



Museum of Natural History University of Oxford

STRATEGY 2026-2029

"...a museum in the largest sense of the word." The Oxford Museum,
Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art, London, Vol. 1,
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Museum of
**Natural
History**
University of Oxford



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VISION

To connect everyone to the
science and art of the natural world.

MISSION

To awaken and nurture a lifelong interest in nature by preserving and promoting the Museum's collections and advancing and sharing the sciences of the natural environment.

We will achieve this by:

- Connecting the Museum's collections with increasingly diverse audiences – local, national and global – through innovative and creative engagement and programming, both physical and digital.
- Enabling everyone to reflect and make decisions on issues relating to the natural world in an informed, evidence-led manner.
- Taking a proactive and innovative role to challenge established inequalities in order to inspire and support diverse and scientifically literate generations to come.
- Enabling people to have a rich and sustained lifelong relationship with the Museum, its collections and the natural sciences by ensuring a continuum of engagement from early childhood through to mature adulthood.
- Supporting the mission of the University of Oxford and other higher education institutions in relation to research, object-led learning, and public engagement with research.
- Emphasising hope and agency, rather than hopelessness, when addressing difficult issues such as climate change and biodiversity loss.
- Exploring the arts/science interface as a means of demystifying science, and sharing the joy and beauty of the natural world.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



COLLECTIONS

- Maintain excellence by curating and stewarding collections through ongoing organizational and environmental care, capacity and expectation management, and supporting balanced access.
- Improve collections discoverability, accessibility, and digital preservation through a programme of largescale collections digitisation and partnerships with UK natural science museums and facilities.
- Collaborate across GLAM to complete the build and development of the Collections Teaching & Research Centre (CTRC) and the Swindon Collections Storage Facility (CSF), including the new Spirit Store.
- Develop robust storage solutions and modern research facilities within the MNH building that open the collections to a new era of investigation and improve the quality of collection care.



AUDIENCE

- Enable all visitors to enjoy a rich and fulfilling experience at the Museum of Natural History through a coordinated and welcoming approach that includes a visible and engaged ambassador presence, intuitive wayfinding, a cohesive offer, and a clear sense of place, and inclusive consideration of all access needs.
- Develop and implement a five-year exhibition strategy centred on Contemporary Science and Society (Human Stories & Living Planet), Cultural Cross-Over, and Family-Friendly themes, while establishing a touring exhibitions programme to extend MNH's reach and maximise return on investment in exhibition design and development.
- Redevelop permanent exhibition galleries to highlight key assets of the MNH, as part of the ongoing masterplan.
- Develop and implement a data-driven social media strategy adopting a diversity of techniques for varied audiences to promote the range of MNH activity and people.
- Establish and sustain a cohesive MNH brand identity across all touchpoints, including signage, online, communications, templates, educational materials, and merchandise.



LEARNING

- Maintain a focus on the importance of school programming, using data on the demography of visiting schools to inform engagement strategy.
- Deliver a strategic Higher Education teaching programme that connects students with world-leading research, collections, and expertise, while maintaining excellence in provision for Earth Sciences and Biology at the University.
- Develop and maintain high-quality, innovative and commercially resilient informal science engagement from early years to adulthood, with experiential programming specific to key audiences within that spectrum.
- Collaborate with other GLAM institutions to implement the Collections Teaching & Research Centre use strategy.



RESEARCH

- Strengthen partnerships with University departments to better integrate the Museum's collections and research into the University's teaching, research, and public engagement, while encouraging greater collaboration and resource sharing.
- Create strong connections between research and the visitor experience by drawing on the exceptional academic expertise of the Museum and the University
- Maintain research excellence toward REF2029 through a vibrant research programme using specimen-based approaches to understand life and environmental evolution and cultural heritage, sustained external funding and diversified income, strong publication output in leading journals, and active training of students, postdocs, and fellows.
- Develop the Museum's role as an incubator for collections-focussed early career researchers and take an active role in mentoring them to further develop their career.



OUR PEOPLE

- Ensure the Museum fosters a high-quality, positive, and fulfilling working environment by supporting staff wellbeing, balancing workloads, and providing meaningful professional development through training initiatives that strengthen communication and promote organisational best practices.
- Cultivate a communicative and supportive culture across teams, modelled by the Senior Leadership Team and Leadership Council, through effective project coordination, transparent cross team reporting, purposeful committee action, and clear reciprocal representation in externally facing committees.
- Embed inclusive recruitment and employment practices to build a diverse, representative workforce and commit to a culture of inclusion, belonging, and equity across the Museum.
- Maintain a supportive, high-quality experience for volunteers across the range of work the Museum undertakes.



OUR BUILDING

- Maintain a compliant and responsive facilities and operations programme that proactively and efficiently addresses health, safety, security and building issues, ensuring uninterrupted service to the community.
- Address accessibility, safety, and sustainability through a programme of historically sensitive repairs and improvements to the Grade 1-listed building including the front entrance, roof, window refurbishment, and other prioritised projects.
- Develop a masterplan for the repurposing of behind-the-scenes Museum spaces.
- Engage in a feasible facilities improvement program to enhance commercial, research, and collections areas to support revenue generation, visitor experience, and scientific progress.



OUR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Act as a forum and hub, within the University and beyond, for discussion and debate around the impact of climate change, biodiversity and biomass loss, and environmental degradation through programming, exhibits, and messaging.
- Serve as proactive champions and exemplars of environmental responsibility and sustainability within the University by leveraging public facing facility projects to demonstrate best practices in advancing sustainability across its heritage buildings.
- Develop and embark on a carbon reduction programme towards the University target of net zero in 2035, and a parallel programme of biodiversity enhancement.

FINANCE AND FUNDRAISING

- Implement and refine a decentralised annual budgeting process that enhances transparency, establishes team ownership of cost centres, incorporates regular reporting, and allows for strategic decision making on spend.
- Enhance income through development and implementation of a new commercial strategy that aligns with the Museum's identity and responds to visitor demand and market opportunities.
- Enhance philanthropic income through development of a comprehensive strategy that incorporates Board stakeholders, the establishment of a Director's Circle, development of an engagement strategy, and the launch of appeal campaigns.



**"If you love museums,
this has it all."**

TRIP ADVISOR



Approved by the Museum of Natural History Board of Visitors 22 June 2026



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