



V&A UK Strategy

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 As a national museum, the V&A shares its collections, knowledge and expertise as widely as possible throughout the UK. The V&A has a good track record, working with a wide variety of organisations in the UK in different ways since it opened in 1857.
- 1.2 UK work is a key part of the V&A's Strategic Plan and it helps the Museum achieve its mission '*To be the world's leading museum of art and design; enriching people's lives by promoting knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the designed world*' and underlying four key strategic objectives:
 - *To provide optimum access to collections and services for diverse audiences, now and in the future*
 - *To be acknowledged and respected as the world's leading museum of art and design*
 - *To promote, support and develop the UK creative economy by inspiring designers and makers, and by stimulating enjoyment and appreciation of design*
 - *To operate with financial and organisational efficiency*
- 1.3 One of the conditions of the V&A's grant settlement from the Government for 2011/12-2014/15 is that the Museum will continue to work in partnership with other museums in the UK.
- 1.4 The purpose of the V&A UK Strategy is to ensure that national activities are effectively implemented, recognised, encouraged, planned, resourced, evaluated, recorded and reported.
- 1.5 The underlying principles of the Strategy are to consider the national dimension in all that the Museum does and to achieve the best value for the public and the Museum from the V&A's national work.
- 1.6 The V&A UK Strategy explains how the V&A UK aims are achieved and is reviewed and updated every 3 years. Previous versions were approved by the Trustees in September 2004 and October 2007.
- 1.7 To achieve its aims, the V&A will work with and in association with other national museums. The V&A UK and International strategies will seek synergies and alignments where possible.

2 Key Aims

- 2.1 To maximise the number of people across the UK engaging with the V&A and experiencing high quality activities.
- 2.2 To share expertise related to collections, audiences, museum practice and the creative industries.
- 2.3 To develop mutually beneficial relationships which strengthen outcomes through collaboration.
- 2.4 To increase and strengthen recognition of the V&A and its presence outside London.
- 2.5 To embed V&A UK work across the Museum, using the V&A UK Group as a mechanism.

Appendix: Terms of Reference for V&A UK Group

3 V&A UK Relationships

3.1 The V&A sees good relationships as those which deliver benefits to all partners. We work with museums, universities, colleges and schools, charities and community groups, central government and local authorities and other organisations. The starting point for many links is likely to be similarity of interests and collections. We use both traditional and innovative means to increase physical, intellectual and electronic access to objects and information about them and also to activities and services. Good communication between partners is essential so that plans can be shared in order for opportunities for collaboration to be recognised and seized.

3.2 The V&A's relationships fall naturally into two types, both of which are important to the V&A in allowing the Museum to have considerable reach and a visible profile across the UK:

- (1) A limited number of high profile partnerships with formal agreements. The V&A will provide content and expertise to these organisations. It will not be responsible for any capital or running costs.

V&A at Dundee

Since 2007 the V&A has been working with Scottish Enterprise, the University of Dundee and the University of Abertay, Dundee to realise a new entity which will be known as the V&A at Dundee. This will be the first branded and permanent presence of the V&A outside London. The new building, to which the V&A will provide content and programming, is expected to open in 2015. The initial partnership arrangement is for 20 years.

V&A at Blackpool

Since 2007 the V&A has been working with Blackpool Council with a view to providing content and programming to a proposed new cultural venue as part of the town's regeneration plans.

V&A Partnership with Museums Sheffield

The V&A has had a formal partnership with Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust since 1999 which established the Millennium Galleries as a flagship service and a V&A presence in Yorkshire. In January 2010, it was renewed for a further five years through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

- (2) Other relationships with a flexible alliance of organisations across the cultural sector that the V&A works with in different ways and to different degrees as and when opportunities arise. This network includes longstanding relationships and generates new ones.

A formal partnership of 5 museums and Action for Children was established in 2004 for the government-funded strategic commissioning project for national and regional museums to work with schools and young people. The relationship expanded beyond this formal project to collaboration on museum issues and participation in V&A work. These museums, Birmingham, Brighton & Hove, Manchester, Sheffield and Tyne & Wear, will remain core to a wider network which we will build on the good links established with others through, for example, repeat touring exhibitions.

4 Areas of activity

Relationships between organisations and with audiences are and will be developed in a number of ways:

4.1 Learning projects

The V&A will sustain the good relationships established with partners and regional audiences in strategic commissioning projects, working in a flexible way to include partners' networks.

Advice and ideas on learning programmes relating to V&A touring exhibitions and collaborative projects will be offered.

The Museum's educational activities and initiatives will be franchised to its UK alliance.

4.2 Sharing objects

Increasing access to collections ranges from the loan of a single item, to an exhibition organised entirely by the borrower, to major V&A exhibitions with hundreds of objects.

4.2.1 Loans

Loans will continue to play a major role in reaching UK audiences at both traditional and non-traditional venues. Loans from UK organisations will continue to feature in V&A exhibitions, complementing and giving new contexts to objects in respective collections.

The V&A endeavours to agree to all reasonable loan requests from UK institutions, whether short-term for exhibition or for periods of several years, where they are of particular relevance to the borrowing organisation. Where feasible, the V&A will seek alternative display venues when objects are removed from display at the V&A for extended periods due, for example, to gallery developments.

The borrowing process, costs and requirements will be as transparent and straightforward as possible.

4.2.2 Touring exhibitions

The Museum will seek UK venues for a selection of suitable temporary exhibitions and displays developed by and shown at the V&A's London sites, or developed specifically for a UK audience. UK touring exhibitions will be of a high quality and reflect the strength and diversity of the V&A's collections and programming. They will be straightforward to manage and maintain (by both the V&A and venues). Exhibitions may be developed and curated principally or solely by the V&A, jointly curated or initiated and principally curated by the borrowing institution drawing substantially on V&A collections and advice/input. They may involve V&A objects or intellectual content.

4.3 Supporting collections and research

Collaborative work increases knowledge and understanding of all aspects of collections in our areas of interest, including conservation, research and scholarship.

4.3.1 Managing the Purchase Grant Fund (PGF)

will continue to provide a solid base for the Museum's UK activity. The Fund enables eligible museums, libraries and record repositories to acquire objects for their collections. V&A endorsement is as important as financial support and the PGF is a vehicle for

advice and regular and productive liaison with a wide range of cultural heritage institutions. V&A staff benefit from gaining an overview of nationwide collecting in their fields.

- 4.3.2 The V&A advises Government and public bodies on national cultural property issues, including the Acceptance-in-Lieu scheme, export licensing and funding applications. Championing these schemes by advising and encouraging regional museums on ensuing acquisition is an important aspect of our UK activity.
- 4.3.3 The V&A has extensive day-to-day contact with curatorial staff in a wide range of regional museums and organisations. Subject specialist networks of various forms are a flexible and effective way to enhance these links. The Museum will encourage them and participate within its areas of interest as appropriate.
- 4.3.4 Not all significant collections are to be found in national museums and galleries. The V&A accepts it has an interest and pastoral role where collections in its field may need support and will continue to have a formal role on a number of museum governing bodies.
- 4.3.5 Research underpins all V&A activity. The Museum is recognised by the Arts and Humanities Research Council as an independent research organisation. It will build on its record of fruitful partnerships with academic institutions, exchange programmes and placements, seeking joint research grant initiatives and collaborations in humanities, art and design, conservation, learning and understanding audiences.

4.4 Development of museum people and practice

- 4.4.1 The V&A will build upon its strong record in training and development to offer opportunities to its own staff and those in other cultural and educational UK institutions in order to build capacity for the sustainable development of the museum sector.

Partnership working in itself is central to understanding different organisations and how they operate. Exchange and placement opportunities will be encouraged across a wide range of skills and expertise.

The V&A is an accredited NVQ Assessment Centre for Cultural Heritage. Qualifications are offered in technical skills, customer service, curatorial skills, management and administration. Adoption and take-up of NVQs by UK organisations will be encouraged.

The V&A will continue its commitment to training in its subject area through the postgraduate course in Design History it runs with the Royal College of Art. Support is also given to other external courses through the contribution of Museum staff as lecturers, examiners and advisory board members.

The V&A will continue to offer support and advice to other organisations across the UK regarding fundraising.

4.5 Digital Technology

Increasingly, online projects will be a key method of making V&A collections and activities available and of reaching and engaging both national and international audiences. New media will be exploited to bring the V&A to people wherever they live, providing information and the opportunity for virtual interaction. It will also be used to promote UK partnership work and local opportunities to experience the V&A: V&A objects, exhibitions, films via the V&A Channel, Purchase Grant Fund support and partner projects.

4.6 Advocacy

The V&A will regularly report and communicate the extent and impact of its UK work to governing bodies and opinion formers and will encourage and disseminate local and national press coverage of UK activity.

Measuring and evaluating the impact of collaborative work, both quantitatively and qualitatively is, therefore, essential and an appropriate degree of information is required of UK partners. Maximum political and promotional benefits of UK work will be obtained by ensuring that the V&A's regional contribution is appropriately acknowledged.

National, local authority, university and independent museums, because of their location and governance structures, have different constituencies and spheres of operation. Collaboration in advocating the value of this work and of the sector is of mutual benefit in ensuring greater reach. The V&A and its partners will raise awareness of UK work internally and externally and by participating in the activity of the wider cultural sector.

5 Resources

Despite the funding cuts that we face, the Museum will identify sources and respond to all opportunities to support UK working. Recognising the importance of partnerships in the current funding climate, this will be a mix of V&A funding, partner funding, and external funding from grants, sponsorship and centrally-funded initiatives that advance national working whenever possible and appropriate. Because of the importance we attach to UK work we continue to allocate grant in aid to support it. The level of UK activity is dependent on staff capacity.

Appendix:

V&A UK Group terms of reference

V&A UK GROUP

Terms of Reference

- To facilitate the V&A UK Policy and UK Strategy
- To focus information and ideas on the V&A's national activities and to ensure their effective operation, thereby promoting the V&A as a nationwide Museum
- To be informed about, and sensitive to, the operation, activities and concerns of regional museums and other organisations, and to seek opportunities for regional working
- To represent and promote regional interests within the V&A, and to represent the V&A in external fora
- To capture and disseminate information on what the V&A does in, and on behalf of, museums and other organisations in the UK
- To be alert to, and informed about, external factors (e.g. professional, political) relevant to the V&A's national activities

Reporting

The V&A UK Group is a committee of the Management Board

V&A UK Group > Management Board > Trustees

Meetings

Three times a year

Membership

Chair: Deputy Director

Representatives of departments, functions and areas of interest across the V&A