



NATIONAL MUSEUMS NI

CORPORATE STRATEGY

2021-25

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SETTING THE SCENE

In the past five years we have built strong foundations that will help National Museums NI navigate uncertainty and seize opportunity as we look towards the future.

OUR ROLE AND PURPOSE

National Museums NI is made up of four museums and serves as a custodian for 1.4 million objects in Northern Ireland's national collection.

Our vision is to:

Celebrate who we are; telling the stories of our past, challenging our present, shaping our future

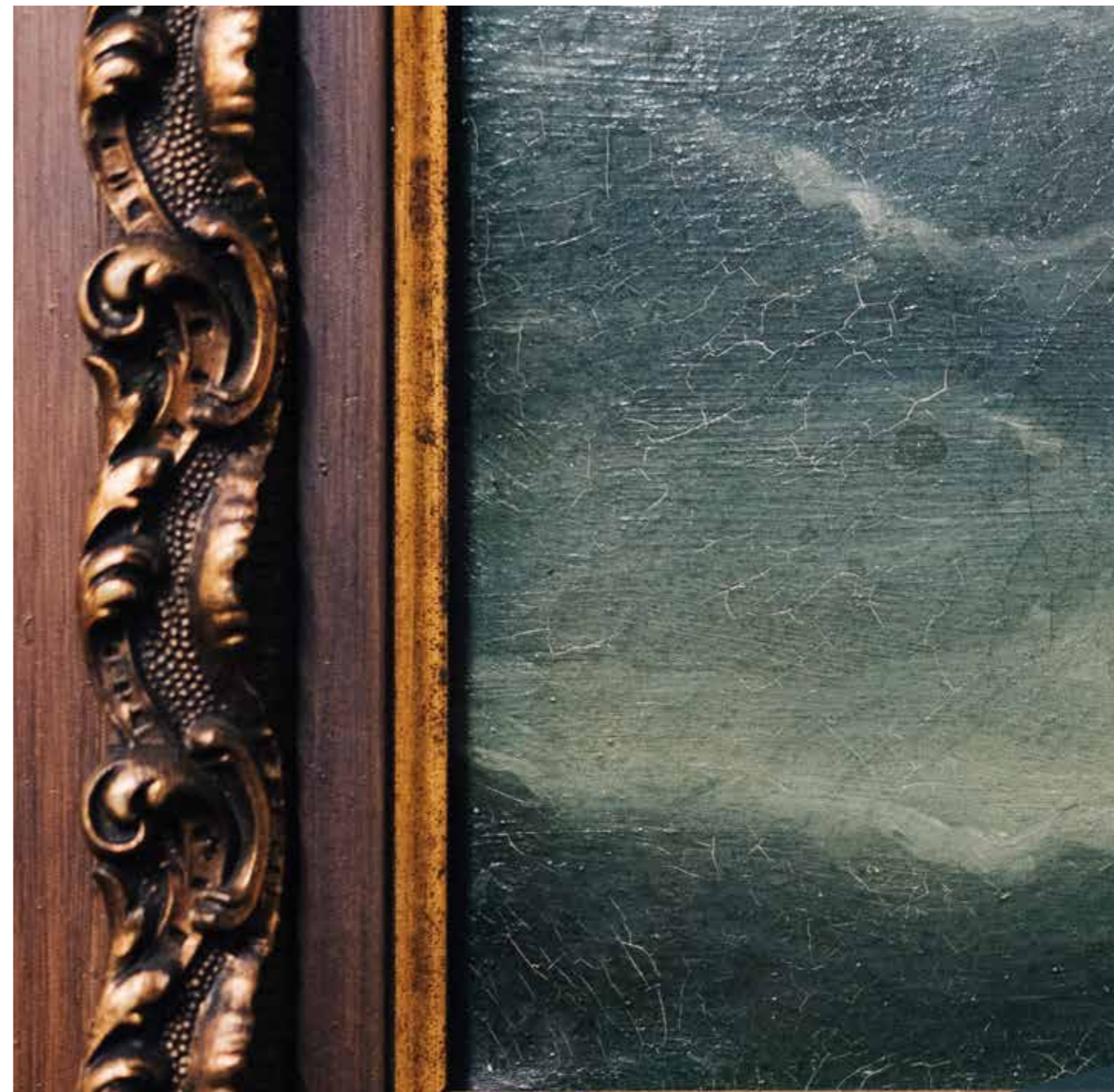
We do to this by fulfilling our mission of:

- Developing, managing and caring for the collections
- Playing a leading role in the economic and social wellbeing of this place
- Making collections accessible to the widest possible audience
- Building an organisation where people feel valued

At our core we believe in the following values:

- **Striving for excellence** – being the best we can be in everything we do; delivering excellent customer service internally and externally; sharing our expertise
- **Being authentic** – being true to our collections; having integrity in everything we do; creating unique experiences
- **Working together** – promoting team-work; building mutually beneficial partnerships; being receptive to others and their ideas
- **Showing respect** – valuing everyone; supporting diversity; respecting collections
- **Being courageous** – being ambitious in programming; embracing change; being brave and creative in the stories we tell; empowering our people

*Economic & Social Impact Report 2018/19



£6

OF ECONOMIC & SOCIAL
WELLBEING GENERATED
FOR EVERY £1 INVESTED
IN NATIONAL MUSEUMS NI*

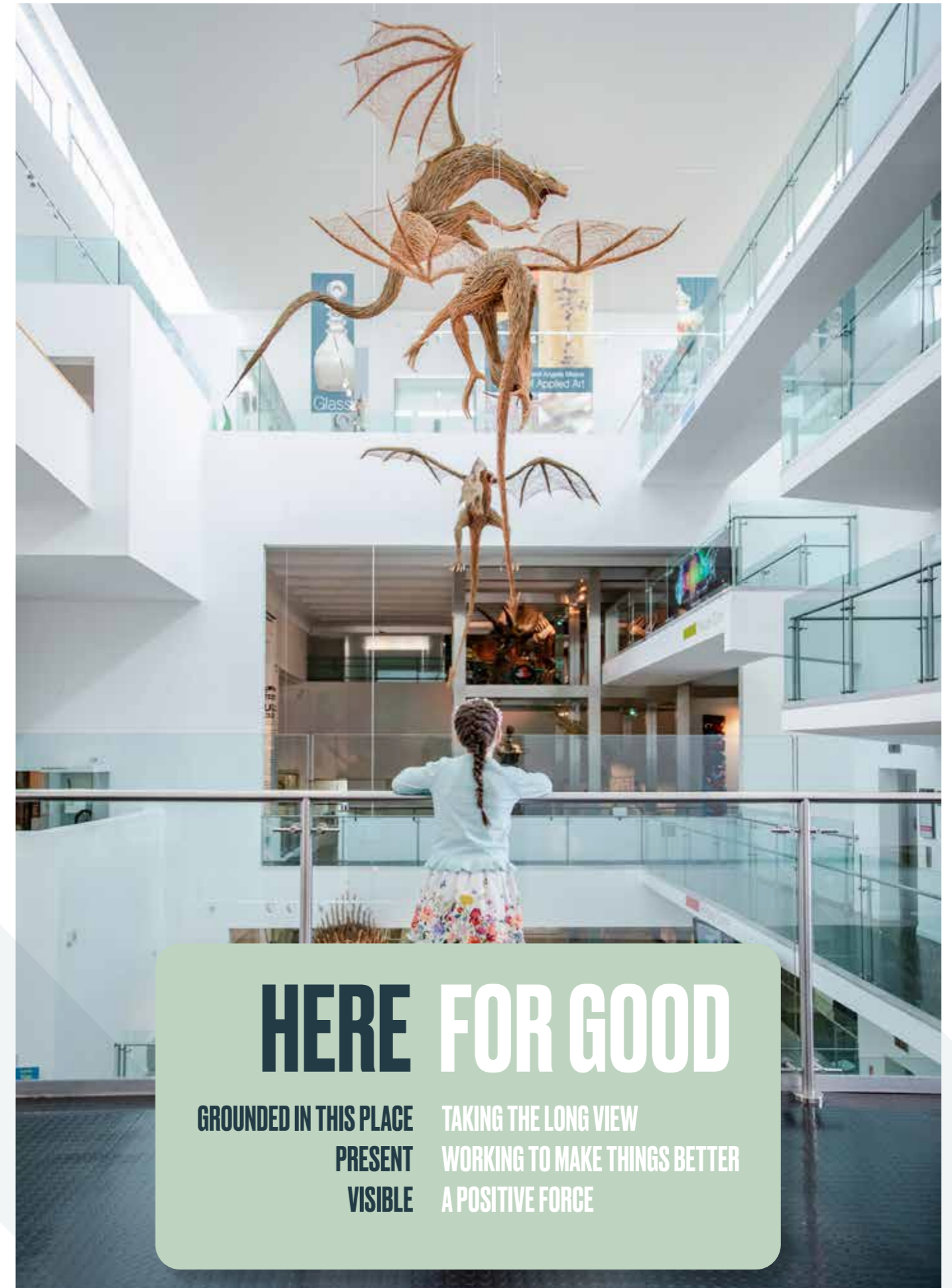
OUR JOURNEY OF CHANGE

In the past five years, spurred by our passion for our museums and collections, National Museums NI has embarked on an ambitious programme of transformation to ensure that we achieve the maximum public benefit through everything we do.

Our transformation is anchored in our organisational purpose – which we have articulated as Here For Good. It is based on the premise that our museums can play an important and valuable role at the heart of society, but that we must renew and refresh our approach if we are to remain relevant with our audiences, partners and stakeholders.

This journey of change was embedded in the Corporate Plan 2018–21, through which we have successfully laid the foundations for change and initiated a forward momentum including:

- Establishment of our vision, mission, values and core purpose
- Organisational restructuring and building leadership capability
- Establishing a development framework for each museum
- Significant upgrading of our collections storage estate
- Growing our talent base in key roles and functions
- Significant strengthening of governance framework



HERE FOR GOOD

**GROUNDING IN THIS PLACE
PRESENT
VISIBLE**

**TAKING THE LONG VIEW
WORKING TO MAKE THINGS BETTER
A POSITIVE FORCE**

CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

Despite the strong foundations we have built, we are setting this strategy against a backdrop of vast disruption and uncertainty.

Covid-19 has interrupted our progress in the past year - through closure and revenue loss. We anticipate that its shadow will pervade over the next five years and will continue to impact our work.

However, like many organisations we have grown accustomed to operating in uncertainty. Prior to the pandemic we were already experiencing the impact and uncertainty of issues such as Brexit, digital disruption, growing concerns about environmental issues and social and economic polarisation.

All of this, and our passion to build relevant and sustainable museum services for the future, is what sparked our transformation over the last five years. We established a strong foothold and forward momentum. Our building blocks of change are already in place. We recognise that keeping and building that momentum in these volatile and uncertain times will be a key challenge.

However, the current climate also presents a continued opportunity to reflect on and rethink the role of culture and the museum in public and civic life. At a time when we need to learn, connect and grow more than ever, we know museums have a key role to play in facilitating this conversation.

At a local level, the principles outlined in New Decade, New Approach speak to the opportunity to strengthen public services through such themes as: identity and cultural expression; health and wellbeing; skills and innovation; and environmental sustainability.

Similarly, Department for Communities, has prioritised themes such as: sustainability and inclusive growth; wellbeing and inclusion; anti-poverty; and agility and innovation – all of which support the widely endorsed UN Sustainable Development Goals.



**UNTIL NOW, ARTS AND CULTURE
HAVE ONLY HAD A MINOR ROLE
IN THE PROCESS OF CIVIL
RENEWAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE,
BUT WE SHOULD COMMIT TO
THEM BEING CENTRAL TO THE
REBUILDING OF OUR SOCIETIES.**

MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION'S MANIFESTO FOR
LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT IN MUSEUMS



FOCUSSING ON THE FUTURE

We need to be realistic about the challenges of our operating environment, however, Covid-19 has only sharpened the need for National Museums NI to continue on the journey we have already begun. Our opportunity is to align our transformation to local and global change agendas. Now more than ever, we are determined to show that museums can be a force for good in the world.

INTRODUCING OUR OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

In navigating our challenges and opportunities we will need to be clear about how National Museums NI can work as an enabler of shared governmental and societal goals in the long-term.

This is why we have developed our new **outcomes framework** – our ‘True North’ – which will sit at the heart of our long-term strategic intent. Our organisational **purpose** – Here For Good – and **values** sit at the core of the framework.

These long-term outcomes provide clear definitions of what ‘good’ will look like and provide the context for the next five years of this Corporate Strategy. Crucially the framework has also been designed to align with the Programme for Government outcomes, the Department for Communities strategy, other Departments’ strategies and ‘New Decade New Approach’.

The framework presents a **shared language** that promotes **clarity** and a shared **understanding** of what we aspire to achieve across all National Museums NI’s work. Success happens when we progress these outcomes through **mutually beneficial partnerships** and **cross departmental collaboration**.

Embedding the framework across all areas of our work will maximise our impact, enabling us to be a valued, healthy and resilient organisation over the long-term.



OUR FIVE YEAR STRATEGY

What we have built so far gives us an amazing opportunity to continue building a more ambitious, innovative and relevant museum service. In the next five years we will be bolder in accelerating the transformation of our museums as a public service.

COMMITMENTS

We will commit to making progress in four main areas:

1 WE WILL CHAMPION INCLUSION, DIVERSITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

2 WE WILL CREATE MORE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

3 WE WILL EXTEND THE IMPACT OF OUR COLLECTIONS

4 WE WILL BUILD THE MUSEUM INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE FUTURE

ENABLERS

We will be enabled by a healthy and resilient organisation through:

1 OUR PEOPLE AND EXPERTISE

2 OUR COLLECTIONS

3 OUR PARTNERSHIPS

4 OUR DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

5 OUR GOVERNANCE

6 OUR INCOME

COMMITMENT ONE

WE WILL CHAMPION INCLUSION, DIVERSITY & ACCESSIBILITY

Our remit is to make the collections we hold accessible and engaging to the largest, broadest and most diverse audiences. As a public service, it is fundamental that our approach is as inclusive and as representative as possible.

But we also know that many people in our society have barriers to accessing and engaging with museums. It is our intent to address these barriers and adopt the pledge of 'leaving no one behind' through our work.

What will progress look like in 2025?

Our audience profile will be more representative of the NI population. A wider range of groups and partners will engage with our programmes and services with consistency and confidence.

To achieve progress in this area in the next five years, we will commit to the following strategic aims:

- 1 Better understand the needs, motivations and barriers to access and engagement for the NI population.**
- 2 Design museum experiences and programmes that are accessible to all, appealing to diverse needs.**
- 3 Develop and interpret our collections in a way that represents and reflects society today.**
- 4 Connect to existing health and social infrastructures through growing our partner network**

COMMITMENT TWO

WE WILL CREATE MORE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Our museums are well established and have offered a successful 'days out' experience for many years. However, we will not have a sustainable and successful future if we are seen in such limited terms. To achieve our long-term outcomes, we will need to be more dynamic and relevant to our audiences and partners through opening up new layers of our museums service.

To fully play our role as a purpose-driven organisation, we will need to evolve our ability to develop deeper, more emotional connections with audiences – moving from transactional visits to longer-term relationships.

What will progress look like in 2025?

Our museums will no longer be seen as 'been there, done that'. People will be compelled by the range of experiences and learning opportunities available. We will have started seeing evidence of deeper relationships through higher repeatability, more co-production with audiences and a growing volunteer and membership base.

To achieve progress in this area in the next five years, we will commit to the following strategic aims:

- 1 Create more innovative ways to promote longer-lasting, deeper relationships with our audiences.**
- 2 Reimagine museums membership programmes as a means to supporting deeper relationships.**
- 3 Develop rewarding volunteering opportunities to enable audiences to fully participate in the life of the museum.**
- 4 Continue to invest in and grow our education programmes as a central aspect of our role.**

COMMITMENT THREE

WE WILL EXTEND 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. To maximise its potential for positive impact, we must strive to improve access to the collection in more dynamic and collaborative ways.

What will progress look like in 2025?

The value and significance of the collection as a shared public resource will be better recognised. More people will actively access and use it in more diverse ways. We will not only see people accessing the collection more freely inside our museums and stores, but also in more inspiring digital spaces and unexpected places through new partnerships.

To achieve progress in this area in the next five years, we will commit to the following strategic aims:

- 1 Unlock the potential of our collections through dynamic partnerships.**
- 2 Increase access and create new engagement opportunities through collections digitisation.**
- 3 Develop our reputation as a sectoral leader in collections research that delivers meaningful impact.**
- 4 Realise the potential of our natural sciences collections and sites as a means to address key questions around climate change and biodiversity conservation.**

COMMITMENT FOUR

WE WILL BUILD THE MUSEUM INFRASTRUCTURE OF THE FUTURE

Through our Corporate Strategy 2018-21, we established development frameworks for each of our museums – in consultation with partners and stakeholders – so that all future investment can be focussed on improving the functionality of our museums and enhancing their ability to meet long-term outcomes. In the next five years, we will continue to pursue the transformational investment required to make these projects a reality. We will phase and prioritise our plans to create energetic, yet steady, momentum.

What will progress look like in 2025?

The transformational projects at the Ulster Museum and the Ulster Folk Museum will be near completion. The new improved functionality at both museums will already be opening up new opportunities with new audiences and partners. Our sense of excitement will be shared by our internal and external stakeholders. The projects at Ulster American Folk Park and Ulster Transport Museum will have gathered momentum and will have built strong cases for imminent investment.

To achieve progress in this area in the next five years, we will commit to the following strategic aims:

- 1 Deliver enabling investment at the Ulster Museum, improving its ability to connect with broader audiences.**
- 2 Deliver an ambitious programme of transformative investment at the Ulster Folk Museum.**
- 3 Progress plans to reshape the Ulster American Folk Park as a dynamic heritage centre and tourism hub.**
- 4 Pilot new ways of bringing the transport and industry collections to life through experimentation and partnership working.**



ENABLING CHANGE FOR GOOD

Our ambition and intent will only succeed if we continuously invest in and build the 'engine' of a healthy and resilient organisation.

WHAT WILL ENABLE PROGRESS?

ENABLER ONE OUR PEOPLE AND EXPERTISE

Our people are passionate and committed to the pursuit of our vision and long-term outcomes. They are experts in their fields and every day bring that expertise to the fore. We will continue to focus on their development and empowerment to deliver greater innovation and agility in how we do our business and how we continue to facilitate learning and knowledge transfer.

ENABLER TWO OUR COLLECTIONS

Our collections are at the heart of everything we do. We will continue to focus on collecting, caring for, documenting, and making our collections accessible to all. Our aim continues to be the development of an empowering, relevant, and dynamic collection that brings our communities together, builds insight and understanding, and positions our museums as a vital part of our society.



WHAT WILL ENABLE PROGRESS?

ENABLER THREE OUR PARTNERSHIPS

In the last five years, we have focussed on being a more open and collaborative organisation. This has resulted in new and strengthened partnerships which have extended our reach and relevance. We will continue to build and enhance our partnerships locally, nationally and internationally across private, public and third sectors.

ENABLER FOUR OUR GOVERNANCE

As a public sector organisation we continue to set our ambition to be an exemplar of good governance. We see good governance as an integral part of good management and organisational efficiency. As such, a focus on continuously improving our governance and accountability structures will form an integral part of our organisational development programme.

ENABLER FIVE OUR DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Digital enablement and systems integration will be a cornerstone of our development. We will focus on ensuring our investment in technology is integrated and optimised to support all aspects of our business. We will develop our culture around digital solutions to business efficiency and support our people to work with an agile mindset.

ENABLER SIX OUR INCOME

It is vital to build an economically sustainable organisation, one which can generate the income required to re-invest in our services and collections. We will build an effective self-generated income plan focused on realistic markets and income streams. Our ambitions will be properly and fully resourced to give us an optimum return on our investment.

ANNEX

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

NATIONAL MUSEUMS NI OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

Outcome 1	Outcome 2	Outcome 3	Outcome 4	Outcome 5	Outcome 6	Outcome 7	Outcome 8	Outcome 9	Outcome 10
Everyone is invited to participate in our museums	Our work contributes to healthy lives at all ages	People benefit from inclusive learning opportunities	People are informed of sustainable lifestyles	Our work contributes to climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation	Our work promotes skills development and innovation	Our museums boost the local economy	Our work promotes good relations	People understand multiple perspectives of history, culture identity	Partners access our assets with confidence and creativity

Strategic Alignment

Department for Communities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	How we contribute through our commitments
Wellbeing & Inclusion	●	●	●					●	●	●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By designing museum experiences and programmes that are accessible to all, appealing to diverse needs
Sustainability & Inclusive Growth	●		●	●	●	●	●			●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our rewarding volunteering opportunities can support skills development on the road to gainful employment
Agility & Innovation						●				●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leveraging the use of technology to provide greater access to our collections and different ways of working throughout the organisation
Anti-Poverty	●	●	●								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By engaging with audiences in new ways reinforces our pledge of leaving no one behind

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Strategic Alignment

New Decade New Approach	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	How we contribute through our commitments
Transforming other public services		●	●							●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By continuing our investment in education programmes we can support the inclusive learning of children and young people Our ambition to be an exemplar of good governance shows our determination to continue to focus on organisational efficiency
Investing for the future	●			●	●	●	●			●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through our volunteering opportunities we can create more ways to get involved and support the skills development agenda Leveraging the potential of our Natural Sciences collections and sites to address climate change and biodiversity conservation
Delivering a fair and compassionate society	●		●	●				●	●		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our collections and interpretation activation can promote shared understanding of past events
The Executive Office	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	How we contribute through our commitments
Tackling Disadvantage and Promoting Equality of Opportunity	●		●			●					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our collections and interpretation activation can promote shared understanding of past events

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Strategic Alignment

Department for Economy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	How we contribute through our commitments
Accelerate innovation and research					●	●	●				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leveraging the use of technology to provide greater access to our collections Piloting new ideas to bring our transport & industry collections to life
Enhance education, skills and employability	●		●			●	●				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our education programmes and volunteering opportunities will support skills development
Drive inclusive, sustainable growth	●		●	●		●	●			●	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By investing in transformation programmes across each of our sites we can become a top NI Tourist destination
Succeed in global markets						●	●				

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Strategic Alignment

Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	How we contribute through our commitments
Natural Environment				●	●						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We can leverage our Natural Sciences collections and sites to design a compelling narrative around environmental sustainability
Department of Education	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	How we contribute through our commitments
Improving the wellbeing of children and young people, including supporting those who are vulnerable or who have special educational needs	●	●	●			●					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By continuing our investment in education programmes we can support the inclusive learning of children and young people
Increasing access and improving the learning environment for all	●	●	●	●		●			●	●	
Raising standards and tackling underachievement to ensure learners get the best possible education	●		●			●				●	



NATIONAL MUSEUMS NI