively looking to continue to engage in that and similar programmes in the future. Engagement with local community groups in Camden is at the centre

of a pilot workforce entry programme to launch in 2008 aimed at diversifying voluntary and paid staff. Equally the Museum is looking to the longer term through its sponsorship of the Young Graduates for Museums and Galleries (YGMG) programme.

Internal Communications and Team Building

Greater attention is needed to achieve consistent and effective internal communication. This must be two-way, allowing for continued comment and feedback. A key objective is to build pride in the institution and a real sense of the British Museum Team which transcends individual departments and functions. Acknowledging and celebrating success will be important, building a sense of community. Over time, progress will be measured through a comprehensive annual staff survey.

Operational aims

A number of operational improvements will help to support this strategy. The Human Resources team will continue to standardise procedures and policies throughout the Museum; improve data integrity and the control framework; and develop the current range of performance indicators. This will require greater investment in technology to allow staff and managers access to information, to improve the efficiency of processes, and reduce costs. Better process will lead to less bureaucracy and greater freedom to act within a clearly defined framework.

Measures of Success

- Introduction of a succession planning framework which allows comprehensive assessment of talent and the development plans.
- Establish a programme of secondments with industry and other institutions.
- Clear progress on improving the diversity mix.
- Annual staff survey to show consistent year on year improvement.

‘Sufficient funds for sustainable growth’

Grant-in-Aid

Following the Comprehensive Spending Review, the Museum will be able to continue to invest in sustainable infrastructure at least until the next Spending Review. However, our ambitions are much greater than Grant-in-Aid will allow and over the coming years the Museum must significantly expand its capacity with a comprehensive programme of efficiencies and ambitious targets for income generation and fundraising.

Priorities

Efficiency, Effectiveness and Economies

The Museum has a strong platform to deliver improved performance over the forthcoming period. Further improvements will be achieved through:

- Procurement savings through measured term contracts and framework agreements, holding non-salary revenue expenditure and capital costs as flat as possible, and taking advantage of e-opportunities. These will save £0.5m in 2008/09 and £2m cumulatively by 2012.
- A fundamental reassessment of our approach to visitor services and security leading to improved quality and enhanced capacity, while maintaining cost growth to inflation or less.
- Upgrade of the technology infrastructure to facilitate more effective management of data, information flows and communications. A world technology partner is essential.

These programmes will require investment which will be justified by sustained improvement in cost effectiveness and quality. There will be a 3% p.a. value for money saving through the plan period.

Fundraising

In recent years the Museum has enhanced its ability to attract funding from a broad universe in the UK and abroad, the corporate sector, individuals and public bodies. However there are a number of external factors that will make this a challenging fundraising environment, including high profile campaigns at peer institutions and the competition from the Olympic Games seeking £300m sponsorship for the Olympic cultural programme. Competition will also intensify due to tougher economic conditions both in the UK and the USA.

The Museum has three key challenges in the next five years:

- To secure funding to support the North West Development Project and further funds for new gallery projects.
- To increase external funding for operating activities to at least £10m per annum.
- To generate an income of £10m from Membership.

To meet these challenges the focus will be on increasing major donations from individuals and the corporate sector, using the Museum's collection and reputation to best advantage. In order to achieve this, the Museum will work towards a broader and more varied donor base, concentrating on companies and individuals with the capacity for significant support. For both corporate support and individual donations a more diverse pool of potential donors will help to reduce overdependence on specific sectors. In individual giving, the Museum aims to increase support from international donors and new wealth. With corporate support the focus will be on the global market, especially India, the Far East and South East Asia, and on companies specialising in manufacturing and consumer brands, complementing our success with the financial services sector in the US, UK and Europe. For exhibition sponsorship the Middle East will be increasingly important.

The Museum will focus on longer term relationships and on developing better ways to demonstrate appreciation of the key donors who provide such vital philanthropic support. In the corporate sector the global partnership scheme will be critical. It will shift focus on support for exhibition programmes, rather than one-off sponsorship, and major partnership deals for specific areas of Museum activity. The Museum will mount a major drive to increase membership and continue to build and widen support from Patrons.

A number of operational improvements will support the fundraising strategy. For example: better use of our people, events and privilege access for fundraising purposes; improved financial and forward planning; high quality research and analysis; and ensuring the highest standards when dealing with potential donors.

Membership

British Museum Friends will transform into a well defined and ambitious membership programme. This will require a new package of membership benefits including the availability of an attractive members' room. Currently there are less than 20,000 Friends. By 2012 this will be built to a membership base of 100,000, generating an income of £10m. This will require a significant upfront investment in the early years.

Individuals

By 2012 the Museum plans to have in excess of 200 patrons by building on our UK success and adding further patrons from outside the UK, mainly Asia. This, combined with the opportunity to find significant donors, will generate £4.5m per annum by 2012 building from the current base of £2.2m.

Corporate Partners

The Museum aims to increase funding from the corporate sector to £3.5m by 2012, from the current base of £2.3m. The number of corporate partners will be increased from 30 to 40 by 2010 and partners will be recruited from a broader range of sectors, moderating dependence on the financial services sector. Three-year partnerships will be negotiated with half this group. The Museum will also seek to interest 10 to 20 Global Partners in programmes of rolling exhibition sponsorship and individual gallery support.

Public Funding Trusts and Foundations

The Museum needs to focus more resources on attracting funding for acquisitions, projects and research, using its AHRC status to best advantage. In 2007/08 public funding trusts and foundations provided £2m of funding and the aim is to increase this to £3m per annum by 2012.

BMCo

The BMCo strategic plan will be closely aligned with the core activities of the Museum. As a consequence of a more professional retail operation, improved hospitality offering and a much stronger e-commerce programme the net contribution will rise from £1.5m to at least £3m and possibly as high as £4m.

Commercial Activities

International exhibitions and tours will continue to grow as will training and consulting. By 2012 there will be at least six touring exhibitions going to nine venues each year. The Middle East and North America will be a particular focus.

The Museum is developing a professional consultancy service and plans to secure at least one new agreement each year to 2012. The net contribution from commercial activities will grow to at least £2.5m (currently £1.9m), but has potential to go much further with success in a number of Middle East partnerships.

Measures of Success

- Delivery of 3% per annum cost savings.
- Raise funds for the North West Development.
- Generate an income of £10m from Membership.
- Increase external funding for operating activities by £10m per annum.

Key Projects

North West Development

The North West Development Project is of fundamental importance in delivering the Museum's four objectives. There are many short-comings in the Museum's estate not least:

Special Exhibitions

The special exhibition spaces the Museum currently has are much smaller than peer institutions. They constrain the type and scale of exhibition that the Museum can put on. They constrain the amount of income that the Museum can raise from ticket and associated retail and catering income. The logistic facilities serving these spaces are inefficient.

Conservation and Science Facilities

The Museum's existing conservation and science facilities are inadequate; they are neither operationally nor financially efficient, and the poor facilities and working conditions are the cause of excessive staff turnover.

Logistics

The Museum does not currently have any suitable logistic facilities to enable the many thousands of objects of greatly varying size and weight to be brought to, moved around and despatched from the site every year. The facilities for unpacking and preparing objects for display or loan are spread across the site, making these processes extremely complicated and inefficient, and indeed putting the collection at risk.

Collection Storage

The Museum has a statutory responsibility for the care of the collection, and is unable to dispose of objects in the collection. Storage of the collection is thus an essential part of the Museum's activities. Objects that are not stored in appropriate environments deteriorate over time, resulting either in permanent degradation or the need for additional conservation effort to restore the objects.

The North West Development Project will address the inadequacies listed above and accommodate the following components:

- A new independently accessible Special Exhibitions Suite, comparable in size and quality to the best such facility in London today, to include secure and functional loading bays for the receipt and despatch of loan objects (Logistics Hub).
- The International Conservation and Science Centre which will bring together in modern laboratories the conservation studios, workshops and offices of the Conservation & Scientific Research Department, which is currently dispersed across the Museum estate.
- A collections storage facility to improve storage conditions and allow the consolidation of the Museum's Africa, Oceania & Americas collections to Bloomsbury.

A History of the World and the Cultural Olympiad

The period 2008-12 will provide a unique opportunity, in the context of the Cultural Olympiad to place the international dimension of the UK's museum collections at the heart of cultural and political understanding. The Museum is developing a programme of which the central spine will be *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, 100 15-minute episodes on BBC Radio 4 based on the British Museum's collection. In turn this will be the platform for a nationwide distributed programme of research, consultation and interpretation, leading to broadcast, website, educational and exhibition activity working with partner museums across the UK. A selection of objects from the British Museum series will be toured around the country while those from partner museums will be shown at the Museum as part of a new strand of 'a month in London' displays in Room 3. Beyond the initial broadcast, the British Museum and a number of other museums will present in 2012 substantial 'histories of the world' as exhibitions from their own collections.

Measures of Success

- North West Development Project completed to time and budget.
- Completion of *A History of the World* and broadcast of 100 programmes.
- Leading role in the Cultural Olympiad.

Planning Pyramid 2008-2012

