



FINAL CLOSURE STATEMENT

CORNWALL MUSEUMS PARTNERSHIP (CMP) COMPLETES PROACTIVE CLOSURE AND ENSURES POSITIVE LEGACY, ONGOING EVOLUTION AND SUPPORT FOR MUSEUMS ACROSS THE REGION AND BEYOND

Cornwall Museums Partnership (CMP), the charity that existed to create positive social change with museums, has completed the Arts Council England funded Transition process and has come to a positive closure.

The museum specialist body focused on securing a legacy of its work to ensure the continuation of its purpose to create positive social impact for museums and heritage settings across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Over the last few months, ongoing discussions and negotiations led by CEO Tamzyn Smith, in collaboration with CMP's Board, have achieved a number of the evolutionary objectives set when the decision to close was made.

These include the planned 'adoption' of the organisation's live projects to new homes, the continuation of funding for the museum sector, support for the valued team in securing new roles and homes crucially, ongoing support for Cornwall's exceptional rural museums and heritage adjacent organisations. They are proud to have achieved this, creating a blueprint for others in the cultural sector who are either facing similar challenges, or who may do in the future.

In January 2023, Arts Council England withdrew CMP's conditional offer of National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) 2023-26 funding. In March 2023, following an additional application process, the Arts Council offered CMP investment from its Transition programme. Transition funding is granted to previous NPO organisations to "assist them to wind down or move towards a new operating and/or funding model in a managed and orderly manner."

Since 2015, CMP has worked with 24 funders, unlocking £8.1m for the sector, and been there to provide support through projects, programmes, funding, advice, advocacy, and opportunities to convene for the 70+ museums and heritage settings across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. The organisation has invested over £3.5m directly into 63 museums and heritage organisations in Cornwall, £2.7m into more than 400 CreaTech collaborators, and commissioned almost 100 specialist consultants and freelancers to deliver over 40 programmes and projects.

Providing more than 500 sector workforce development opportunities, CMP also established and facilitated 13 peer and specialist museum networks. The overall investment sourced by CMP for cultural and heritage activities in Cornwall has either created or supported a significant 178 jobs for 173 people.

Despite this impressive legacy of experience, success, development, project delivery, outreach, consultancy, innovation, work, and talent, an extensive, independent strategic business and funding review clearly illustrated that a secure and sustainable way for CMP to move to a new operating model could not be developed within ACE's Transition programme timeframe or the current challenging funding climate. Therefore, in November 2023 the CMP Board made the difficult, but necessary, decision to commence a phased closure process.

CEO Tamzyn Smith says, "The findings of the independent business and funding review as part of our Transition process was highly unexpected, but once we got over the initial shock, as a team we agreed that we wanted to embark on this ending and closure in a new way. We committed to making this exit an evolution, and to it being as positive, proactive, and human-centred as it could be. Importantly we set out to provide a positive legacy, and where possible, to find new, fitting, 'adoptive homes' for CMP's invaluable work."

From April, Cornwall's Museum Development Officer, Stephanie Clemens will transition to be a member of the Cornwall Council Culture Team. Stephanie will continue to deliver support and expert advice through the South West Museum Development Programme, funded by Arts Council England. She will also contribute to the wider Cultural Programme funded through Cornwall Council's Cultural Investment Programme.

Another CMP project, the St Ives Digital Town Trail, funded through Central Government's Town Deal Programme, will be further developed, and delivered by the Leach Pottery. The Citizen Curators learning portal will continue to be steered by a co-creator of the project, Tehmina Goskar, at the Museum of Cornish Life.

CMP's work with the team at Carefree Cornwall - the Museum of Carefree and the Culture Card projects - will be further developed by that team. The impactful and powerful work with Black Voices Cornwall and Museum X in the creation of the documentary, "To whom does this belong" will also be built on and carefully grown.

Another innovative CMP project, Safe Access, working in partnership with Queer Kernow, will move to being part of the national portfolio of the Association of Independent Museums (AIM). This R&D project highlights the risk to wellbeing that increasing access to collections presents, especially for researchers from marginalised backgrounds. This work is funded by NLHF via their Heritage Innovation Fund and supported by the Young Foundation. As part of the positive transition, CMP's Jenna Marrion will move to AIM to lead the project.

Last month, CMP also ran their final, highly successful Heritage Awards at Kresen Kernow in Redruth. At the awards, Tamzyn Smith said, "Since we all gathered last year for these much-valued awards, it's fair to say we have shared many challenges within our sector. Yet, in these unsettling times, our local museums play a vital role in supporting our communities by engaging them with spaces and places, people, and collections. Museums, in their broadest sense are an essential sanctuary for curiosity and inquiry, prompting and enabling more significant questions and feelings to be explored. Our aim once we made the closure decision, was that the legacy of CMP would continue to deliver meaningful social impact through the new host organisations, for museums and heritage settings across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. We are proud to have achieved this."

Tamzyn continued, "We can also all be proud of the fact that CMP's closure is a story of teamwork, collaboration, resilience, hope, opportunistic thinking, empathy, and integrity. At this pivotal point, we can look forward to exciting new beginnings and celebrate what CMP has achieved since 2015, rather than what it has lost. This was an unexpected 'transition' for all involved, and I'm very happy to report that, now we are in the final stages of the journey, our human-centred approach has ensured that the team has come out with a positive final chapter. It's a journey that I feel honoured to have gone through with the support of the CMP Board, Committee members and our wonderful team. We've also had support from a number of our national and local cultural and creative industry colleagues, all of whom have helped us land a dignified and, in a sense, a celebratory close to our charity. I hope other organisations may find our blueprint in some way inspiring, when facing unexpected change."

Vic Harding from South West Museum Development said, "We would like to take this moment to celebrate our partnership with Cornwall Museums Partnership (CMP) and thank the dedicated team with whom we have collaborated for over 10 years. Funding from Cornwall Council and South West Museum Development for the Cornwall Museum Development Officer (MDO) is secured for the coming two years, and we are so pleased that Steph Clemens will be joining the Culture Team at Cornwall Council ensuring the continuation of support for museums across Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly through the South West Museums Development Programme."

Mark Trevethan, Principal Culture Lead from Cornwall Council said, "Over the last decade, Cornwall Museums Partnership (CMP) has been an excellent advocate for the Duchy's museums and provided expertise through their talented and energetic team. CMP will be very much missed, and we thank the team for all their work. We now look forward to welcoming the Museums Development Officer into the Culture Team of Cornwall Council and ensuring that expert advice and support continues to be available to the museum sector across Cornwall."

Lisa Ollerhead, CEO of the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) said, "We are delighted to support the ongoing Safe Access project with Queer Kernow. Innovation thrives on breaking barriers and fostering inclusivity, and Safe Access exemplifies these principles. Thanks to the support of NLHF we are glad to give this project a home and continue CMP's important work. Welcoming Jenna to the AIM team to drive this project forward is a great opportunity, and we look forward to sharing the outcomes of this innovative work in due course."

An Arts Council England spokesperson said: "Over the past 10 years, Cornwall Museum Partnership has laid firm groundwork for the local sector. We are pleased to have supported a thoughtful closure programme through Transition Funding and will continue to support museums in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly for the long-term benefit of residents and visitors to the South West."

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