

PRESS RELEASE

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UK Museums, Galleries and Visitors Welcome Reopening – But New Figures Show Sector Still Faces an Uncertain Future

- **Over half of museums and galleries still concerned about their survival**
- **Museum visitor numbers down 75% in 2020/21 and income down 62%**
- **Almost a quarter of people in Britain (24%) say they want to visit museums and galleries at least five times a year**
- **Art Fund is urging the public to return to help museums and galleries thrive**

Today (17 May) sees re-openings at hundreds of museums and galleries across England and Wales – a sector which was thriving before the pandemic.

But new research from Art Fund, the national charity for art and home of the National Art Pass, reveals that UK museums and galleries could be suffering from a cultural ‘long-Covid’ with many still facing an uncertain future – with the effects of the pandemic set to reverberate for years to come.

The survey found that over half (55%) of museums and galleries remain concerned about their long-term survival. Just 24% said they were not very concerned, and only 4% not at all concerned, about their ability to survive.

The sector showed remarkable ingenuity to get through the pandemic - with many experimenting with reaching their audiences online or becoming Covid testing or vaccination centres for their communities – but the support of the public visiting them in person as lockdown lifts will be vital.

Art Fund’s research found that visitor numbers were down 75% in 2020/21 compared with the previous year, and income was down 62%. More than a third (37% of all museums in the survey) have a new deficit this financial year.

Emergency grants often provided a lifeline over the course of the past year. Of those who took part in the research, 39% said they had relied on local authority grants, 38% on the Government’s Culture Recovery Fund and one in five cited grants from Art Fund as an important source of support.

There is voracious appetite to be back with friends and family in these familiar places enjoying art. A poll commissioned by Art Fund showed that almost a quarter of people in Britain (24%) would ideally like to visit museums, galleries, and exhibitions at least five times a year.* Ensuring they do will be vital to help the sector recover.

Art Fund, with its 130,000 National Art Pass members, is now asking everyone to visit their local museum or art gallery – or others across the UK during staycations – to help our much-loved

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institutions get back on their feet and thrive. And with Art Fund's National Art Pass, the public can see more art for less, and the money goes straight back to funding museums and galleries.

Jenny Waldman, Art Fund director, said: "This past year we have all been deprived of our museums, galleries and historic houses. Now everyone has the power to breathe life back into their favourite museum by going with family and friends. These much-loved places have made heroic efforts to stay afloat over the past year and are now ready to safely welcome everybody back. By visiting with Art Fund's National Art Pass everyone has the chance to be inspired to see more art and new places, at the same time giving back to the museums they love. There is no better way to thank them than visiting over the summer."

There are over 2,500 museums and galleries across the UK, many of them in our cities and towns but many in the heart of community in more remote locations - from the Orkneys to St Agnes in Cornwall and from Anglesey to County Fermanagh.

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Editors notes:

- Looking Ahead: Museum Sector Research, commissioned by Art Fund and conducted by Wafer Hadley, completed in April 2021, among the directors of 316 UK museums, galleries and historic houses. To read the research in full go to: <https://www.artfund.org/assets/downloads/looking-ahead-sector-research-report-2021.pdf>
- * This figure is from a poll commissioned by Art Fund from YouGov Plc
- To join Art Fund and sign up for a National Art Pass visit www.artfund.org/national-art-pass
- For more information about grants funded by Art Fund visit www.artfund.org/supporting-museums
- For images visit: <https://bibli.artfund.org/web/6eed884a7bbb64b4/museums-reopening/>

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About Art Fund's National Art Pass

Annual membership of Art Fund with the National Art Pass opens up free entry to hundreds of museums, galleries and historic places across the UK as well as 50% off major exhibitions. Every membership or gift purchase helps Art Fund support these vital spaces to thrive.

www.artfund.org/national-art-pass

About Art Fund

Art Fund is the national fundraising charity for art. It provides millions of pounds every year to help museums to acquire and share works of art across the UK, further the professional development of

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their curators, and inspire more people to visit and enjoy their public programmes. In response to Covid-19 Art Fund has made £2 million in adapted funding available to support museums through reopening and beyond, including Respond and Reimagine grants to help meet immediate need and reimagine future ways of working. Art Fund is independently funded, supported by the 130,000 members who buy the National Art Pass, who enjoy free entry to over 240 museums, galleries and historic places, 50% off major exhibitions, and receive Art Quarterly magazine. Art Fund also supports museums through its annual prize, Art Fund Museum of the Year. In a unique edition of the prize for 2020, Art Fund responded to the unprecedented challenges that all museums are facing by selecting five winners and increasing the prize money to £200,000. The winners are Aberdeen Art Gallery; Gairloch Museum; Science Museum; South London Gallery; and Towner Eastbourne www.artfund.org