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From going to giving: national crowd-funding initiative heralds new era of creativity in museums

The Art Fund's mission to help museums and galleries buy and show great art for everyone is taking a new turn, in which donating to museums becomes a creative and rewarding experience in its own right. Today the Art Fund launches Art Happens artfund.org/arthappens - a crowd-funding platform housed within the Art Fund website that will help UK museums raise money for new, small-scale, achievable and highly creative projects. Each project will forge an ongoing dialogue between museum and donor, 'thanking' all donors with limited edition rewards, and, unlike other crowd-funding platforms, every penny raised will go directly to the projects, with no fees charged to anyone. The Art Fund is proud to be launching this new and important free fundraising service for UK museums.

"Art Happens is about harnessing the support of everyday visitors to make highly creative things happen." *Stephen Deuchar, Art Fund director*

The first five museums to take part in Art Happens are: Compton Verney, Warwickshire; The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, Shropshire; Jerwood Gallery, Hastings; St Fagans National History Museum, Cardiff; The Bowes Museum, County Durham. Each participating museum has proposed an innovative project with a feasible target; all projects range from £10,000 - £25,000. Throughout the year, several new projects will be added to the platform.

Art Happens: a response to research into what motivates museum visitors to give

Art Happens is a new approach to fundraising, involving and engaging everyday museum visitors in the creation and realisation of new areas of activity. It is launched following focussed research into what motivates museum visitors to give, co-commissioned with the National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC). The research found that:

- Although 93% of museum visitors give to charities, only 40% of those give to museums
- Most visitors don't realise museums need their donations - and don't see giving to museums as 'charitable giving'
- Visitors rarely have a sense of why their donation is needed, or what it might support
- The more engaged a donor is with the 'cause' - the higher the donation
- Visitors currently equate giving to the arts with very high value donations - they tend to think their small donation won't make a difference

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, Shropshire

Transform the Museum of the Gorge: Warehouse of the World - £25,000

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust needs £25,000 to completely transform the Museum of the Gorge through a total redesign of the gallery and an upgrade of the existing auditorium, to create a dynamic space that can be used for museum and community events. The iconic building that houses the museum lies at the heart of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site. It was built in 1832 in a gothic style and once served as the Severn Warehouse for the Coalbrookdale Company. Goods would be brought down from the furnaces and forges in Coalbrookdale and shipped down the river Severn to the markets of Gloucester, Bristol and the Empire beyond. Set right on the river, with wonderful views of the Iron Bridge, the new museum will narrate the story of how the river, roads, railways and canals came together to make the Gorge a vibrant hub of industry from the 1600s right up to the 1950s. Once completed, the Museum of the Gorge will be the starting point for visitors wanting to explore the unique museums and landscapes of Ironbridge. Upgraded audio-visual equipment will allow the museum to develop a varied programme of screenings, from historic Pathé footage to community film events.

Jerwood Gallery, Hastings

Bring the Chapman brothers home for their first major show in Hastings - £25,000

Jerwood wants to bring a major exhibition of work by the Chapman Brothers, one of Hastings's most famous exports, to the gallery. The exhibition will present new, previously unseen, work by Jake and Dinos Chapman, including pieces commissioned exclusively for the exhibition. The brothers will scour the antique emporiums and junk shops of Hastings for old artworks which will then be 'fixed' (or perhaps defaced) by the brothers in their inimitable style. There will be an unusual public programme of events to complement the exhibition, 'including a 'live' fixing clinic where members of the public will be able to witness artworks being doctored by the brothers, and there will also be a tattoo parlour, terrifyingly manned by Jake Chapman. The exhibition will mark a significant moment as it will bring the Chapman Brothers back home for their first major exhibition of new work in the town where they grew up and went to school.

St Fagans National History Museum, National Museum Wales, Cardiff

The reconstruction of Bryn Eryr, an Iron Age farmstead - £25,000

Donations would facilitate the building of Bryn Eryr, an Iron Age farmstead based on an Anglesey archaeological site from the time of the Roman conquest. This rural settlement will consist of two roundhouses built with six-foot-thick clay walls and conical thatched roofs. With the help of volunteers, the specialist historic building team will raise up the clay walls using traditional construction methods. Where possible they will use replicas of Iron Age tools made by the museum's resident blacksmith. The roof will be thatched with spelt grown in a field nearby. The homes in the settlement will be brought to life with household goods, ranging from bronze cauldrons and Roman-inspired pottery to colourful textiles hanging on looms and decorative glass beads. These goods will be handmade by some of the finest craftspeople in Wales, as well as volunteers specially trained at the museum. When Bryn Eryr is complete, visitors of all ages will be able to discover the lives of its original inhabitants. The settlement is part of the museum's Making History Project, whose goal is to transform the much-loved museum into a space where visitors can follow the stories of the people of Wales, from the first human inhabitants to the present day.

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£100,000 Art Fund Prize for Museum of the Year - an annual celebration of the best of UK museums, won in 2013 by William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow. We are independently funded, the majority of our income coming from over 108,000 members who, through the National Art Pass, enjoy free entry to over 220 museums, galleries and historic houses across the UK, as well as 50% off entry to major exhibitions.

Arts Council England champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries - from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2011 and 2015, we will invest £1.4 billion of public money from government and an estimated £1 billion from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk

National Museum Directors' Council

The National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC) represents the leaders of the UK's national collections and major regional museums. Our members are the national and major regional museums in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the British Library, the National Library of Scotland and the National Archives. While our members are funded by government, the NMDC is an independent, non-governmental organisation.

The NMDC was founded in 1929, in anticipation of a Royal Commission recommendation that the national collections should 'coordinate their work and discuss matters of mutual concern'. Today the NMDC acts as an advocate on behalf of its members and their collective priorities, and provides its membership with a valuable forum for discussion and debate and an opportunity to share information and work collaboratively. www.nationalmuseums.org.uk