



OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

# STRATEGY 2024-2029

"...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

- Improve collections discoverability and accessibility through a programme of large-scale collections digitisation and partnerships with UK natural science museums and facilities.
- Devise and implement robust storage solutions and modern research facilities that open the collections to a new era of investigation, and improve the quality of collection care.
- Promote systems of effective preservation for digital collections across GLAM (Gardens, Libraries and Museums).
- Develop a programme of targeted contemporary collecting, to support future research questions on climate change and biodiversity loss.
- Take a proactive and collaborative approach to repatriation and decoloniality through an honest and transparent process of exploration of people and place.
- Collaborate across the GLAM museums to complete collection moves to the Collections Teaching & Research Centre (CTRC) and the Swindon Collections Storage Facility (CSF), including the new Spirit Store.



## AUDIENCES

- Continue to deliver Life, As We Know It, the redisplay masterplan, with high quality, innovative and visually beautiful displays in the main court.
- Develop and deliver digital layering to accompany Life, As We Know It and other aspects of the redisplay programme.
- Implement a campaign as part of the masterplan to make the art of the public areas more representative and equitable, particularly in relation to women in science.
- Continue to develop and deliver Contemporary Science & Society (CSS) exhibitions as interdisciplinary explorations of current science developments and issues.
- Increase the proportion of CSS exhibitions that tour to other venues, as a means of enhancing the MNH brand and increasing cost effectiveness.
- Create a sustainable funding model for youth programmes.
- Programme a rich pathway of informal science learning from under-10s to mature adulthood.
- Develop programmes of regular public tours to showcase the Collections Teaching & Research Centre (CTRC) and the Swindon Collections Storage Facility.
- Develop and deliver a new Museum website and enhance the digital offer.
- Raise the profile of the Museum as a centre of excellence for public engagement within the university.



## LEARNING

- Maintain a focus on the importance of school programming, using data on the demography of visiting schools to inform engagement strategy.
- Build and strengthen links with cognate academic departments (including Archaeology, Biology, Earth Sciences and Geography & Environment) to enhance teaching programmes.
- Introduce new teaching opportunities focussed on collections, both delivered and facilitated, for Oxford and non-Oxford HEIs.
- Work with other GLAM institutions to develop interdisciplinary teaching within the Collections Teaching & Research Centre.
- Enhance informal student engagement, including as a space to enhance wellbeing.





## RESEARCH

- Develop the Museum's role as an incubator for collections-focused early career researchers, and take an active role in mentoring them.
- Ensure that early career research opportunities support those from under-represented backgrounds.
- Enable a smooth continuum of career development for researchers.
- Further develop and evaluate the Museum's innovative bursary programme to support young scientists from backgrounds under-represented in natural science research.
- Reintroduce the Visiting Fellows programme emphasising equity, diversity and inclusion.
- Build humanities and social sciences research programmes, and increase the number of doctoral researchers in these areas.
- Work with cognate departments to ensure seamless and bi-directional access to research facilities.
- Build the Museum's research strategically towards REF 2029.
- Diversify the range of research income and raise overhead levels.
- Enhance the visibility of research taking place within the Museum, across the University and beyond.



## OUR PEOPLE

- Ensure the Museum provides a high-quality, positive and fulfilling workplace experience.
- Maintain effective personal development as one of the principal enabling factors for the continued success of the Museum.
- Develop and enhance cross-GLAM collaborations, working relationships and secondment opportunities.
- Enable Museum staff to have a greater external profile within the sector.
- Engage in equitable recruitment to encourage staff diversity, including working towards accreditation as a Disability Confident employer
- Work to provide a supportive, high-quality experience for volunteers, extending the range of work the Museum is able to undertake.



## OUR BUILDING

- Enhance the quality of 'behind the scenes' spaces to create a modern and well-equipped facility for natural history study, accessible to both researchers and the public.
- Address accessibility and safety for visitors and staff through a programme of historically sensitive repairs and improvements to the Grade 1-listed building.
- Develop a masterplan for the repurposing of Museum spaces vacated by collections moves.
- Partner with the Pitt Rivers Museum to introduce new, more effective signage within and outside the Museum.
- Prioritise the implementation of a programme of window repair and refurbishment to enhance environmental sustainability and improve collections care towards accreditation as a Disability Confident employer.




## OUR ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Develop and embark on a carbon reduction programme to achieve net zero in 2035, and a parallel programme of biodiversity enhancement.
- Take a proactive role within the University as champions and exemplars in environmental responsibility and sustainability.
- Act as a forum, within the University and beyond, for discussion and debate around the impact of climate change, biodiversity and biomass loss, and environmental degradation.
- Move towards the use of electric vehicles for the movement of collections between storage sites.

## FINANCE AND FUNDRAISING

- Enhance the level of philanthropic income, particularly through endowment fundraising.
- Enhance commercial income through the installation of a new café.
- Enhance commercial income by refitting the Museum shop, increasing the online offer and developing bespoke product lines including partnerships with other vendors.
- Develop effective commercial partnerships and collaborations across GLAM, including enhancing licensing activity.

A woman with glasses and a colorful patterned sweater is looking at a young girl in a museum. The girl is wearing a red top and a pink headband. They are standing in front of a display case. The background is blurred, showing other museum exhibits.

“If you love museums,  
this has it all.”

TRIP ADVISOR



Approved by the Museum of Natural History Board of Visitors 6 June 2024  
Approved by GLAM Board 10 July 2024



[WWW.OUMNH.OX.AC.UK](http://WWW.OUMNH.OX.AC.UK)



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