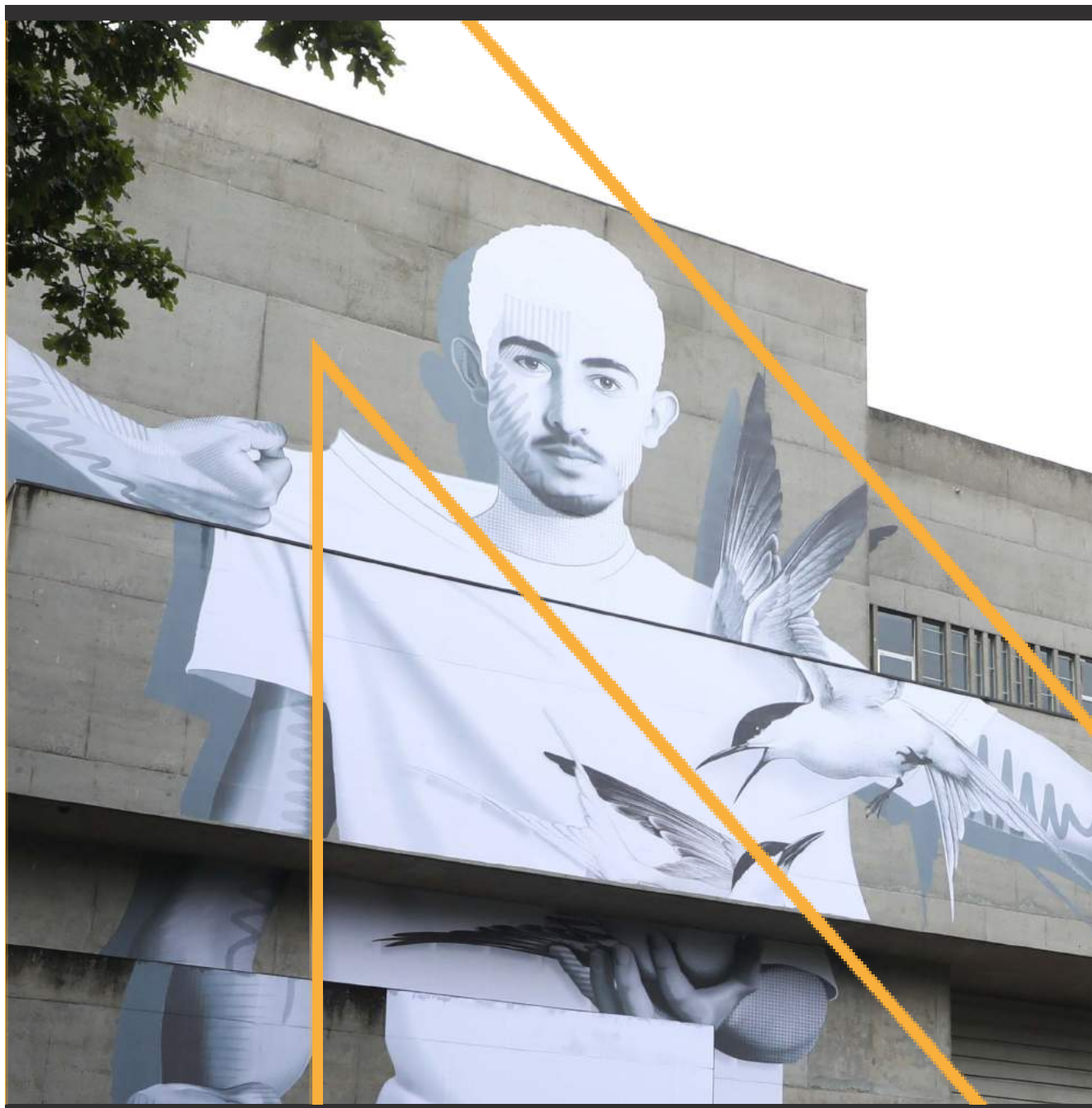


ANNUAL REVIEW

2021-22

NNNi
NATIONAL
MUSEUMS NI



Counterpart by Joe Caslin

ABOUT NATIONAL MUSEUMS NI

Hello.

We are an organisation responsible for four diverse museums - Ulster Museum, Ulster Folk Museum, Ulster Transport Museum and Ulster American Folk Park - and we serve as a custodian of the 1.4 million objects within the National Collection. Our vision is to celebrate who we are; telling the stories of our past, challenging our present and shaping our future.

Our founding legislation establishes that National Museums NI has the following responsibilities with reference to the heritage of Northern Ireland:

To care for, preserve and add to the collections.

To ensure that the collections are available to the public through exhibitions, effective interpretation and availability for research and study.

To promote the awareness, appreciation and understanding of: art, history and science; the way of life and traditions of people and; the migration and settlement of people.

This review charts how we have met these responsibilities in the financial year ending 31st March 2022. It is structured around the **four key commitments** outlined in our Corporate Strategy 2021-25.



CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

In my role as Chairman of the Board of Trustees, I would like to extend a warm invitation to you - as a partner, stakeholder or interested onlooker - to explore this Annual Review publication, which charts the progress made by National Museums NI in the reporting year ending 31st March 2022.

In what has been a largely complex and worrisome time for the museums and heritage sector, and indeed most other sectors, the Trustees have sought to support National Museums NI to remain resolute in the pursuit of our longer-term strategic ambitions. Now more than ever, museums must demonstrate their ability to be a force for good in this world and create positive impacts for the benefit of all. It pleases me, in that regard, to present you with just some of the projects that evidence the impact that National Museums NI continues to generate. I have had the opportunity to witness these projects first-hand, such as The Conservation Volunteers partnership activity now taking place at the Ulster Folk Museum (featured on page 15). This project alone speaks to opportunity for museums to rethink their services, ensuring that they are geared towards achieving positive social and environmental outcomes in a way that embraces partnership working and innovation. With these initiatives now firmly embedded within National Museums NI, and others like them in development, I am optimistic and excited about the future.

Miceal McCoy



CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S INTRODUCTION

2021-22 was an extremely busy, but productive and ultimately rewarding year at National Museums NI. It represented the first year of our new five-year corporate strategy, which set out an ambitious programme of investment and recalibration to transform our museum services and spaces. And, as with any journey, we needed to ensure strong and stable progress from the outset. It also represented a significant year for society as it marked the centenary of the creation of Northern Ireland and the partition of Ireland, which was a critical opportunity for our work to make an impact through encouraging debate, providing new perspectives and promoting reconciliation. Remaining with us throughout the year, of course, were the enduring uncertainties brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenging impact it continued to have on our operations as we attempted to stride forwards towards the opportunities at hand.

Reflecting back, I am extremely proud of how we managed to navigate the year to surmount our challenges, seize our opportunities and ultimately make progress. I am pleased to present in this Annual Review just some of the year's highlights, none of which would be possible without the continued dedication of my colleagues and support from our partners. What we have achieved so far fills me with confidence that we can be even bolder in accelerating our progress as we look to this incoming year.

Kathryn Thomson

WE ARE COMMITTING TO DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY

We are committed to making the collections we hold accessible to the largest and most diverse audiences. It is vital that our approach is as inclusive as possible and systematically addresses barriers to engaging with museums and heritage.

In Year 1 of our strategy, we set out to establish strong foundations on which to build our approach. We completed a significant research project to understand drivers and barriers to engaging museums and heritage more fully across the population of Northern Ireland, which we are using to guide our approach to planning and delivery going forward. We also established a new Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility policy and an internal working group to chart the progress of this multifaceted commitment across the breadth of our work.

Our programme to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland and partition of Ireland, provided an ideal opportunity to further develop our inclusive practice as featured on **pages 5–13**.

100 YEARS FORWARD

Feature project: Commitment to Diversity, Inclusion & Accessibility

In Northern Ireland, history has a particularly close relationship to contemporary politics and cultural identity. Historical anniversaries and commemorations have frequently contributed to community tensions. Events and figures from our past are often deployed to project cultural and political messages in the present.

Museums - through their institutional interpretation of history - can provide affirmation of identity, but can also expose people to new experiences and make them more receptive to different ideas and perspectives. By presenting diverse narratives in an accessible and engaging way, museums can move public understanding beyond simplistic versions of history to a more inclusive appreciation of the richness and complexity of our shared past.

Our *100 Years Forward* programme of exhibitions and events was designed to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland and the partition of Ireland and provided the perfect platform to express our commitment to diversity, inclusion and accessibility. The programme was purposefully broad so that we could sufficiently platform diverse perspectives and ensure that there were multiple opportunities for engagement suited to different types of audience.

Image (right and next page):
Visitors were invited to 'Make the Future' in the
Collecting the Past / Making the Future exhibition







Images: Displays reflected on both our past (above) and our present (below)

COLLECTING THE PAST / MAKING THE FUTURE

***Collecting the Past / Making the Future* was created specifically to mark the centenary and opened at the Ulster Museum in May, as we were reopening to the public.**

The exhibition - developed in partnership with the Nerve Centre - drew on objects from key collections, and from partners across the island, to offer a view of the events up to and around partition and the formation of Northern Ireland. It explored events over the past 100 years and showed how they are relevant to us today and how the legacy of partition has had an impact on our lives.

Over 200 objects were on display in the exhibition with a series of portraits by Sir John Lavery to the fore, which included Edward Carson and Éamon De Valera, two of the key political figures in the run-up to partition a century ago. Other highlights included an NHS Tribute quilt loaned by the North Down & Ards Volunteers Scrubs Group; a t-shirt showing support for the 2019 Harland and Wolff shipyard workers protest from the LGBT+ community and a bomb disposal suit.

The exhibition prompted conversation and debate about our past, present and future with visitors using interactive displays to have their say on issues they feel will be important in the next 100 years, contributing to an active discussion both within the exhibition and online.





Image: Willie Doherty, *Where/Dove*, 2020, copyright the artist

WILLIE DOHERTY WHERE

***WILLIE DOHERTY WHERE*, a major international exhibition of the work of Willie Doherty (Derry, 1959), twice Turner Prize nominee and Northern Ireland's foremost contemporary artist, opened at the Ulster Museum in June.**

Beginning in the 1980s, the exhibition presented an extensive series of photographic and video work and offered an important opportunity to see Doherty's work in depth. In the aftermath of Brexit, and in the centenary year of the partition of Ireland, the exhibition focused on the theme of borders, both real and imagined, a subject which has dominated Doherty's practice for over four decades.

The exhibition was curated in partnership with Fondazione Modena Arti Visive, Italy and included a new video installation *Where/Dove*, commissioned for the exhibition (dove is the Italian for where). *Where/Dove* used the experience of the Irish border as a point of reference in understanding some of the divisive issues of national identity, nativism and exclusion.

“Borders are points of transition, evoking a sense of something inherently unstable, changing, and unfixed. Borders also present the opportunity for positive change, for recognition of other perspectives, for compassion and understanding in the face of adversity and fear.”

Willie Doherty



Image: Actors from Kabosh Theatre Company in character

BORDERLINE: THE PEOPLE'S STORY

A very distinct offering from the exhibitions taking place at the Ulster Museum, *Borderline: The People's Story* saw the creation of partition-related content and theatrical performances at the Ulster Folk Museum and the Ulster American Folk Park, all thanks to funding from Northern Ireland Office's Shared History Fund.

The approach was based on a series of character vignettes - created by Kabosh Theatre Company - which would form a theatrical tour through the unique heritage settings of Ulster Folk Museum and Ulster American Folk Park. Using multiple scripts and locations, the interpretation was designed to tell the story of some of the people affected by partition; stories of loss, change, rebellion and adapting to new situations. The approach didn't shy away from the tumultuousness of this period of history and included difficult themes such as sectarian violence, alcohol abuse and suicide.

The character-based approach allowed for a range of different voices and perspectives to be presented, simultaneously recognising diversity of identities and accommodating cultural difference. Coupling Kabosh's expertise with the unique setting of the outdoor museums, the interpretation successfully presented historical information in an accessible and engaging way, even for those with no prior knowledge of the subject matter.

"I hope that you can continue to offer these types of tours to community groups across the country in an effort to learn from the past and hopefully cause folk to pause and consider the similarities of yesterday versus today."

Participant feedback



Image: Joe Caslin with participants and project staff

COUNTERPART

In September we revealed a 25-metre art installation designed by renowned artist and activist, Joe Caslin, on the exterior of the Ulster Museum's iconic brutalist extension. *Counterpart* was a powerful contribution to the city's street art collection and depicts aspects of society, life and culture in Northern Ireland, brought to life on an unavoidable scale to entice viewers to reflect on Northern Ireland's shared future.

Throughout the summer, members of the public had the opportunity to work alongside Caslin to explore the world of street art and examine how political division and societal aspirations are represented in contemporary works. Inspired by their contributions, The final *Counterpart* piece represented the culmination of these discussions and depicts some of the perspectives shared by participants around their heritage, culture and identity in Northern Ireland.

Commenting on the piece, street artist and activist, Caslin, said: "Ulster Museum is a particularly fitting location to this project - not only is it a treasure house to stories of the past and the present, but as a building it blends traditional and contemporary design elements too, all appealing to the theme of the piece as we question what life in Northern Ireland might be in the future."

"It feels like I'm part of something bigger. I got to meet new people through the workshops and have discussions with people from different walks of life."

Barra Doherty, Participant





Image: Artist Colin Davidson with portrait sitters Mo Norton and Damien McNally, and John Reid, son of portrait sitter Maureen Reid

COLIN DAVIDSON, SILENT TESTIMONY

In October Colin Davidson, *Silent Testimony* returned to the Ulster Museum for the third time, recognising the continued impact and legacy of seismic events from the last century.

In partnership with WAVE Trauma Centre and cross community leaders, *Silent Testimony* became a focus for educating young people and students on the legacy of the Troubles. Workshops and talks were held for Ulster University Art Psychotherapy Masters students, the Falls and Shankill 'Ambassadors for Peace Project' youth group and cross community and border schools. Over 25,000 people visited the exhibition, meaning the total number of people who have viewed *Silent Testimony* has now exceeded well over 100,000.



Image: Mo Norton with her portrait



YOU SAY YOU LOVE ME BUT YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW ME

On Valentine's Day, fittingly, we opened our new partnership exhibition at the Little Museum of Dublin, with special guests the Lord Mayors of Belfast and Dublin.

The idea for the partnership began in 2019 when Trevor White, Director of the Little Museum, had an idea that we could work together to *'not promote a political agenda, but promote a broader understanding of life on a part of this island that is both familiar and remote'*.

Through the exhibition we playfully challenged stereotypes, exploring different views of 'Irishness' and contrasting our shared and distinctive histories. Curators from across our four museums were tasked to make personal choices from our extensive collections, of objects that say something about the identity of this place, which might be humorous or subversive in nature, and capable of provoking a range of emotions.

Image: (L-R) Kathryn Thomsson with Cllr Kate Nicholl (Lord Mayor of Belfast), Cllr Alison Gilliland (Lord Mayor of Dublin) and Trevor White (Director, Little Museum of Dublin)

As a result the exhibition features a very eclectic mix, from a game in which players try to get nails into the coffin of Home Rule, to a Neolithic polished stone axe c.3000 BC, which far predates any borders on this shared island. Speaking through our collections, the many stories they tell and perspectives they give, we sought to fill in the gaps in visitors' understanding of Northern Ireland, and show the realities of life here away from the more familiar media gaze.

"You Say You Love But You Don't Even Know Me is a great example of the positive outcomes that come from collaboration and cultural exchange across our shared island. Today, on St Valentine's Day, it is in the spirit of friendship and mutual respect that we launch this selection of intriguing artefacts."

Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Alison Gilliland

WE ARE CREATING MORE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Whilst our museums remain a popular choice for a day out, and indeed experienced somewhat of a rediscovery last summer with many people holidaying at home, we know that to sustain relevance in the longer-term that we need to continue to be dynamic and innovative through opening up new layers of our museums service.

Alongside our ever-popular exhibitions and events programme this year, we piloted and successfully launched a range of new initiatives, featured on **pages 15-22** which have provided a broader range of people with more ways to get involved in the work of our museums. Although often undertaken at a small-scale to begin with, these pilots are critically important in building the insights and evidence required to ensure we are creating the sort of museum service that appeals to our audiences. What we developed last year gives us a strong platform to further develop these initiatives and keep looking for more ways to innovate.

VOLUNTEERING & PARTICIPATION

Feature project: We are creating more ways to get involved

This year we unlocked significant growth in volunteering and participation, creating new ways for people to get involved in our museums. Despite continued site closures, over 170 volunteers contributed a total of 19,100 hours across our museums, which exceeded our target of 18,000 volunteering hours.

Digital and remote volunteering continued to be a significant way that volunteers got involved, allowing us to engage with volunteers whom might not have been able to access us as easily in person. We saw an increase in volunteers living in remote rural areas as well as an increase in volunteers with disabilities. Projects which engage with volunteers in this way include the Coutaulds Connects project, where volunteers produced a booklet, film and online exhibition about the impact and legacy of the Courtauld's factory in Carrickfergus, Searchlight WWII project, which involved volunteers in the transcribing of oral stories, Unlocking our Sound Heritage, which engaged with 91 volunteers as well as volunteers involved in cataloguing our collections.

This year also saw the beginning of an exciting new partnership with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) who have relocated their Native Tree Nursery to the Ulster Folk Museum, which will help to unlock the museum's potential to connect people with nature, biodiversity and sustainability. This partnership has already begun to transform how we use our the green spaces through projects such as the Green Gym, where volunteers work on our cottage gardens to grow heritage fruit and vegetables.



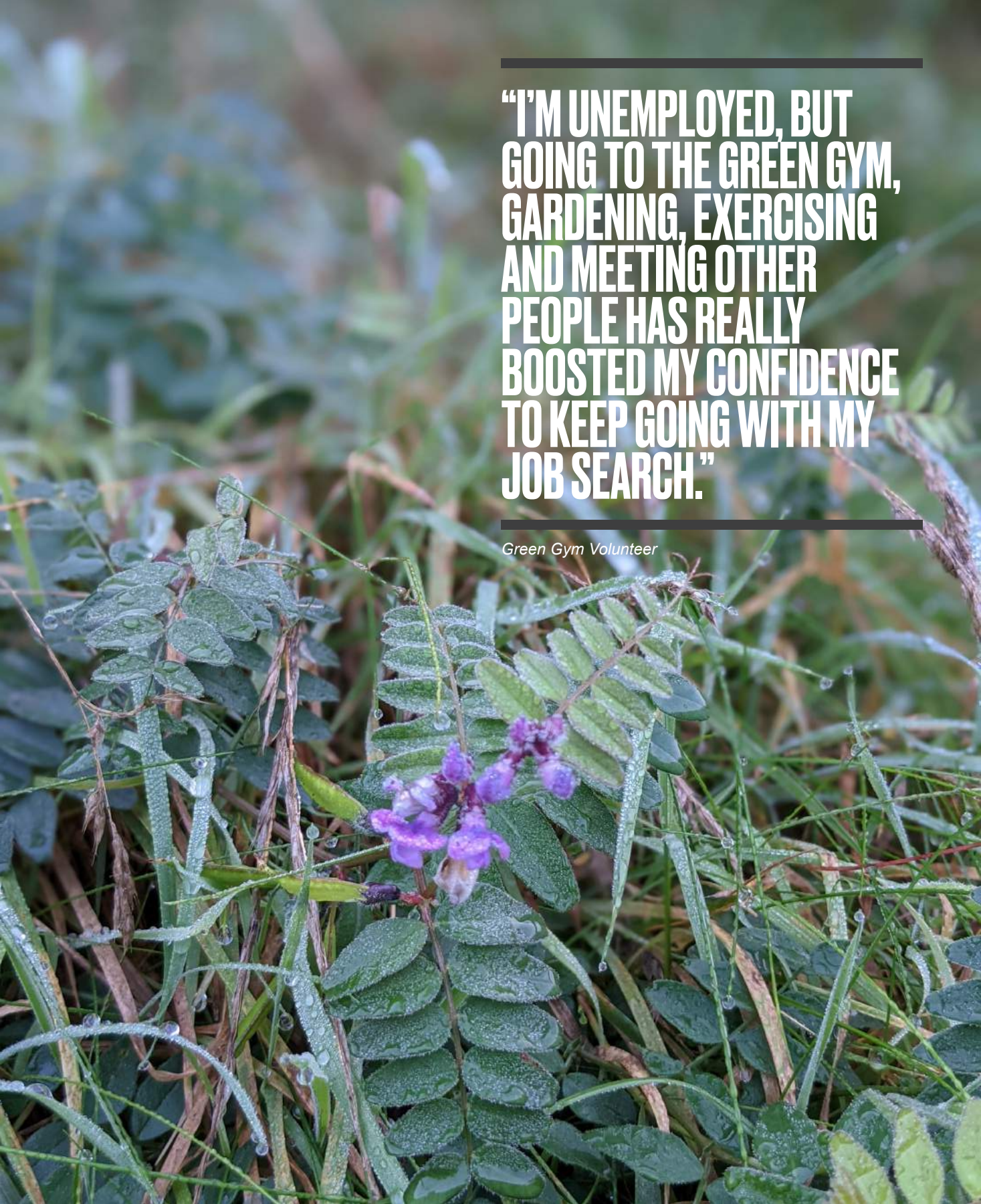
Image: A group of visitors getting hands on with at The Conservation Volunteers' new tree nursery at Ulster Folk Museum

Not only has the partnership increased the number of volunteers we work with but has also significantly increased the diversity of our volunteers, also supporting our commitment to inclusive access to the museums. In February we ran a pilot partnership project with TCV and the EasyHotel Belfast. 12 asylum seekers volunteered over a six week period on various green spaces including the creation of a 'willow walk way' which will open to visitors later this year.

Our event days also benefitted from more volunteer support than ever before with over 30 new volunteers involved in our Halloween and Christmas offerings. This was partially achieved through a new partnership with Queens Student Union. Other significant milestones this year include the launch of our Volunteer Policy and our first ever corporate volunteer's event as part of National Volunteers Week.

**“I’M UNEMPLOYED, BUT
GOING TO THE GREEN GYM,
GARDENING, EXERCISING
AND MEETING OTHER
PEOPLE HAS REALLY
BOOSTED MY CONFIDENCE
TO KEEP GOING WITH MY
JOB SEARCH.”**

Green Gym Volunteer

A close-up photograph of a green plant with small purple flowers and dew drops on its leaves. The plant has several stems with small, rounded leaves and a cluster of small purple flowers. The background is a soft-focus green field of similar plants.

LANGUAGES OF ULSTER

Feature project: We are creating more ways to get involved

In February we introduced a new engagement project, Languages of Ulster, which will over the coming years offer people the opportunity to explore the rich and diverse language traditions associated with Irish-English, Irish and Ulster Scots.

The project aims to communicate that language, in all its diversity, belongs to everyone and that people from all backgrounds and traditions have a stake in its future. By sharing the stories of the people and places around us, we can challenge the assumptions that can be made about local languages and dialects and those who use them.

A new educational trail entitled Cúl Trá-il - deriving its name from the Irish place name for Cultra (Baile Chúl Trá) - is a self-guided tour exploring the story of the Irish language through the places and people of the Ulster Folk Museum. It is the first output of the Languages of Ulster project with research work also already underway to introduce an Ulster Scots trail to celebrate additional local languages and culture.



Image: (L-R) Donal McAnnallen (National Museums NI), Madison Moore, Daire McElroy and Ciaran Lavelle (National Museums NI)

Cúl Trá-il participants will enjoy the trail through an illustrated booklet or smartphone app, both of which will be available in English and Irish. The trail leans on the living museum's heritage setting to demonstrate authentic links between language, buildings, people and places. Speaking about the trail, Donal McAnallen, Library & Archives Manager at National Museums NI said: "Language is a powerful tool when it comes to understanding our wider sense of heritage and identity. Having spent the past few years renewing our institutional knowledge of the vast language-based collections and archives we hold, we are excited to launch this trail and begin looking forward to new opportunities to work with a wide range of people, schools, volunteers and partners."

CRUCKACLADY FARMHOUSE (46)

Teach Feirme Chnoc an Chládaigh

This 19th-century farmhouse is particularly interesting because its bedroom has been placed above its cattle byre. The design follows the lie of the land and allows warmth from the livestock to heat the dwelling in winter. Cruckaclady lies next to Meenagarragh in the Munterloney district of County Tyrone. The way its name is spelled and pronounced tells us a lot about Ulster Irish. The Irish word **Cnoc** means 'hill or small mountain', but in the northern half of Ireland its [n] was often pronounced as [r]. So 'Cruckaclady' comes from the Ulster version of **Cnoc an Chládaigh** meaning 'hill of dry ground'. Interestingly, despite its geographical location, County Tyrone Irish is classed as an east Ulster dialect. Some of its words – like **tonnóg** for duck or **cha** (instead of **ni**) for no – are closer to Scottish Gaelic than Donegal Irish. In many ways, Cruckaclady reflects the story of how Irish died out in rural Tyrone. Just two native speakers remained in the townland in 1901. One of them, Owen McAnally, then lived with his daughter Rose McBride and her husband Patrick – neither of whom spoke Irish. By 1911, McAnally died, and there was not a single Irish speaker left among the townland's residents.





Image: The Edible Flower leading a cooking demonstration at the Ulster Folk Museum

FROM THE GROUND

Feature project: We are creating more ways to get involved

A new pilot programme, From The Ground, was successful in opening up a new layer of engagement through showcasing the unique opportunities at the Ulster Folk Museum to learn about our inherent connection and symbiotic relationship with the land.

The lives captured in the buildings, domestic practices, crafts, fields and verdant hedgerows of the museum were once more reliant on, and at the mercy of, nature. From ritual practices to the food on the table, the relationship to the ground formed a part of daily life in a way that our modern life has become detached from. Through the pilot programme we explored what can we learn from these lives and what can we learn from nature itself.

The events included: growing and cooking workshops; a Harvest Festival; a Tree Folklore Guided Walk; early morning guided mindfulness walks; foraging events; and a family-focused nature explorers event. The pilot has demonstrated how we can meet the museum’s transformational aspirations through small interventions. New partnerships were established, new audiences are now connected to the museum and we are now beginning to present the museum in a new light.



“THESE FELT LIKE THE IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCES THE FOLK MUSEUM SHOULD BE STRIVING FOR TO BRING OUR SHARED HISTORY TO LIFE. BEING ALLOWED TO PICK APPLES GAVE ME A TRUE SENSE OF CONNECTION TO PLACE.”

Participant feedback



Image: Kathryn Thomson and Education Minister, Michelle McLveen, visit Greenisland Primary School to learn more about Museum on the Move

NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOLS

Feature project: We are creating more ways to get involved

Quarter 3 saw a much anticipated return of schools to our museums for in-person learning programmes, for the first time since March 2020.

Our multifaceted schools programme is critical to our role and purpose as a learning-based institution and offers a chance for children to actively investigate our collections, be creative, discuss ideas, work in teams and share their findings with our skilled team of museum educators.

Despite the return to 'normal' operations, we have been delighted to have been able to continue with the hugely successful 'Museum on the Move' initiative as a core part of our education offering. Though conceived initially as a response to the pandemic, the programme has demonstrated an ability to widen our reach, particularly into rural areas and areas of multiple social deprivation, and will offer teachers an alternative way of getting involved in our museums.

“The children were transported to another world! Having museum objects in their own hands was a powerful experience, along with a live expert there to explain their significance.”

Teacher feedback

NEW EXHIBITIONS

Our exhibitions continued to provide a diversity of ways to engage with the collection and exciting new loans.

As well as the exhibitions profiled as part of the *100 Years Forward* programme, we were delighted to introduce our visitors to the following displays.



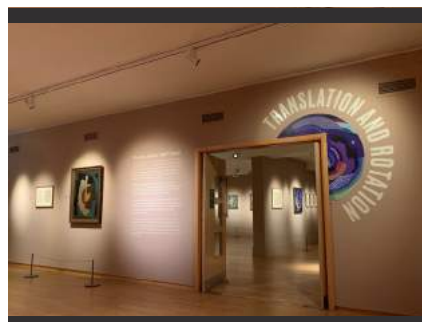
Tissot's Mysterious Irish Muse
Celebrating an exciting new acquisition, *Quiet*, by acclaimed 19th-century artist James (Jaques) Tissot.



Blue Sky Thinking
20th century and contemporary art from the Ulster Museum collection, including new acquisition *Blue Sky Thinking* by Patrick Goddard.



1845: Memento Mori
A memorial dedicated to the Irish Potato Famine, the installation comprised 1,845 hand-blown glass potatoes by artist Paula Stokes (pictured with Liam Corry, National Museums NI).



Mainie Jellett: Translation and Rotation
An exhibition focussing on the work of Mainie Jellett (1897-1944), an Irish artist who looked to the rest of Europe and brought the new style of Modernism to Ireland.



**Royal Ulster Academy
140th Annual Exhibition**
Always one of the highlights of the Northern Irish art calendar, the Royal Ulster Academy Annual Exhibition made a return to the Ulster Museum following Covid-19.

WE ARE EXTENDING THE IMPACT OF OUR COLLECTIONS

Our internationally significant collection is a public resource for learning, research and inspiration. As a resource it has latent potential for deepening understanding of many societal challenges including environmental change, biodiversity loss, legacy of conflict, decolonisation and educational attainment.

This year we have continued to mark anniversaries associated with the Decade of Centenaries and The Troubles. Through our collecting we seek to represent a range of experiences and give profile to different identities and perspectives. More broadly, our collecting speaks to our place in the world, and indeed the wider universe. An updated version of the Collections Development Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees in March 2022, is supporting collecting that is dynamic, relevant and progressive, enabling us to connect with topical issues that affect all our lives.

NEW ACQUISITIONS

We are grateful to the donors who have generously gifted to us this year, and to our funders for their vital financial support – Department for Communities, Art Fund, National Heritage Memorial Fund, Esme Mitchell Trust, Friends of the Ulster Museum.

Across the following pages we share ten of our acquisition highlights from 2021-22.

Copyright information (page 24):

The Nativity
Baldassare Peruzzi (1481-1536) *The Nativity* c.1515, National Museums NI

Portrait of Northern Ireland
Portrait of Northern Ireland, 2021
© Stephen Johnston

Copyright information (page 25):

The 36th (Ulster Division) at the Cenotaph
The 36th (Ulster Division) at the Cenotaph by William Conor,
© by permission of the Conor Estate

The Druithaib's Ball
The Druithaib's Ball (2021) Array Collective © garryjonesphotography



We were glad to save this significant historic painting after it was placed under an Export Bar. *The Nativity* was painted in Rome around 1515, during the brief and intensely creative period of the High Renaissance. At this time Peruzzi was the leading painter in Rome after Michelangelo and Raphael. The painting is the first significant Renaissance painting to enter the Ulster Museum's collection, enabling us to offer access to Renaissance art of the highest quality to our audiences.



This 1980s Clan Clover was built in Northern Ireland. In 1982, Clan Cars Ltd was started in Newtownards by Peter McCandless, taking advantage of government development grants for the area. The car was sold in three levels of kit form (basic, deluxe and complete). It is believed that 120 road cars and 10 competition cars were built before Clan Cars Ltd went into receivership and ceased trading, in June 1987.



This hand-coloured engraved city plan of Boston is from 1850. At the Ulster American Folk Park it helps us to understand experiences of Ulster emigration to urban areas, and it can currently be seen in the *Bad Bridget* exhibition. This important new exhibition tells the stories of the thousands of girls and women who left Ireland for North America between 1838 and 1918. Some of these women found themselves in trouble with the authorities as they struggled to survive.



This is a depiction of the original throne used by King George V at the opening of the new Northern Ireland Parliament, at the City Hall in Belfast, on 22 June 1921. Still in the collections of Belfast City Council, the throne was conserved for the Northern Ireland centenary in 2021, but this painting by Stephen Johnston shows it before it was treated, capturing the effects of time and wear during 100 years of Northern Ireland.



The Moon, our nearest neighbour in the Solar System, is an object familiar to everyone. There is increasing interest in the Moon following recent robotic missions there and the prospect of astronauts returning in the next few years. This palm-sized specimen is a substantial, impressive piece of a typical Lunar rock specimen. In 2022, it will be displayed in the Ulster Museum as part of the *Our Place in Space* project, and will be used in our popular education sessions.



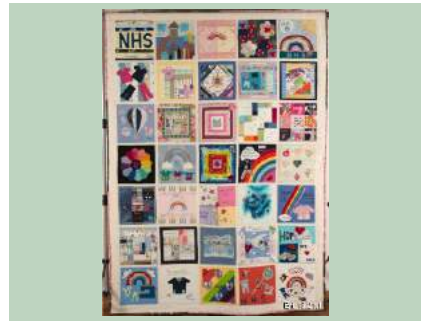
This 1916 Easter Rising Service Medal was awarded to Kathleen Lynn, Chief Medical Officer in the Irish Citizen Army. During the Rising she was stationed at Dublin City Hall. The position was captured by British forces on the evening of Easter Monday and Kathleen was arrested and imprisoned. Following her release, Kathleen remained active in the Nationalist movement; she was elected vice-president of the Sinn Féin executive in 1917, and in 1923 she was elected to Dáil Éireann.



During both the First and Second World Wars, Belfast-born artist William Conor (1881-1968) was commissioned by the British government to record aspects of the war effort. He spent the First World War producing official records of soldiers and munitions workers and, at the end of the war, his drawings were sold at auction in aid of the Ulster Volunteer Force Patriotic Fund. This painting captures soldiers of the 36th (Ulster) Division during the Victory Parade at The Cenotaph in London.



In December 2021, Array Collective became the first artists from Northern Ireland to win the prestigious Turner Prize. Their winning artwork, *The Druthaib's Ball*, responds to the anniversary of the partition of Ireland, grappling with cultural identities through characters, music, poetry, storytelling and myth-making, with the backdrop of a wake.



This quilt was made by members of North Down and Ards Scrubs Group in 2020, to celebrate and honour the work of the NHS during the Covid-19 pandemic. The group were one of many who worked collectively to make tens of thousands of scrubs sets for NHS workers. The quilt is tangible evidence of an unprecedented event in our recent history, and the creative response to it locally.



In the 1950s, this brass cooking pot was brought from India to Northern Ireland by the donor's mother. It helps us to tell stories relating to the achievements and contributions of communities who have migrated from India to Northern Ireland in the 20th century, as well as the experience of 2nd and 3rd generation families with Indian heritage today. Through acquisitions such as this we are able to tell a more accurate, complete and inclusive story of Northern Ireland.

INCLUSIVE GLOBAL HISTORIES

Feature project: We are extending the impact of our collections

March saw the launch of *Inclusive Global Histories*, a new exhibition which highlights how we are institutionally re-evaluating the World Cultures Collection to better understand the complex global stories of some 4,500 items - how and why they came to be in Belfast, how they can be connected to audiences, and what the options might be for their future.

The exhibition has been created through collaboration with various communities both on a local and international level, such as the Belfast Multi-Cultural Association (BMCA) and the African and Caribbean Support Organisation Northern Ireland (ACSONI). Working in partnership and 'co-creating' in this way has enabled our staff to better understand the cultural heritage and contexts of these collections. Collaborating with local communities, who have shared their own perspectives and lived experiences, is essential to understanding the ever-evolving diversity of our society, the complex legacies of our past, and how we can together build a shared future.

This exhibition is part of a wider and ongoing aim to decolonise our museums. Working in partnership with others, we are re-examining our collections and sites and seeking to address racism and exclusionary practices. The exhibition will run for two years and will be updated as research progresses and relationships develop further.



Image: The 'Challenging Our Present' section of the new exhibition which showcases some of the live projects and partnerships focussed on the World Cultures collections

Commenting on how decolonisation can support good relations into the future, Hannah Crowdy, Head of Curatorial at National Museums NI, said: "Ulster Museum is a vibrant place where people can experience both local and global culture, and the rich tapestry of stories objects tell. It is a safe and shared space where we want diverse voices to be heard, and difficult challenges to be explored. By increasing representation and promoting respect, tolerance and understanding, museums and their collections can and should play a part in promoting diversity and inclusivity and decolonisation can be a positive force for encouraging respect and promoting community pride."

"I FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO SHOWCASE THESE ITEMS, TO LET PEOPLE KNOW THAT WITHIN NORTHERN IRELAND THERE WAS AN ORGANISATION WHO WANTED TO SERVE THE COMMUNITY AND HELP THOSE IN NEED, WHILE SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND COMPASSION ABOUT THE ISLAMIC FAITH."

*Ali Khan
Chairman of Belfast Multi-Cultural Association*



WE ARE BUILDING THE MUSEUMS OF THE FUTURE

Through our last corporate strategy, we established development frameworks for each of our museums so that all future investment can be focussed on enhancing their ability to meet long-term outcomes. Between now and 2025, it is one of our key priorities to keep building on the development of these projects and secure the investment required to make them a reality.

In this first year of our new strategic period, we have unlocked significant progress for each of the museum projects, much of which is foundational work at this stage and will lay the groundwork for more tangible outputs in future annual reviews. Critically, this included the appointment of an Integrated Consultants Team - including architects, interpretive planners and environmental consultants - who we began work with in January to progress our capital investment plans for the Ulster Folk Museum. Using our available resources to best effect, we have also made tangible investment in critical areas in order to keep unlocking progress. Two of these projects, relating to the Ulster Transport Museum, are featured on **pages 29-32**.



NEW & ACCESSIBLE STORES

Feature project: We are building museums of the future

A major transport storage project was formally completed this year, seeing transformative improvements not only in its management and care, but also creating a new facility that has been designed to increase public access.

The collections in the new storage facility are organised to utilise the available space as efficiently as possible, whilst also providing pathways for all types of accessibility needs including users of mobility devices.

Suspending items from the aviation collection from the ceiling provides an eye-catching feature and the inclusion of a collections-inspired piece of public art adds additional personality to the new store. While the primary purpose of this venue is to provide a secure modern store for this dynamic collection, it is also a space that allows us to actively progress plans to make the collection accessible to the wider public for research, tours and engagement programmes.



THE MUSEUM OF INNOVATION

Feature project: We are building museums of the future

An exciting new permanent gallery, *Museum of Innovation*, opened at the Ulster Transport Museum in July and showcases objects that celebrate local pioneers who have pushed the boundaries of engineering and invention.

The new development forms part of the longer term development plan for Ulster Transport Museum, which aims to embed the transport and industry collections as an engine of STEM learning and skills development. It is the result of new thinking and incorporates a renewed approach to design, interpretation and interactivity. It reveals the local stories behind some of our transport collections within a wider national and international context and the impact some of these inventions and feats of engineering had globally. Telling these stories adds a rich layer of voices, perspectives and personal connections.

All the objects on display and their inventors have contributed in some way to Northern Ireland's legacy of innovation. Some stories told in the exhibition include that of John DeLorean, whose iconic DeLorean sports car, built in a bespoke state-of-the-art Dunmurry factory, is given the 21st century treatment through a state-of-the-art project mapping display. Also included is Hillsborough's Professor Frank Pantridge, who transformed emergency medicine and paramedic services by creating the world's first cardiac ambulance in 1966, which contained the prototype of the now ubiquitous portable defibrillator.



Image: Clare Ablett (National Museums NI), curator of *The Museum of Innovation*

Harry Ferguson from Dromore in Co Down is highlighted too. In 1926, he patented the three-point linkage for tractors that revolutionised farming globally. Exhibited and on display for the first time is a restored 1960s Massey Ferguson tractor.

The inventions of John Boyd Dunlop are also included in the new gallery. Dunlop, who was living in Belfast at the time, created his pneumatic tyre which went into mass production from the 1890s onwards. One of the earliest bicycles fitted with pneumatic tyres ridden by Dunlop himself, along with an Eagle 360 Goodyear concept tyre, on loan from Goodyear, forms part of the display.

One of the most inspiring innovators to be exhibited is the pioneering aviator, Lilian Bland. From her home in Carnmoney, Bland became the first woman in the world to design, build and fly an aeroplane in August 1910.

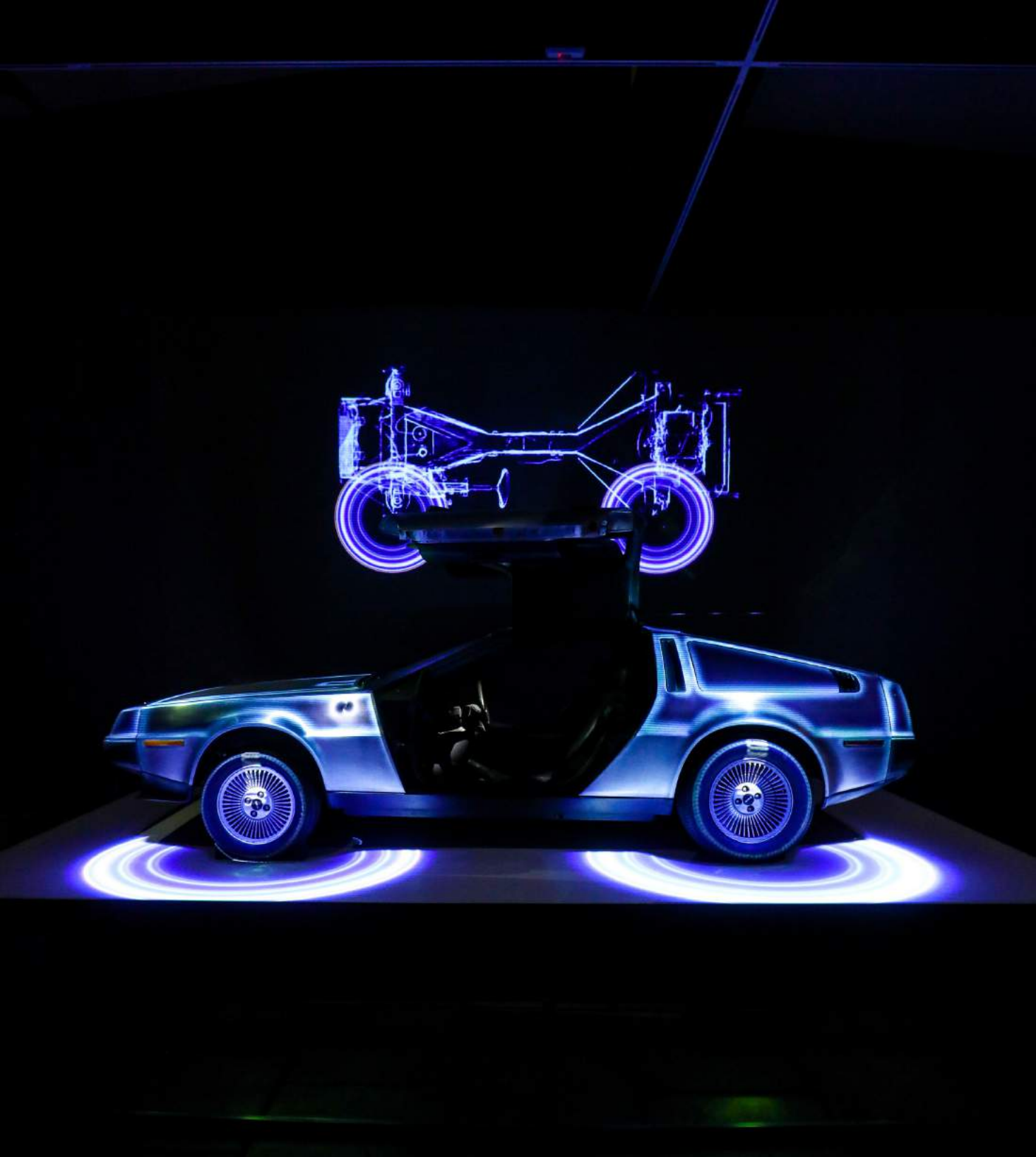


Image: The new DeLorean projection mapping experience in *The Museum of Innovation*



A NOTE OF THANKS

Thanks to our funding partners, particularly our core funder the Department for Communities, and to the tremendous support of our stakeholders, board members, our partners, our colleagues and of course our loyal visitors, participants and volunteers.

Image: The first ambulance in the world to be fitted with Professor Frank Pantridge's portable defibrillator at *The Museum of Innovation*

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