

## Press Release

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

### **Museums Association warns of museum closures ahead**

As the cuts to government departments and local government bite deeper there is every possibility of the closure of all or part of some museum services says the Museums Association. There are predicted cuts of at least a further 5% in next Wednesday's spending review on top of an average of 20% cuts (more in real terms) already endured by museums. Some buildings and services cannot survive – particularly in local government, which is being pressed so hard at the moment.

Director of the Museums Association, Mark Taylor comments:

*We are reaching the tipping point. Museums have high costs in maintaining public buildings and these cuts mean that they have little or no money to make collections available to the people that own them – the public. We risk having the world's largest collection of white elephants up and down the country with museums either closed or unable to deliver adequate levels of service.*

The Museums Association surveyed cuts to museums in 2011 and 2012 (our 2013 survey will report in the autumn). We found that 31% of respondents experienced a budget cut of more than 10% in the past year alone. 22% of respondents have reduced access to sites by closing whole or parts of sites, permanently or temporarily.

More than a third of museums who responded to our 2011 and 2012 surveys had experienced a cut of over 35% over the two years, leading to reduced staff and reduced public services. See <http://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/funding-cuts>  
By 2016 national museums in England may have had their funding from government cut by almost 30%.

This decline in the UK's world-class museums coincides with increasing demand for museums. Public participation has reached an all-time high since records began. The proportion of people who visited a museum or gallery reached 52% in 2012/23 - a significant increase from 42% in 2005/06. This means that some 4 million more people visited a museum in 2012/13 than in 2005/6. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/taking-part-2012-13-quarter-3-statistical-release>

Recent research into public attitudes to museums shows that the public has a strong, growing, emotional attachment to museums. Museums occupy a unique and privileged place in the public imagination. There is a consistent view that museums have changed for the better and free entry is highly valued. Museums are trusted by the public, in stark contrast with suspicion of the spin and bias of other public institutions.

*BritainThinks* was commissioned by the Museums Association to conduct a programme of research into public attitudes to museums and, in particular, their purpose and role in society in a series of six day-long deliberative workshops across the UK. See

<http://www.museumsassociation.org/museums2020/11122012-what-the-public-thinks>

Museums' contribution to the economy is also at risk – every £1 invested in culture produces £2. See *Cultural Capital* Tony Travers (2010)

<http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/news/?item=cultural-capital>

Says Taylor:

*This shows the strengths of museums and what we are in danger of losing. Museums are of and for their communities, provide a sense of identity and place in troubled times and a key educational resource. They are also vital in attracting tourists and spending. All these attributes are imperilled.*

For further comment or information, contact:

Georgie Stagg Director Assistant Museums Association 020 7566 7850

[georgie@museumsassociation.org](mailto:georgie@museumsassociation.org)

Mark Taylor, Director, Museums Association, Tel: 07904 950567

[mark@museumsassociation.org](mailto:mark@museumsassociation.org)

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#### Note for editors

The Museums Association (MA) is the independent membership organisation representing museums and galleries in the UK and people who work for them. It has over 6,000 individual members and 600 institutional members. These institutional members encompass around 1500 museums in the UK ranging from the largest government-funded national museums to small volunteer-run charitable trust museums. Formed in 1889, it is a not-for-profit charity, receiving no government funding, which seeks to inform, represent and develop museums and people who work for them in order that they may provide a better service to society and the public.

Tel: 020 7566 7800

[www.museumsassociation.org](http://www.museumsassociation.org)

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