



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 12 October 2020**

**STATEMENT FROM BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF MUSEUMS ON REDUNDANCIES AND IMPACT OF COVID ON THE SECTOR**

The British Association of Friends of Museums represents 200 groups around the UK with combined membership of over 70,000 people who love museums. We are pleased to see the Culture Recovery Fund awards announced which will be a vital lifeline for many museums and other cultural organisations.

We have seen with dismay the impact of the Covid crisis on the sector and a survey of our members has revealed concerns they have for the devastating consequences for museums. Museums have lost income during what should have been their peak season and face ongoing restrictions in the way they are able to operate and engage with visitors.

Civic museums face further budget cuts as local authorities prepare for a difficult future and as a non-statutory service museums are vulnerable. Retail is no longer the driver for town centre economies that it once was. Our cultural venues can play a valuable role as a focus of community identity, drawing local and tourism footfall into town centres and of course, continuing in their mission to protect our heritage and provide inspiration and enjoyment for visitors.

It is not an exaggeration to say that many museums face an existential crisis. Damaging rounds of redundancies have been announced and the consequent loss of skills and knowledge will take many years to rebuild. This is not to mention the destruction of the career aspirations of the creative and committed people who work in our museums, usually for salaries which undervalue their knowledge and talents. And also those of creative practitioners for whom the venues are a key part of the cultural ecology.

BAFM members contribute over 250,000 hours of voluntary work to museums annually. However we do not endorse the use of volunteers as a cost-cutting substitute for paid staff. We offer them our solidarity as they face the anxiety of an uncertain future.

The awards made through the DCMS's Culture Recovery Fund are very welcome. We would like the Government to extend the programme in next financial year. We ask that in planning measures for supporting the post Covid recovery the Government recognises the part museums and galleries can play in supporting the local and national economy and contributing to the enrichment of many peoples' lives.

UK museums really merit that over-used term 'world-leading'. It would be a tragedy if they and their staff were allowed to become part of the collateral damage of the Covid crisis.

*Dame Rosemary Butler*  
*President, BAFM*

*Alex Walker*  
*Chair, BAFM*

## **ABOUT BAFM**

The British Association of Friends of Museums (BAFM) is an independent charity established in 1973 for friends, volunteers and supporters in museums, galleries and heritage sites. Today it represents more than 70,000 friends and volunteers across the UK. Through a network of regional coordinators and local and national events, BAFM offers a practical support and advocacy for friends organisations and acts as a central source of information and guidance for people passionate about the arts, culture and heritage.

BAFM actively supports Friends through an annual awards scheme.

A summary of the results on our summer 2020 survey on the impact of the Covid crisis is available.

For more information on The British Association of Friends of Museums (BAFM) and the contribution of Friends groups to the museum sector, please contact Alex Walker (Chair of BAFM)

[chair@bafm.co.uk](mailto:chair@bafm.co.uk) , or telephone 07507 888271 or go to [www.bafm.ac.uk](http://www.bafm.ac.uk)

## **PHOTOGRAPHY AVAILABLE**

JPEG images of a range of BAFM national and local activities are available from Charlotte Spink at [northeast@bafm.co.uk](mailto:northeast@bafm.co.uk)

## **END OF MEDIA RELEASE**

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