

British Museum sets out next steps for the Masterplan

Safeguarding the collection for future generations, in spaces fit for the 21st century

For immediate release

- Proposals for new, state-of-the-art Energy Centre have now been submitted to Camden Council
- International architectural competition to reimagine a third of the Museum's galleries to be launched to market in spring 2024
- Official opening of the new British Museum Archaeological Research Collection (BM_ARC) on 7 June 2024 – the anniversary of the Museum's foundation through the British Museum Act
- A new multi-year partnership with long-term supporter, BP, will provide £50m over 10 years to help deliver the Museum's Masterplan and ensure millions of visitors can continue to access the collection for generations to come

LONDON, 19 December: The British Museum has today announced the next steps in its plans to restore and renovate the iconic Bloomsbury site, extend to new locations, and ensure its extraordinary collection is housed in buildings and galleries fit for the 21st century.

The scale, complexity and importance of the Masterplan means it will be one of the most significant cultural redevelopment projects ever undertaken. Alongside today's announcements the Museum has confirmed that it will stay open to the public throughout the works, maintaining the founding commitment to keep the collection safe and accessible to the public.

Completion of the first phase of the Masterplan will be marked by the official opening of the new British Museum Archaeological Research facility on 7 June 2024. BM_ARC will house items ranging from nails from the Sutton Hoo ship burial to rare Peruvian fabrics and ancient fingerprints preserved on 5000-year-old antler picks. It offers a radically different approach to museum storage by also facilitating research and study by academics and members of the public alike.

Alongside this, designs for a new Energy Centre have been submitted which will see the phasing out of the use of fossil fuels within the Museum's estate, replacing them with low carbon technologies. This will result in an estimated annual net saving of 1,700 tonnes of CO² compared to existing usage, enabling the Museum to become more sustainable over the coming years. Funding for the plans received a significant boost with the government having committed financial support for the creation of the Energy Centre.

Plans for an international architectural competition to redevelop around 7,500 m² of gallery space have also been announced, with applications open in spring 2024. The competition will focus on the "Western Range" – which currently houses collections such as Ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome – and will involve the introduction of contemporary architecture and innovative gallery displays, alongside sensitivity towards the need to respect and restore the highly significant and celebrated listed buildings on the site. The Museum will be looking to find the most exciting proposals from across the globe, with a particular focus on expertise in sustainability – both environmental and economic.

A new multi-year partnership with BP will support the future transformation of the Museum by contributing £50m over 10 years. The partnership will also help deliver on plans to maintain

public access for generations to come. The Museum is very grateful for BP's support at this early stage of the Masterplan.

Charlie Mayfield, Chair of the British Museum's Masterplan committee, said: "The British Museum is one of the largest and most visited cultural institutions in the world but some of its buildings are over 200 years old and in urgent need of refurbishment. That's why the Masterplan is so essential – and it's exciting to be moving forward with our plans.

"Next year we will begin the process of completely overhauling our outdated energy infrastructure and replacing it with state-of-the-art facilities that will dramatically reduce our carbon footprint, and we will begin a global search amongst leading architects to find a partner to help us reimagine the famous Western Range. There's so much to look forward to in 2024 and we are grateful to all our partners for their support."

Louise Kingham, Senior Vice President, Europe and UK Country Chair for BP, said: "The British Museum offers a window to the world for the millions of people that pass through its doors every year. As a business that has made Britain its home for over a century, we are proud to be a long-term partner to this important British institution and play our part in its future transformation – whilst helping to ensure that this iconic cultural venue remains freely accessible to all."



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