



# Acknowledgments

## **Museums at Night is**

Managed and delivered by Culture24

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**Note:** 'Museum' is used in this report to cover all the venues who participated in Museums at Night 2010. This included museums, galleries, libraries, archives, heritage sites and science and environment centres.

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# Museums at Night 2010: What is Museums at Night?

**"I've lived down here for 61 years and this is the first time I've ever been here."**

**"And the second time I've been here in 50 years."**

**"And it's the first time I've been here."**

Grandfather, Father and Daughter at Keep Military Museum



For one weekend in May, hundreds of cultural and heritage organisations opened their doors after hours for torchlight tours, ghost walks, twilight screenings, midnight murder mysteries and all-night sleepovers. They all aimed to welcome new visitors into their museums to have fun and discover that museums are places they want to step inside more often.

Culture24 is at the centre of this celebration: finding funding; motivating museums to join in; supporting them to devise different events and experiences to tempt visitors in; encouraging collaboration and building skills; brokering partnerships with government departments, cultural agencies and media; and managing campaign communications. All this is delivered in order to get more people into cultural organisations, in line with plans for the future direction of Renaissance as set out in the January 2010 draft paper *Renaissance: Future Direction* which states that 'given sustained investment, all museum collections can engage and deliver more; for more people; in new ways; with new partners; and for more diverse communities'. The cost-effective, localised delivery of Museums at Night addresses many of the future challenges identified in this report including increased pressure on public spending, localism and digital developments.

Most people think that museums are important. 82% of British people want to have a museum or art gallery in their local town or city.<sup>1</sup> Most would probably agree that museums are a valuable part of their local community: they are places that teach, entertain, make people curious and create social interactions.

But how many people actually venture into museums?

According to DCMS research, only 37% of UK residents visited a museum in the previous year<sup>2</sup>. So what prevents the remaining 63% visiting a museum? Many people think that museums are 'not for them'. Museums compete for people's time and attention with cinema, TV and other leisure activities in their busy lives. Museums at Night breaks down these barriers by encouraging organisations to open 'out of hours' and put on exciting, accessible and, in many cases, free events.

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<sup>1</sup> Value and Vision, The National Museums Directors Conference 2010

<sup>2</sup> [www.museumsassociation.org](http://www.museumsassociation.org)

## Key statistics from the Museums at Night 2010 campaign

<b>286 organisations</b>	<b>345 creative events</b>
<b>85,000 visitors across 3 nights</b>	<b>47% of visitors were new to the venue</b>
<b>15% of visitors had not been to a museum for over 1 year</b>	<b>5% of visitors had never been to a museum</b>
<b>97% of visitors were inspired to visit another museum</b>	<b>85% rated their visit at &gt;8 out of 10</b>
<b>198 press articles in 158 publications</b>	<b>Estimated advertising value of £400,000</b>
<b>92% of venues will take part again next year</b>	<b>£75,000 funding Cost under £1 per visitor</b>

# Who said what about Museums at Night

To capture impressions and opinions of Museums at Night we spoke to cultural agencies and organisations, media partners and participating museums. Their responses were positive and encouraging. There is substantial goodwill toward Culture24 for orchestrating Museums at Night, and the ethos and delivery of the project were praised – a sound basis for taking Museums at Night forward.



*Museums that open their doors and share are museums that gain public support and grow stronger; museums that win public hearts and minds are museums that are more likely to remain relevant, lively and responsive to continually changing tastes and needs. Museums at Night puts consumers first, represents excellent practice and sets the standard for low-cost, high-value programming; subject to government funding being available I am planning on MLA supporting the initiative again in 2011.*

**Roy Clare CBE, Chief Executive Officer, MLA**

*It's tough being a pioneer in a project like Museums at Night. 69% of people think that they do not use their leisure time well enough and don't know enough about their country so even getting them to go into a museum for half an hour will start to get them into the habit of doing things they don't normally do. Opening up at night brings another dimension to museums so people experience them in a different way.*

**Lady Penny Cobham, Chair, VisitEngland**

*It's important to get the public in by doing something unusual. The cuts in budget we are seeing make projects like Museums at Night an efficient way to use resources for a joint initiative which has great value.*

**Frances Carey, British Museum**

*Museums at Night promotes increasing participation in museums in a sustainable way. It reaches the people who would not otherwise be reached; getting them into a museum and providing an opportunity to be more involved, rather than just visiting an exhibition. It raises the profile of museums at local and national level.*

**John Harrison, Head of Communications, MLA**

*Museums at Night is a big profile raiser for heritage. It's uniquely significant as it gives museums a chance to do something to reach a new audience.*

**Dave Musgrove, Editor, BBC History Magazine**

*Congratulations on the event. I think it reached a lot of new people and inspired a lot of creative ideas.*

**Bath Postal Museum**

Photographs:

Top left: Shipley Art Gallery, courtesy of The Late Shows

Bottom right: The Hovercraft Museum, courtesy of Ruth Harper



# Museums at Night and Audiences

**85,000** people visited a Museums at Night event  
**47%** of visitors were **new** to the museum they were visiting  
**5%** of visitors had **never** been to a museum before  
**15%** of visitors had **not been** to a museum for **more than 12 months**  
**85%** of visitors rated their experience at **8+ out of 10**  
**97%** of visitors are **inspired to visit other museums**

Why don't people visit museums? Barriers to visiting museums can be physical, perceptual or cultural. People may perceive museums as stuffy places with little to offer them. Museums at Night is instrumental in supporting museums to break down traditional perceptions and strengthen relationships with local people by providing new ways to use the museum, and new reasons to come in and – most importantly – enjoy themselves.

**"We always look at it, [the museum] like, every time we go past, but we've never been in before. And the other museums were all really interesting as well."**

Teenage girls in Dorset County Museum



**"It is a good idea and it's something that I would never have dreamt of coming to, had it not been for the quirkiness of being at night." - "I wouldn't have come just to see it [the Hovercraft Museum] being open, but because it's Museums at Night, that is why we're here - there's no question about that."**

Couple at Hovercraft Museum

**We went to the newly opened Florence Nightingale museum. How fab to be able to go there late afternoon and not have to rush around during the day! Bravo to that museum - the staff were just great and the place is amazing, interactive and so beautiful. Great for families too! Probably would not have gone without the Museum Night opportunity. Well done, you guys!**

Visitor Feedback: Facebook

**Night is brilliant, definitely yes – days are too busy.**

Mother with three children



Photographs:

Top right: Dorset County Museum, courtesy of Rachel Hayward

Bottom right: The Hovercraft Museum, courtesy of Ruth Harper



Age	%
< 16	11%
16-24	7%
25-34	18%
35-44	22%
45-54	15%
55+	27%



*Images courtesy of Freia Turland / Bath and North East Somerset Council*

## How visitors heard

- **Word of mouth** (48%) was the most common way people heard about Museums at Night
- **Local press** (18%) took second place
- The individual **museum's website** (12%) came in third

Event flyers, signs at the museum and direct communication from individual organisations were also key methods of distributing information.

## Impact of Museums at Night on Audiences – Sustainability

**97% of visitors stated that they are inspired to visit further museums as a result of Museums at Night.** This indicates how the sector benefits in the long term from public engagement with the campaign.

# Venues and Museums at Night

- 286 museums took part in Museums at Night, putting on 347 events
- Museums want to be part of a national PR campaign celebrating the sector, raising the profile of museums and showing museums in a new light
- Museums recognise Museums at Night as a vehicle to enable them to try new things and attract new visitors
- Museums put on sleepovers, nature walks, live gigs, costumed interpretation, food themed events, craft activities, torchlight tours and more

## Why organisations get involved – the benefits

286 venues meant 286 different approaches to one central proposition. Museums at Night is far more than a branding and media campaign – its value lies in being a national campaign which enables each participating organisation to create a unique response at their local level.

Organisations recognise the benefits of joining in Museums at Night:

- Being part of a national celebration of museums
- Inclusion in a national and international campaign which generates PR coverage that would be impossible for organisations to achieve on their own
- An impetus to try something different - opening late, showing rarely seen collections, providing new activities or building new partnerships
- Enhancing staff skills through experience, peer learning and guidance from Culture24

Being part of Museums at Night enables organisations to:

- Increase and broaden their audiences
- Change the profile of their services
- Move forward with improved skills and knowledge
- Showcase their venue in a different way by offering an inspiring experience

## Who took part?

2009: 125 museums: 157 events

2010: 286 museums: 345 events

The Future: Culture24 has a database of 4485 cultural and heritage organisations. From 2009 – 2010 the number of participating organisations more than doubled.

**Potentially over 570 venues will take part in 2011 and over 1200 in the year of the Olympics.**

**Museums, Galleries, Heritage Organisations:** Organisations joining in Museums at Night ranged from small independent museums and galleries to national organisations. Some English

Heritage and National Trust properties took part, and with longer lead-in times and the positive results of this year's campaign, Culture24 hopes to secure greater involvement in the future.



***Harewood House<sup>4</sup>***



***The Late Shows<sup>5</sup>***



***The Hovercraft Museum<sup>6</sup>***

**National museums:** including the National Maritime Museum, the V&A, the National Gallery and the National Portrait Gallery. Using the results of this evaluation Culture24 can challenge the assumption made by some that they do not 'need' Museums at Night, and recruit a larger number of national organisations. This will add a greater kudos to the campaign thereby encouraging more organisations to take part and creating an even greater PR response.

**If the national museums are involved it gives the project kudos; if what is happening in Doncaster is part of what is happening at the British Museum then everyone will take more note.**

Mark Taylor, Director, Museums Association

**Rural areas:** many small museums in rural areas are able to benefit from the project such as the Petersfield Museums in Hampshire and the Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum in Northamptonshire. Gaps in rural areas may in part be due to a lesser concentration of organisations but this is an area to be considered further for Museums at Night 2011.

**England focus:** Culture24 is currently funded to deliver Museums at Night in England. However, in 2010 nine organisations took part in Wales, five in Scotland, one in Northern Ireland and one in Guernsey. With additional funding to support the increased administration and to enable a greater UK-wide PR presence, there is scope for Museums at Night to extend beyond England.

**Sector Development:** Culture24 provided learning opportunities by producing and promoting guidance documents and by inviting sector professionals to write about their areas of expertise and knowledge on the Museums at Night blog. 86% of museums that downloaded resources were very happy with them.

**Museums at Night 2010 was a sustainable success: 92% of organisations plan to take part again in 2011.**

<sup>4</sup> Harewood North Front against Mackerel Sky, Jonny Harris

<sup>5</sup> *User Friendly*, projection by Northern Print studio artists in collaboration with /sLab, produced as part of Northern Print Biennale & shown during the Late Shows 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Courtesy of Ruth Harper

# Museums at Night – Sector Impact

Museums at Night contributes to sector initiatives and priorities by:

- Showing sector leadership
- Increasing access to culture
- Increasing cultural participation
- Supporting the visitor economy
- Making more of cultural infrastructure
- Enriching people's lives through cultural experiences
- Encouraging creativity and innovation
- Extending learning opportunities
- Making partnerships central to achieving its goals

## Think national: act local

**Museums, libraries and archives need to be more pro-active in telling people what they can expect and they need to be making use of new media to reach people.**

Sharper Investment for Changing Times, MLA, 2010

Museums at Night is active advocacy for the sector. The campaign makes an effective public and sector impact for a relatively small investment – the cost of attracting a new visitor into a museum through Museums at Night was less than £1 a head. The project is important for the results it delivers by working at a national level to deliver local results. It encourages local people to discover and value what is on their doorstep and encourages museums to take an innovative approach to welcoming in local people. Reaching out to new audiences is a key ambition referred to in almost every museums sector report.

## Showing sector leadership

Stakeholders think that Museums at Night is innovative, worthwhile, and supports many of their priorities in the museums and cultural sector. Delivering this collaborative, country-wide project demonstrated Culture24's leadership skills and strengths in supporting the sector.

## Increasing access to culture

Museums at Night supports the commitments from MLA, Arts Council England and DCMS to improve access to culture in an exciting way that captures the imagination.

MLA Chief Executive Roy Clare said recently: *the MLA is committed to promoting activities and measures that help make culture and the arts accessible to all... to encourage organisations to reach new and non-traditional audiences through re-interpretation and re-presentation.*<sup>7</sup>

Arts Council England's strategy document *Great Art for Everyone 2008-2011*, states 'our mission for the next three years, ten years and beyond is clear and unequivocal. It is about great art for everyone'.

<sup>7</sup> MLA website 'News', January 2010, [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)

On its website the DCMS states, 'It is a strategic Departmental objective to enhance access to the arts, increasing both the numbers of those taking part in and attending arts events'.

### **Increasing cultural participation**

*People seek engagement. They want enjoyment, but they also want the stimulus and the challenge of new ideas and new ways of seeing and doing things that cultural investment provides<sup>8</sup>.* In 2010 Museums at Night attracted over 85,000 visits: 47% were first time visitors to the venue they were visiting. Many museums in the project are under local authority control. *A Passion for Excellence<sup>9</sup>* prioritises improving provision of culture and sport, offering greater value for money and higher quality services for local residents. Museums at Night supports these priorities by encouraging museums to review their provision and offer new opportunities to enable visitors to view museums in a new light, go to a new venue and experience something different.

### **Supporting the visitor economy**

VisitBritain stress that cultural heritage is the most important part of Britain's tourism offering as it is part of every visitor's experience. Culture is the single most important motivation for city trips: VisitBritain's research shows that almost all tourists are interested to learn about and experience the culture of the destinations they visit<sup>10</sup>. VisitEngland felt that partnership working with Museums at Night enhanced their ability to achieve national press and media coverage, including full page features in the Daily Telegraph and Guardian.

**Museums at Night is a great hook for VisitEngland to promote museums throughout England in a different way. It is excellent for VisitEngland as it is unique and imaginative and gives an immediate reason to travel.**

Tim Holt, VisitEngland

### **Making more of cultural infrastructure**

Museum opening hours can be restricted and often coincide with the average working day. Museums at Night encourages the sector to trial late openings and improve physical access for more of the population. It facilitates partnership working, enabling organisations to share resources and expertise in order to offer potential visitors a joined-up, expanded offer.

**The best thing about Museums at Night was being creative in how we put our programme together, forcing us to seek out collaborations, and the outcome being, extending our networks and meeting new contacts as well as connecting with our own audience again.**

Events Manager, London-based organisation.

Through Museums at Night Culture24 provides the sector with valuable lessons about how to attract visitors, deliver new services and make the most of limited marketing budgets. It inspires press, broadcast and online media to highlight all that the museums sector has to offer.

<sup>8</sup> Cultural Capital: A Manifesto for the Future, 2010

<sup>9</sup> A Passion for Excellence: an improvement strategy for culture and sport, LGA, 2008

<sup>10</sup> Arrivals, VisitBritain, 2010

The lessons learned year on year from Museums at Night will continue to contribute to a stronger, more sustainable museums sector.

**Museums at Night enables us to be part of a national event. Loads of organisations take part in the events in NewcastleGateshead, it's really diverse & really exciting to be a part of such a great event. We always get a great attendance and the events bring people through our doors who wouldn't normally visit so it helps us to widen our audience.**

Consortium member, NewcastleGateshead.

- **Had a great couple of hours with my daughter and two grand-daughters - excellent!**
- **It's good to experience family life outdoors after 6pm in England - usually only see it abroad.**
- **It's great to see something good going on at night in museums.**
- **Living in Bournemouth it is all too easy to forget what a gem is on my doorstep. Thank you for the reminder!**
- **More please! An excellent way of bringing history alive. Very good for children. The ones in our group obviously enjoyed it.**

### **Encouraging creativity and innovation**

Museums responded to the opportunity generated by Museum at Night by thinking up new ways to relate to audiences, review their offer and try something different. Many worked for the first time with other museums and tried new communications techniques, such as social networking.

#### **Museums at Night:**

- ***Gave us the impetus to try something we hadn't previously done***
- ***Gave us the opportunity to try out evening openings***

Museum staff who took part in Museums at Night

### **Extending learning opportunities**

Throughout Museums at Night Culture24 offered advice and guidance to participating organisations. They encouraged venues to talk to one another and share their experiences. Via their blog they provided guidance from sector professionals on issues such as using social media, promoting events and running special activities. Culture24 provided downloadable documents including a PR toolkit to encourage museums to improve their self-promotion. Where possible, Culture24 contacted individual museums to discuss how to improve the promotion of their events.

**I felt that the advice and support were amazing and of a very high standard.**

Unprompted feedback via email from a museum professional.

## **Making partnerships central to achieving its goals**

Successful partnerships for 2010 included:

- **Renaissance** funds Culture24 to deliver Museums at Night as it recognises their ability to inspire the sector to take part whilst providing them with support and guidance needed to make the campaign a success.
- The **British Museum** felt their partnership centred on their Relic Trail had positive outcomes and that using an existing resource is cost-effective and a possible template for further partnerships.
- **BBC History Magazine** felt they benefited from their involvement, as Museums at Night dovetails with their objectives of increasing interest in history and increasing visits to heritage attractions. Their collaboration with Culture24 is seen as '*a very worthwhile venture*' as it gave them a new route into the museums sector.
- **VisitEngland** recognise the power of working with Culture24 and combining their branding to achieve high profile press coverage. They also promoted Museums at Night through their newsletter and on their website.
- **English Heritage** – in 2010 one English Heritage property took part, and it was agreed that depending on their experience it may be possible to negotiate further involvement from English Heritage properties.
- **National Trust** – they promoted the event to their venues resulting in a number of them taking part. They also promoted Museums at Night in their online and print communications.

# Culture24 and Museums at Night

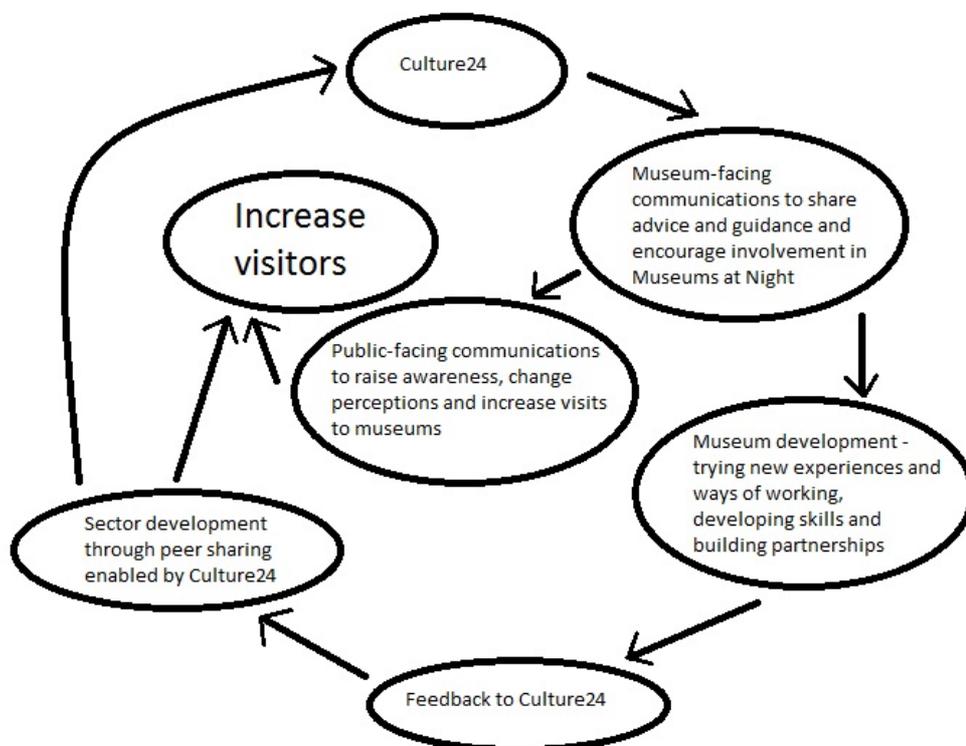
## Culture 24:

- Persuaded 286 museums to take part
- Enabled over 85,000 visits to museums
- Set up new partnerships with organisations including BBC, VisitEngland, MLA, English Heritage, National Trust
- Provided communications resources downloaded 1945 separate times
- Achieved over £400,000 of press coverage and featured on high-profile TV and radio broadcasts
- Increased website traffic by 42% during the week of Museums at Night
- Published 67 blog posts which received 4715 views
- Input approximately 454 days of Culture24 staff time supporting the campaign
- Published 70 Museums at Night related articles on the Culture24 website

**Thank you for all your hard work for Museums at Night. The campaign is very lucky to have Culture24 behind it and it's great to see it growing year on year.**

Laura Crossley, Project Officer, Norwich Heritage, Economic and Regeneration Trust

Culture24 takes on multiple roles to implement Museums at Night as detailed below.



## **For Museums at Night 2010, Culture24 was good at:**

### **Creating a new model**

Culture24 has created a new model to deliver Museums at Night. Its emphasis is on flexible partnerships both with national stakeholders and with the many participating museums. It places responsibility with individual museums so that their input responds to local circumstances and priorities. It is cost efficient and represents effective use of public funds; it brings new skills and expertise into the sector (especially in digital communications) and through its inclusive ethos is creating a critical mass in the number of participating museums and the volume of the activities presented.

### **Grass roots engagement**

Culture24 takes a grass roots approach to Museums at Night by promoting the organisations taking part and the events on offer, rather than the campaign brand. This approach means that potential visitors seeing the PR generated by the campaign are given real examples of activities they can engage with, rather than generic messages. This approach aims to encourage immediacy by enabling people to buy in to the potential activities available to them.

### **Being open and enabling**

Culture24 asks venues to stage late openings and events of a size that they feel comfortable with and can deliver successfully. This inclusive and empathic approach enables organisations of all sizes to take part.

### **Creating tools and resources to help venues**

Culture24 created downloadable resources for participating organisations including logos, flyer templates and poster templates. These enabled consistent campaign branding as well as encouraging museums to actively promote their activities.

- 58% of museums responding to the online survey downloaded resources.
- 1,945 downloads of the materials were made during the campaign.
- 86% of museums using these tools felt that they were satisfactory or brilliant.

### **Achieving positive PR and raising the profile of organisations**

The media campaign was handled by Culture24 working with Ruth Cobb of Mosaic Marketing Communications, with additional support in the final month commissioned from Bullet PR. The press and media campaign for Museums at Night 2010 generated 198 press articles in 158 publications, with an advertising value equivalent of over £400,000.

Profile was also boosted by presence in broadcast media with features and interviews on national TV and radio programmes including; The One Show; BBC Breakfast TV; Radio Two with Claudia Winkleman, Jeremy Vine and Simon Mayo; Radio Four You and Yours; Radio Five Live; Radio 6 with Andrew Collins and Lauren Laverne.

Museums at Night also drew hundreds of online mentions. Highlights include: Guardian Travel section; Guardian Food Blog; Independent Travel Agenda; The Lady; Female First; Time Out; Families Online; Visit London; BBC News; New Statesman; Wales Online; The Londonist.

## **Making use of social media**

Culture24 used social media to communicate with organisations and visitors. Throughout the campaign Culture24 used the hashtag #MuseumsatNight to track **Twitter** activity relating to the campaign. From April to May 2010 Museums at Night tweeted 109 times using this hash tag inspiring 80 retweets. This is a retweet ratio of 73% or 1: 0.75. Culture24 aims for a 1:1 ratio in all of their Twitter use so although the April-May results are good, there is scope for development. The Museums at Night campaign inspired 433 spontaneous tweets from museums, visitors, bloggers and listings sites, containing either the keywords 'Museums at Night' or the relevant hash tag. During this time there were 573 retweets of all Museums at Night related tweets.

Culture24's **Flickr** competition encouraged visitors and museums to photograph their experience. 265 photographs were posted by 36 users, depicting a wide range of activity and organisations. Winners will be announced but entries illustrate this report.

Since the **blog** was set up in November 2009, there have been 67 posts and 4715 views. Activity peaked on Friday 14 May 2010 coinciding with the launch of Museums at Night 2010. Blog content is mainly museum-facing, with advice and guidance on topics such as how to run a night-time bat walk and how to make the most of social media. Culture24 also use the blog to keep museums up to date with the campaign progress. The majority of the blog-generated traffic was to the Museums at Night home page and the Museums at Night Facebook group.

Culture24 ran an animation competition in partnership with Kanoti, a digital production agency to find a winning entry to be used as a promotional, online advert to attract click-throughs to the Museums at Night mini-site. Culture24 used **YouTube** to upload videos of the animation competition winners, the Museums at Night launch event and vox pops taken during the event weekend. These were viewed by 1577 people. Looking to 2011 there may be scope for Culture24 to encourage other participating museums to create content to be uploaded. This could take the form of advice postings, videos of events or vox pops.

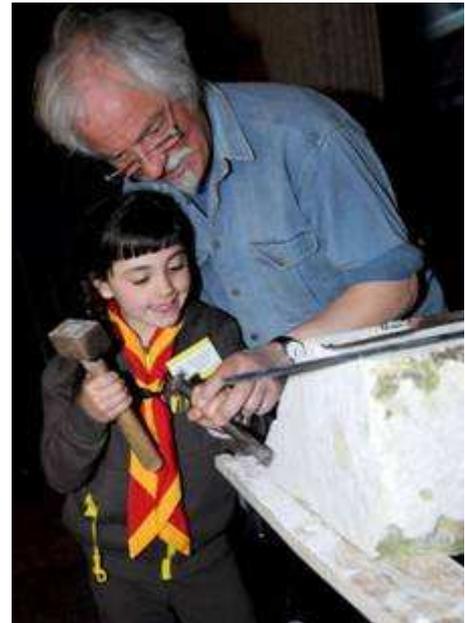
## **Encouraging a positive museum response**

Following the completion of Museums at Night, a number of museums spontaneously contacted Culture24 by email and Facebook to thank them for their successful campaign management.

- **Thanks for all your help promoting and assisting with our event.**
- **Congratulations on the event - think it reached a lot of new people and inspired a lot of creative ideas.**
- **Thank you so much for co-ordinating M@N! We had a brilliant time organising our sleepover and the night itself was absolutely fantastic. I'm really sad it's all over, and can't wait for next year :)**

## Creative collaboration - Bath and North East Somerset

Thirteen museums in Bath and North East Somerset partnered with five different performance groups, Bath and North East Somerset Council, Southgate shopping centre and the Natural Theatre Company to offer over 800 visitors a broad range of events and activities. They have taken part over the last few years and the event has always inspired a positive response from visitors – so much so that it is now part the established Museums Group calendar of events.



The Museums Group like working together on Museums at Night because *'collaborative events by their nature pull peoples' strengths together and provide a host of benefits including shared knowledge, resources and experience'*. Managing a collaborative event can be difficult but their top tips for making it a success are:

*Good communication, enthusiasm and a programme that all have contributed to so that there is a sense of ownership and responsibility. Feedback after the event is essential for improving the event next time for all those involved.*

*We publicise our events through B&NES Council press and marketing department, websites, through the schools in the district area and through leaflets and posters distributed throughout the local region at venues, libraries and council reception points. We have excellent links with the local tourist offices and this year we also publicised the event at the Bath Flower Show with a Museums Group stall and gave out leaflets at Bath's World Heritage Day in April.*



***The event is great to be a part of. The fact that it is happening all over Europe is a real pull for people and connects all the museums taking part and the visitors enjoying the events. The national publicity that Culture24 can attract is great and reinforces what we are publicising on a local level. The museums benefit from a shared experience, the joint publicity for the event and with greater visitor numbers and experiences.***

All quotes from Chezy Brownen, Heritage Events Co-ordinator, Bath and North East Somerset Council and all images courtesy of Freia Turland / Bath and North East Somerset Council.

## In the bigger picture - Fleet Air Arm Museum, Somerset

Fleet Air Arm museum took part in Museums at Night as a way of directly contributing to the Museums in Somerset Heritage Month. Museums in Somerset is a county network and the heritage month was designed to link with Museums at Night. The museum aimed to attract two target groups:

- Locals who may not have considered accessing the main museum site
- People who might want to find out more about looking after objects

They provided something different by opening Cobham Hall, their highly specialised reserve store which is normally only open to the public through appointment or special events. They also offered additional activities such as guided tours of the stores for small objects and archives. They set up a *Meet the Curator* session so that people could ask for advice on the care of their objects. The museum attracted 22 visitors who queued outside, keen to experience their event. Once inside, the visitors were so engaged by the museum staff that they had to be encouraged to leave at closing time!

Their advice on marketing is to *'ensure that marketing is targeted to the groups you want to attract and that whoever does your marketing, whether an external or internal team, understands the true nature of the evening.'*

The success of this year's event has led to interest amongst Museums in Somerset for Museums at Night to become part of the broader events calendar, and for 2011 Fleet Air Arm Museum is exploring how to work with other local museums to develop a cluster approach.

Information provided by David Hill, Head of Curatorial Division, Fleet Air Arm Museum.

## That's entertainment - Dorchester Museums

In Dorchester, World Heritage (which operates the Dinosaur Museum, Tutankhamun Exhibition, Teddy Bear Museum, & Terracotta Warriors Museum) partnered with the Dorset County Museum, the Keep Military Museum and 10 eateries attracting over 2000 visitors for Museums at Night.



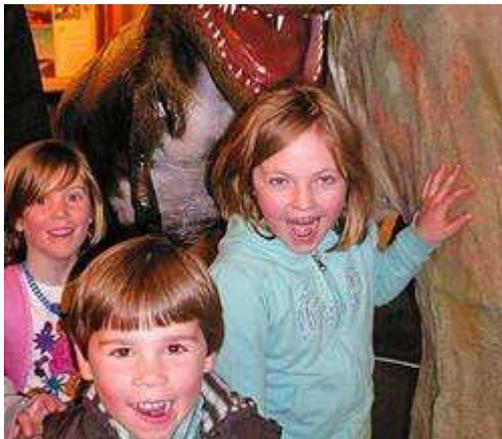
World Heritage and the Dorset County Museum had been a part of Museums at Night in previous years offering discrete events, but recognised that by working together they could offer a more exciting package, so they set up the partnership for 2010 resulting in something totally unique. By working with local restaurants, they encouraged people to see their museums visit as part of a whole evening's entertainment.



Being part of Museums at night 2010 ***'raised the profile of Dorchester and all six museums both locally and nationally. It brought in many visitors on the night that had not been before, or had certainly not been for many years. Cross-fertilisation of business from one museum to another occurred, and it also raised the museums' profile with local businesses. They were perceived as a force for good in the town.'***

Tim Batty, World Heritage

The museums decided to focus on encouraging visitors to enjoy their existing collections by offering a family ticket costing £6 that covered admittance to all of the museums involved. The event was a great success and for 2011 the museums are looking to develop the visitor information available by providing a map and possibly developing a trail linking all six venues.



***'It's good value for money! It's something nice, something different, something educational but it's also fun as well.' "We just wanted something nice to do with your children for the evening - we made use of the offer for dinner, so we had a meal out as well."***

Family who travelled from Bournemouth to Dorchester for Museums at Night.

All photographs courtesy of Rachel Hayward.

## Culture and cheese - Stockport Museums

All the Stockport council-owned cultural attractions joined forces, as in 2009, to create a campaign with an over-arching theme of 'food' to tie in with Stockport Market's 750 celebrations. The participating venues were Staircase House, Stockport Story Museum, Stockport Air Raid Shelters, Stockport Art Gallery, Bramall Hall, Hat Works and Stockport Market. They also joined forces with Reece's Dairy, who created a special Stockport Cheshire Cheese which was showcased during Museums at Night.



To add to this wide-ranging offer they opened Stockport Market for late night shopping, cookery demonstrations and the launch of the new Stockport Cheshire Cheese. Stockport Art Gallery also moved the launch date of its latest exhibition, Reggie's Roller Palace, to coincide with Museums at Night to provide some extra activity and publicity.

**Museums at Night is 'a great way to involve all Stockport's heritage attractions in one initiative and build an overarching campaign. It also receives good publicity and we recognise that it gives those who cannot visit us during normal opening hours, the opportunity to do something cultural in the evening.'**

Christine Stirling, Stockport Council

Stockport Museums wanted to attract a mainly adult audience, and specifically working professionals. They wanted those who might not have time to come and visit them during normal working hours to come and do so. However, as each of the Stockport attractions are different, they also had to remain conscious of the strengths of each site – therefore, Hat Works ran a family event. Working in partnership, the Stockport organisations attracted over 300 visitors.



To make partnership working a success Stockport Museums report that you need as much lead-in time as possible to ensure that there is an opportunity to include everyone who has to be included, brainstorm with them and draw in external organisations as needed.

To successfully market events, Stockport Museums believe that you really need to produce your own literature and make sure it has a strong identity. If you are promoting a number of museums they think an overarching theme works well. They make a point of running all their activities for free to encourage people who may be new to museums, to take a chance and visit. They have also found that people seem to revel in the gruesome, the weird and the wonderful!

All images courtesy of Stockport Council.

## Fun on your doorstep - Great Yarmouth

For Museums at Night 2010, museums in Great Yarmouth joined forces to provide local people with a night of opportunities. All of the local museums, including both council and independent, worked together to offer more than 2500 visitors something that they wouldn't normally expect to find. This included a hog roast, a juggler, a fire eater and an escapologist. Museums used music to dispel the myth that they are old and dusty and not multi-sensory, and employed costumed characters to act as a bridge between their collections and their visitors.

To encourage people to visit all of the venues, they ran a competition to win a family pass to all of the museums for a year by collecting the answers to a list of questions as they moved round the town.

To promote Museums at Night they offered local people a good night out for little or no money. They ran a poetry competition which was picked up by local papers who gave it editorial space. By including listings in the editorial, the Great Yarmouth group were able to promote their events for free.

The Great Yarmouth group wanted to provoke a sense of ownership amongst local people by promoting Museums at Night as a special event for them, encouraging them to visit 'their' museums.

The four council-run venues in Great Yarmouth received 2,231 visitors during the four hour period which is one third of their total event attendance figures for the year. Evaluation showed that 90% of the visitors were local and 75% had not been to a museum before.

Being part of Museums at Night provides the Great Yarmouth group with access to a nationwide PR campaign. It is also a good opportunity for partnership working, and the group are already planning for next year.

# Family friendly - Cyfarthfa Castle, Museum and Art Gallery

For Museums at Night 2010 Cyfarthfa Museum decided to target families with children aged 4-11 years.

*All our current events are held during the daytime. We wanted to run something exciting and different. Often children who come into the Museum will talk about what they think it would be like to be in the Museum at night. We wanted to explore that interest and turn it into an exciting opportunity for families. Holding the event on a Friday night meant that children could stay up later as they had the weekend to recover. We discovered that more parents and grandparents were able to attend the museums at night as they were outside standard working hours.*

Ruth Bradburn, Cyfarthfa Museum and Art Gallery

The museum put on lots of interactive activities:

- Each child was given an activity booklet to complete in the Museum and at home
- Each child got to make a mummy, sarcophagus and burial goods
- Families were given a torch lit tour of the Museum
- Snack time included hot chocolate and time to play the Ancient Egyptian game Senet

To put on a successful event, Cyfarthfa Museum recommend providing activities that cannot be done in the classroom or at home and make learning a by-product of fun and enjoyment.

In the build up to Museums at Night the museum got a number of enquiries asking if there was going to be an adult-focused event. To meet this demand in 2011 Cyfarthfa Museum plans to present two events, one adult-focused and one child-focused.

# Museums at Night 2011: What Next?

Culture24 has successfully built on the success of the 2009 event, increasing the number of participating venues from 125 to 286 and the number of visitors from 34,000 to over 85,000. There is still great scope for future development of Museums at Night and this section details suggested action points based on recommendations from stakeholders, participating organisations, visitors and Culture24 staff.

## **Provide longer lead-in time**

Participating organisations, partner organisations and the PR campaign would benefit from a longer lead-in time for Museums at Night. Culture24 has announced the dates for 2011 (Friday 13 – Sunday 15 May) and intends to start conversations with partners including National Trust, English Heritage, VisitBritain, VisitEngland and the BBC on publication of this evaluation. Culture24 is confident in the future of Museums at Night and will communicate this to partners as it is from long-term partnerships that Museums at Night will really benefit.

### **Action Points:**

- Announce dates on Culture24 website and encourage organisations to start planning their 2011 events
- Explore the possibility of long-term funding and sponsorship agreements
- Hold meetings with English Heritage and National Trust to explore greater involvement from their properties and inclusion in their annual diary and resulting communication activity
- Hold meeting with VisitEngland and the BBC to explore further developing these partnerships

## **Build critical mass**

In 2010 there were 286 organisations involved - 161 more than in 2009, so Museums at Night is growing. Culture24 has a database of over 4000 cultural and heritage organisations and a DDE user contact list of 2110 people. In 2010 14% of the museums that are DDE users of the Culture24 website took part in Museums at Night. From 2009 – 2010 the number of participating organisations more than doubled. Potentially over 572 venues will take part in 2011 and over 1200 in the year of the Olympics.

The concept of bringing many museums together in a countrywide collaboration meets with great support – both to the lead bodies in the sector and to the many museums who feel that they are part of something bigger and special. All stakeholders interviewed think that more organisations should get involved in 2011 and it was mentioned that having more national museums on board will encourage others to get involved.

**Action Points:**

- Work with national museums and galleries currently involved, to encourage additional national organisations to get involved
- Re-visit the possibility of working with Renaissance regional staff to encourage museums, libraries and archives to take part
- Run regional events (in partnership with Renaissance) to promote the campaign to organisations, address any negative perceptions, pass on suggestions for best practice and provide learning opportunities for the sector

Culture24 is already taking steps to develop its existing partnerships and has started to explore potential sponsorship and media partnership opportunities. Another possibility might be to liaise with Show Scotland, the annual long weekend showcasing Scotland's museums and galleries, which in 2010 took place one week before Museums at Night. Working in partnership with Show Scotland would increase the number of events and opportunities for visitors, whilst benefitting all the museums involved, as collectively the opportunities for PR increase exponentially.

Many of the successful stories from Museums at Night 2010 have involved museums working together in partnership. Culture24 could encourage this approach in the planning stages of the campaign providing advice and guidance on how to set up a partnership and make it successful.

**Action Points:**

- Explore sponsorship and media partnership opportunities
- Encourage museums to combine resources and work together for Museums at Night 2011, providing case studies from 2010 and guidance documents to encourage best practice.

**Share the knowledge and develop the skills**

Some museums recognise that the results of this evaluation will be invaluable in encouraging partners to get involved for 2010. Museums have also requested a Museum at Night organisers' directory for networking and peer sharing purposes – this could become an online forum where museum professionals can discuss their challenges and successes. Museums are also keen to see case studies of successful events, so Culture24 may choose to develop a greater number of these during the build up to 2011.

Museums are keen to develop their knowledge and skills and Culture24 has the experience to run seminars on key relevant issues: e.g. attracting audiences for evening openings; how to run evening events; how to hold great events; how to attract a particular audience; how to deal with insurance issues, and ideas for fundraising. Culture24 could set up regional events, giving people in the sector the opportunity to increase their knowledge, meet and share ideas. By working in partnership with MLA to deliver these regional events Culture24 could maximise its potential to use its knowledge to contribute to the development of the sector. Alongside these seminars Culture24 could provide additional guidance documents available to download from the website and accessible via the blog.

Many organisations stated that it was hard to find the resources needed to successfully take part in Museums at Night. Finding funding for these events has become extremely difficult but Culture24 can help organisations by developing a 'how to' guide with ideas on sourcing funding and maximising resources based on case studies from 2009 and 2010 examples. They may also want to issue a guide on how to do Museums at Night on a shoestring.

**Action Points:**

- Explore ways to facilitate peer networking for organisations involved in Museums at Night – this could be an online forum
- Ensure that case studies from 2010 are available to organisations
- Identify the knowledge that Culture24 has gained through Museums at Night and how best to disseminate this. This could be through regional events, online resources, YouTube videos or online seminars

**Build the profile**

The PR campaign in 2010 was very successful. However, some stakeholders believe that commissioning a national, well-connected PR company might develop this further enabling an even higher profile across all media. This might work particularly well for the London launch event, enabling Culture24 to create a 'splash' by harnessing the contacts of the PR company.

Many of the stakeholders, staff and organisations involved believe that Museums at Night needs a figurehead who will endorse and support the campaign and be active as its public face. Culture24 did engage Andrew Collins to speak at the launch event but it was recommended that a celebrity with a broader appeal is engaged for a more long-term relationship. Culture24 is already taking steps to develop a relationship with an appropriate celebrity.

Museums wanted to see more regional and local publicity. Working at this level may not be possible for Culture24 but perhaps if regional co-ordinators were identified (with some attached funding) they could manage the local PR. Alternatively a greater push on 'how to' downloads with the possibility of online seminars or face-to-face sessions may address this area of concern.

One museum suggested that Culture24 should try to organise a BBC programme on the night with guests, discussions and local stations broadcasting from venues all over the country, 'a bit like Children in Need without the fundraising'.

**Action Points:**

- Consider engaging a national PR company to assist with the launch event
- Continue to take steps to find a celebrity figurehead for the campaign
- Consider appointing regional co-ordinators to push local and regional PR

## Further improve the website

Museums and the public feel that it was quite difficult to search for events on the website. This was recognised by Culture24 in the build up to the campaign and last minute changes were made to the website to address this. However, for 2011 this needs to be explored further.

Currently the Museums at Night microsite is both public and sector-facing. There are potential issues with this as the site may never provide effectively for either audience. As Culture24 develops a greater number of resources for museums, including the possibility of an online forum, it is recommended that how to manage this dual-facing site is reconsidered.

### Action Points:

- Continue to improve the online search facility to ensure potential visitors can easily find events in their geographical and interest area
- Reconsider how the Museums at Night microsite is used, enabling clarity for the sector and the public

## Rethink social media

Culture24 actively embraces the use of social media. However, as with the website, there is a possible lack of clarity as all of the tools are used to communicate with both the sector and potential visitors. Culture24 needs to reconsider the role of social media.

### Action Points:

- Write clear objectives for each social media tool identifying its intended audience
- Clarify the messages to be communicated by each channel

## Keep it fresh

Much of Museums at Night success is down to the exciting events put on by participating organisations. New visitors will continue to be attracted to these events but in order to ensure that returning visitors remain inspired to attend Culture24 and the organisations involved will need to think of new events and activities to offer the public.

### Action Points:

- Encourage museums to try new things
- Gather ideas from around the world for events and activities to offer the public
- Consider declaring an overall theme for Museums at Night each year

# Appendix

## Museums at Night 2010: the evaluation process

### **Aims of the evaluation**

We intended to assess:

- Impacts on and views of audiences
- Success in reaching new audiences
- Impacts on and views of venues
- Museums at Night partnerships – successes, benefits and future plans
- Role of Culture24 as campaign coordinators

### **In order to do this we wanted to look at:**

Project inputs:

- Funding
- Staff time
- Partnerships

Project outputs and outcomes:

- Quantitative and qualitative evidence on impacts on:
  - Participating museums – their approach to partnerships, trying new activities and communicating with audiences
  - Visitors – number of new visitors, profile of visitors, attitudes of visitors towards the museums and their events
  - Culture24 – organisational development in terms of profile, staff development and organisational development
- Success of the project in meeting the needs of museum industry stakeholders and partners

Project impacts:

- Indicative impact on museum behaviour beyond Museums at Night
- Indicative impact on visitor behaviour beyond Museums at Night
- On the future of Museums at Night
- On how Culture24 operates in the future
- On the museums sector

## **Our approach to the evaluation**

To complete this evaluation we consulted with museums, visitors and stakeholders and undertook quantitative analysis of the online and offline activities of Culture24.

### 1) Impact on museums

We ran an online survey to gather information from museums. 230 museums were represented in the final survey results giving an 80% return rate. We researched 9 case studies with museums and consortia across the country.

### 2) Impact on audiences

We issued a printed survey to assess the impact on audiences. In order to reach a range of audiences across the country we asked museums to opt in to distributing the questionnaires on our behalf. 64 museums agreed to be part of the evaluation process. 41 of the museums returned a total of 793 evaluation forms, a strong sample providing reliable results.

### 3) Impact of Culture24 and impact on Culture24

A number of metrics related to Culture24's activity were used to assess their success in using online tools to deliver the campaign. We interviewed project staff to understand their views of Museums at Night, its successes, challenges and potential for the future. The venue survey explored sector views on Culture24, its current activity and how it might develop in the future.

### 4) Success in meeting stakeholder and sector needs

We asked the following for their views:

- Roy Clare CBE, Chief Executive Officer, MLA
- John Harrison, Head of Communications, MLA
- Lady Penny Cobham, Chair, VisitEngland
- Tim Holt, VisitEngland
- Amanda Smyth, VisitEngland
- Mark Taylor, Director, Museums Association
- Frances Carey, British Museum
- Dave Musgrove BBC History Magazine
- Jane Ellison, BBC Radio 4
- Alison Dalby, National Trust
- Ruth Bradburn, Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery
- Tim Batty, World Heritage
- Christine Stirling, Stockport Council
- Jonathan Tooke, Norfolk Council
- Chezzy Brownen, Bath and North East Somerset Council
- Fleet Air Arm Museum
- Culture24 staff
- Pandora George, Bullet PR
- Ruth Cobb, Mosaic Marketing Communications