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The Museum acknowledges the generous support of the Heritage Lottery Fund, who have confirmed a £10 million grant for the WCEC. The HLF's support will provide resources to enable the Museum to expand its innovative outreach and public engagement, and maintain the highest standards of collections care.

WCEC site recognised as an exemplary project

The Considerate Constructors Scheme continues to classify the World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre (WCEC) site as an exemplary project. The latest report issued awarded the site a score of 37.5 out of 40, with the project being commended for its outreach programmes, neighbour relations and outstanding approach to safety. The Considerate Constructors Scheme is the national initiative set up by the construction industry to improve its image. Sites and companies within the Scheme are monitored against a Code of Considerate Practice, designed to encourage best practice beyond statutory requirements.

Site and design update

Works in the last quarter have seen the concrete frame of the building reach 80% completion. The floor slab for the lowest level has now been completed in full and steel work to form a below-ground atrium space in the Science and Conservation section of the building has been erected. The installation of a waterproofing membrane and the block work walls within all the basement areas have been started. Mechanical and electrical works have also commenced at basement levels.

Within the Museum, works to connect the existing buildings to the new building continue, with the formation of the openings from the Great Court now complete. The openings are now temporarily screened off and won't officially open until the completion of the project.

The impact of the Olympics on site activity has been minimal, with good advance planning between all parties. In fact, Bloomsbury seemed quieter than usual!

In July Mace and the construction team celebrated reaching 500,000 man hours worked on the project. This achievement was marked with a celebration in the nearby UCL sunken garden for all involved in the project to date.

During excavation, a total of 57 props were installed across the site to support the structure as the ground level dropped. As the new building emerges from the ground the props are removed, and the final one is due to come out in October which will be an important milestone for the team.

During the quarter, the project hosted several visitors to the site and Mace has provided work experience for three students, all of whom are keen to return at a later stage of their education.

Artist in residence Liam O'Connor spends many hours each week taking inspiration from and working in the site. Mace and the site contractors have been very accommodating, allowing him to quietly work away while building activity continues at pace around him. In August a permanent display space in the site accommodation was identified as an area for Liam to display his work, giving the contractors an opportunity to see some of what is being produced.

Off site, work is progressing with the manufacture of the structural steel frame and the cladding, which together form the above-ground elements of the building. These will be installed in the coming months as we enter the next exciting stage of the project.

The design team is continuing to progress elements of the design in liaison with the various trade contractors. The design team's focus will increasingly switch to ensuring that the desired quality of workmanship is being achieved on site.



Right: aerial view of the site, August 2012.

Top right: basement level storage areas. Hawaiian feather helmet. Cradle made of textile, hide, beads and wood.



Inside the new building

The WCEC basement stores will provide the Museum with nearly 6,000m³ of new storage space for objects. The spaces have been highly specified in terms of scale, floor loadings, environmental controls and accessibility. The lowest basement, level 3 will house the heaviest objects, and has therefore been designed with exceptional floor loading to accommodate large stone sculptures in the collection. The storage furniture will be designed specifically for the contents it will hold and the environment created will be conducive to the storage and preservation of materials. The new stores are entirely underground and as such are less susceptible to ambient temperature and humidity changes. Air conditioning will maintain the stores at optimum values. Basement levels 1 and 2 are designed to hold the collections which are for the most part organic (for example objects like the feather helmet and cradle above made from materials such as wood or feathers) and therefore both the temperature and humidity on these floors will be tailored appropriately.

The infiltration of pests such as moths and rodents is a constant concern for museums and galleries. Housekeeping and pest management in the WCEC has been taken into account at all stages of the building design and, as such, areas of potential ingress and habitation have been minimised. Store areas, workshops and common spaces have been designed to remove opportunities for insect habitats to develop, ensuring that these spaces are clean environments.

In addition, the stores will considerably improve the facilities for members of source communities and others to access objects in the Museum's care.

Who to contact

If you have any questions or would like more information about the project, please contact Louise Fenner on 020 7323 8858 or wcec@britishmuseum.org

If you have any questions regarding the activities on site, you can also contact Martin Field at Mace on 020 7323 8933 or martin.field@macegroup.com