

Summary

Since work began on site in spring 2010 the British Museum photographers have been on hand to capture every milestone in the development of the WCEC. The photography captured on site regularly appears in our newsletters, offering an insight into the development of the construction as it happens. As in all our newsletters you will see their work in this issue.

Last month the Considerate Constructors Scheme awarded the WCEC site a gold award, for recognition of exemplary interaction with its neighbours and consideration for those affected by the works on site.

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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.





Site update

As can now be seen from Montague Place, the building is progressing rapidly and is on course for building completion towards the end of 2013. With the completion of the stair and lift cores, a real sense of the building scale can be appreciated with the inner glass cladding works enclosing the structure on all façades.

Highlights on site over the past few months include:

- completion of the stair and lift core structures
- the connection of the Museum permanent power supply to the WCEC main grid
- commencement of the lorry lift installation

Forthcoming site activity during the summer includes:

- commencement of internal fit out of the exhibitions gallery
- installation of the cast glass façade
- progression of external landscaping
- removal of the tower cranes

Design update

Many elements of outstanding design work have been progressed with the trade contractors in recent months – finalising the detailed design elements of the exhibitions gallery has been a focus. This includes bespoke doors, ceilings and walls.

The design for the spaces connecting the Great Court to the exhibitions gallery is nearing completion. The foyer will provide an arrival area for visitors as well as being a point for bag checks and the collection of

audio guides. The shop will sell exhibition-related products and general Museum merchandise.

New signage and wayfinding will be in place when the gallery opens in order to ensure the best possible experience for exhibition visitors. The new access routes will also deliver significant improvements to visitor flow in the ground floor galleries.

Inside the building

Temporary exhibitions are an important activity for the Museum and a key part of its engagement with wider audiences. The new building offers a modern, accessible exhibition space that will enable the successful temporary exhibitions programme to continue and grow. A flexible, purpose-built gallery will ensure the Museum is able to host major international exhibitions in the future, allowing more people to see once-in-a-lifetime shows.

With a total space of 1,100m² the exhibitions gallery is the only publicly accessible area of the new building. This space will provide a blank canvas for exhibition designers, and with state-of-the-art environmental controls capable of adjustment to suit the nature of the objects on display, will be able to accommodate a diverse range of material. The gallery dimensions, access routes and doors have been designed to accommodate the kind of objects that have previously been impossible for the Museum to display.

The new gallery will open in March 2014 with a major exhibition on the Vikings. The centrepiece will be a 37m-long Viking ship – an extraordinary object the Museum could not have considered displaying without this new space.

Meet the team

John McElgunn, Rogers
Stirk Harbour + Partners:

'It has been a fantastic opportunity to work on a new building at the British Museum, not only because it is a world-renowned institution and the yardstick by which all museums are measured, but also because the Museum has a proud tradition of commissioning great architecture.

'Robert Smirke was commissioned to design the main building in 1823 and the Museum has been adding to the site ever since. The World Conservation and Exhibitions Centre follows in the footsteps of John Russell Pope, J J Burnet and Norman Foster, and will be opened exactly 100 years after the King Edward VII Building was completed.

'We are very excited about the emerging extension, a beautiful contemporary building sitting in the historic context of the Museum. Our project seeks to modernise some of the key 'behind-the-scenes' activities, thereby enabling the staff at the Museum to continue their great work in purpose-built facilities.

'The design and construction of the WCEC has been the opportunity of a lifetime for RSHP and we believe it will be an exciting addition to the Museum estate.'



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 Willie Shaw at Mace on 020 8256 9527 or wshaw@macegroup.com