



The Midlands Federation  
of Museums & Art Galleries

# **Mid Fed**

## **Annual**

### **Report 2015/16**

**Incorporating Statement of Accounts  
and Notice of General Meeting**

<http://midfed.org/>

**Registered Charity No: 225103**

# **Report of Council for 2015 Welcome to the Midlands Federation's annual report of activities.**

## Contents

Presidential Report  
Reports of Meetings  
Reports of Council Officers  
Conference Bursaries and report  
Reference and administrative  
information  
Minutes of 2014 AGM  
Notice of 2015 AGM  
Contact details  
Statement of Accounts

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## **Presidential Report – Jonathan Wallis**

Over the last couple of years changes in the museum sector have seen a further squeeze of museum budgets, a reduction in regional working and many museums facing an uncertain future. The effect of these changes have been felt by the Midlands Federation of Museums and Art Galleries and by others working regionally within the sector.

The development of a future support network for those working in museums has been an important consideration for the council of the Mid Fed. The existence of other organisations with regional remits and has meant that we have not done this in isolation. Arts Council England is keen to ensure that there is adequate support for museums in both

the East and West Midlands. They work with organisations in both regions (Leicestershire County Council in the East and Ironbridge Museums in the West) to provide assistance, this support is at a reduced level from what was offered during the 'Renaissance Years' but is still significant support. Other organisations traditionally have existed to support museums and those who work in them including the Marches Network, the East Midlands Museum Service and the Mid Fed. A year ago it was unclear to me exactly what the future of the Mid Fed was going to be. Did it even have a future?

After a number of meetings with the council, other regional museum bodies, the Museums Association and representatives of other Federations from across the country. I am beginning to get a better idea of the Mid Fed's role. A number of things make what the Mid Fed does unique and should be enough to ensure that we have a place in the region and beyond.

The Mid Fed is –

- The only museums organisation that has a remit that is cross regional, including both the East and West Midlands.
- The only truly independent organisation that receives no funding from Arts Council England.
- The only organisation whose membership is mainly made up of individuals.

I am proposing that for these reasons the Mid Fed has within the current constitution the opportunity to –

- Be the voice of those who work in the museum sector in the East and West Midlands – being able to speak out independently against museum closures, changes to funding and support structures and the policies of both local and central government when they are detrimental to the future of museums and those who work in them.
- Provide opportunities for those who work in museums across the Midlands to meet each other in neutral places and to build their own networks.
- To bring together museum people from both regions to hear from policy makers and those who help to shape the future of our sector and allow free discussion of that future.
- Support other Federations and the Museums Association in national museum campaigns.

In order to do this we need to agree a couple of things at the AGM.

- We will no longer have institutional membership, support from Museum governing bodies could be seen to jeopardise our independence.
- We will organise two meetings a year, one in the East and one in the West Midlands (but both in easily accessible places). These meetings will have at least one speaker of national status and explore a regional or national issue,

allowing time for networking and seeing the museum in which the meeting is held.

- We will support the Museums Association regional representatives in organising regional meetings and social gatherings and other organisations who provide training and support for museums across the Midlands.
- Over the next year we may need to examine the current make up and purpose of the Mid Fed council. Some roles are confusing and in this day and age are irrelevant. All members of the council are volunteers and need to better understand what is expected of their role and what are the benefits of serving a term on the Council.

I hope that all of our members can support us in finding the way forward that is right for the organisation and all our members. I stated at last years AGM that I did not want to be the last President of the Mid Fed. When I took the role on it was a distinct possibility a year on I feel that there is much more hope for a secure future.

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## **Reports of Meetings**

### **Creating Family-Friendly Experiences**

*19th March 2015*

*The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum,  
Jordan Well, Coventry, CV1 5QP*



The event began with a brief update from the regional Museum Development Officers. Claire Browne (Museum Development East Midlands) reported that they had secured three years funding from Arts Council England, with a plan covering a regional collections advisor, regional conservation network, green museums programme, lone workers network, an accreditation advisor, collections review schemes, and a volunteer development and management programme. They would also continue with business development, children and young peoples programme and digital development support. The comprehensive training programme, linked with East Midlands Museums Service and Nottingham Trent University, was available to museums across the region along with a number of grants.

Museums were encouraged to complete a self-assessment business diagnostic to assess eligibility, and participate in data collection.

Helen Johnson (West Midlands) reported big changes in the region. The team were now much smaller and running out of Ironbridge. Their priorities were collections, resilience and audience development, and they had developed a new website at MDOWM.org

The keynote was delivered by Sharon Heal, Director of the Museums Association, and was called Leading Change – Why museums can't live in the past. Sharon was keen to spread the message that it was time to think about where the sector is at now and where we need to go – the good times aren't coming back in a hurry, but she was optimistic about the future: our children's children will be visiting museums but what they see and do will be very different – they will expect to be active participants in their experience. This necessitates a change in how we think now about funding, audiences and ourselves.

Sharon reminded us that we need to demonstrate our value or we will die (e.g. Lancashire residents recently voted for museums to be cut in a budget consultation, while Derby has been more successful in helping prevent cuts with public support.) Bede's World in Tyne & Wear was used as an example of an organisation that has built public support, along the lines of the MA's Museums Change Lives campaign – enhance wellbeing, create better places and inspire people and ideas.

Sharon feels as a sector we need to change the way we think about the use of the museum and the way we work – the MA Transformers programme is about individual and organizational change. If we become 'disobedient curators', we can connect with disenfranchised communities in new ways, and break down barriers between collections, learning, visitor services and regions/nationals. Working inclusively makes museums better for everyone. Next Mel Corner from The Herbert spoke about creative approaches to interpreting collections for a family audience. She began with a quote found

during the Lund Roman Fort project and attributed to Marcus Aurelius (AD 161-180): "The secret of our victory lies in the organisation of the non-obvious." Her main message was that time and effort made better family friendly experiences. Family learning objectives at The Herbert are about offering layered/integrated experiences, providing a welcoming and safe environment and promoting adult/child collaboration. Activities are hands-on, promoting active participation. Curators and learning officers work closely together to share knowledge and skills.

Mel talked us through two areas of her role: creating family activities in non-family orientated exhibitions and creating family friendly events inspired by the permanent collection (the popular 'Who's Poo?' workshop).

After a delicious lunch delivered by the catering team, Dea Birkett from Kids in Museums spoke about the importance of welcoming every family. First she outlined how the campaign had begun – when her family were evicted from the Royal Academy after her son shouted at

a sculpture - and its progress so far, including the Family Friendly Award. Dea got us all cutting and colouring as she challenged us all to think about definitions of family, and about whether we let families self-define in our museums. She then outlined the Kids in Museums campaigns on family tickets, catering and takeover day. She encouraged museums to stop saying 'no' to visitors and to start working towards the Kids in Museums manifesto by picking one point to focus on each year. Last but not least, Jane Findlay from the British Museum spoke about the family offer at the British Museum. Of their 6 million visitors a year, a quarter are made by families. Nearly 70% of visitors come from overseas, with half of their UK visitors coming from outside London. She spoke about some of the difficulties facing families visiting the museum, including overcrowding, lack of family labels in permanent galleries and conflict with non-family visitors in blockbuster exhibitions.

On the positive side, they have a family event programme based on starting young but remembering that adults

matter too: it is about exploring together. There are 8 themed trails to help families explore and regular under 5s activities. There are family labels in temporary exhibitions and a digital learning space sponsored by Samsung. Jane reported that interpretation is currently being evaluated to improve the family offer and they are looking at the whole visit experience not just one event or exhibition.

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## **Reports of Council Officers**

### **Honorary Treasurer's Report – Simon Davies**

The Accounts have been examined and approved by Glyn Hughes in accordance with the Federation's constitution.

Income has been reduced by the limited number of meetings and membership has also been affected, although the figure for institutional members is somewhat misleading as a number of institutions are paying subscriptions for 2015 early in 2016. There has however been a real reduction in local authority institutional members due to the continued pressure on their finances. The accounts also show two unusual receipts: the repayment of the mistaken direct debit by the RAC, which was reported last year and continued until

January 2015. The Federation also benefitted from a £100 donation from the NatWest Bank in apology for errors in the mailing of information to the Treasurer.

Expenditure has reduced less than might have been expected as the squeeze on local authority finances is making museums less able to offer the Federation reduced rates for room hire.

Overall the Federations reserves have shrunk slightly to just below £8,500. The Federation's finances therefore remain healthy and need not be a cause for concern as we move forward into 2016 and beyond.

#### **Honorary Secretary's Report – Olivia Hewkin**

Though Mid Fed has seemed introspective this year, with relatively few events being held, the council has been busy behind the scenes. Nowhere is this more evident than with the launch of the new website, which can be found here:

<http://midfed.org/>

Other changes include the appointment of Jonathan Wallis as President Elect at the 2015 AGM, as well as two new council members. These are Connie Wan as joint Events Secretary and myself (Olivia Hewkin) as Honorary Secretary.

Moving forward into 2016, Laura Waters will be stepping down as Membership Secretary and reverting back to personal member. As will Hannah Steggles, who is currently joint Web & Publicity Officer. Chris Kirkby will be finishing his year as Past President at the AGM next month, and we will be looking for a new President Elect for 2016-2017. Roger Shelley has also completed his term as a personal member. New vacancies will be advertised on the website after the AGM in March.

#### **Membership Secretary's Report – Laura Waters**

As at 10 January 2016, there are 31 paid up individual members, 1 institutional member, 1 co-opted member and 5 honorary members (reduced from 6 following the sad passing of Brian Loughborough in May last year). As in previous years, the balance of memberships is slightly tilted towards the West Midlands. It should be noted that we have one membership recorded with no address details, as the payment arrived without any documentation.

While individual membership numbers have remained very similar (although around half of these are new members rather than renewals), the decline in institutional members can be explained by several factors including confusion among committee members about proceeding with institutional membership, lack of capacity in an

organization where committee members often work full time and a blurring of tasks between the treasurer and membership secretary.

Further discussions are needed about whether the organisation should maintain institutional memberships or focus on individual fees, and about whether – particularly as filling committee posts becomes increasingly difficult - the role of Treasurer and Membership Secretary could be combined.

### **Joint Publicity and Website Officer's Report – Claire Whitbread and Vicki Slade**

In 2014 we started developing a new website for the MidFed. The existing website not only felt dated but had a very complicated back office, which made it very time consuming to update and it was impossible to remove some of the out of date Culture24 links. We knew that we could save time and communicate more clearly with members with something much more simple. Luckily Orangeleaf, a member organisation as well as website wizzes, were willing to provide us with the support to develop a new website and act as our website sponsors. With their hard work we found that we quickly had a new and improved website up and running, [www.midfed.org](http://www.midfed.org).

The new website uses wordpress, which means that it's quick and easy for us to update information and we can reblog useful posts from other relevant sites, such as AIM. The new website also provided an opportunity to integrate with Eventbrite to make our events easy to book. Rather than filling in forms and sending cheques, members can now buy tickets straight through our website in a couple of minutes. This seems to be working really well and has really helped us to cut down on event administration and improve ticket sales.

The new website also features the West Midlands Emergency Response Network's resources. Although the network is no longer active there is a host of valuable information for anyone looking to ensure that their museum or gallery has a robust emergency plan in place. The First Aid treatment guides are particularly useful for a quick insight into how best to salvage different objects if disaster does fall. Our thanks go to Jane Thompson Webb and the WMERN for making the documents available to our members.

There's still work to do to get the website complete and we'd be very appreciative of any images that members are happy to share with us. If you have any feedback about the website, any suggestions as to what could make it a better site for you or any images that we can use then please get in contact!

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### **Conference and Bursaries Report**

This year no one took advantage of the Mid Fed conference bursaries scheme. To apply for a bursary, or for more information on the scheme email: midfed@googlemail.com

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### **Reference and Administrative Information**

Charity name: The Midlands Federation of Museums & Art Galleries  
Charity Registration Number: 225103  
Principal Office to March 2015: The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Jordan Well, Coventry CV1 5QP

Council: Members of Council, who are trustees for the purpose of charity law, who served during the year and up to the date of this report are:

Chris Kirby , Simon Davies, Peter Field, Roger Shelley, Alexa Buffey, Vicki Slade, Hannah Steggles, Laura Walters, Claire Whitbread, Ruth Buttery, Jonathan Wallis, Stacey Bagdi, Olivia Hewkin, Connie Wan.

Structure, government and management: The organisation is an unincorporated association governed by a constitution. Trustees are nominated and elected by members in accordance with detailed provisions in the constitution. The Council consists of Officers and six Personal Members and the Council may co-opt up to three

persons (who are not trustees) for up to a year at a time. Objectives and activities: The objects of the charity, as set out in the constitution, are to promote within the areas covered by the East and West Midlands Government Offices the objects of the Museums Association (as set down in its Memorandum of Association), by holding meetings of an educational nature for the purpose of reading original papers, for discussions, for demonstrations in museum technique and by the provision of information and by encouraging the better administration of museums and art galleries in the Federation area.

**Financial review: The unexamined statement of receipts and payments for the year appears on page 11 of this report. The Treasurer's report appears on page 5.** The report of independent examiners required by the Constitution is presented to members at the AGM. The Federation does not have a reserves policy.  
Public benefit: In planning the Federation's activities during the year, members of Council have at their Council Meetings borne in mind, the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit. The Federation's activities all contribute to the central vision of supporting the museum workforce to serve audiences and collections. This is achieved by holding meetings that enable people who work in museums to

develop their professional competence, providing grants to support individual members with continuing professional development, enabling networking and sharing information between museum professionals, and advocating on regional and national museum issues. The Federation's activities benefit visitors to museums in the East and West Midlands and the public in general by helping museums and galleries and professionals working for them to ensure that people are able to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment, and to collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which museums hold in trust for society. These benefits are defined by the Museum's Association's definition of a museum.

The charity's beneficiaries are people working within museums and galleries in the East and West Midlands. The Federation is a membership organisation but it is not necessary to be a member to attend meetings, which are open to all. Fees charged for meetings are kept to a minimum and are substantially below fees charged by commercial organisations for equivalent events. Only members can benefit from grants to support individuals with their continuing professional development, but membership is open to all those who work for, or have worked with, historic collections, or who support the aims of the Museums Association. Fees charged for personal membership are minimal and a discount is offered to people who

are retired, volunteers, or have a low income. Fees for institutional members are tiered according to revenue budget. The preceding report details the charity's achievements and performance during the year.

### **Minutes of the 2015 Annual General Meeting of the Midlands Federation of Museums & Art Galleries**

Held on 19th March 2015 at The Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, Jordan Well, Coventry, CV1 5QP

#### **Present:**

Council officers and council members  
Stacey Bagdi (Events Secretary West),  
Alexa Buffey (Events Secretary West),  
Simon Davies (Honorary Treasurer),  
Peter Field (Membership Secretary),  
Chris Kirby (President/Past President),  
Vicki Slade (Website and Publicity Officer),  
Hannah Steggles (Website and Publicity Officer),  
Jonathan Wallis (President Elect/President),  
Laura Waters (Acting Honorary Secretary),  
Claire Whitbread (Personal Member)

#### **Members and guests**

Jane Arthur, Sarah Bennett, Dea Birkett,  
Graham Black, Rosemary Bower, Simon Brown,  
Claire Browne, Elizabeth Clauss, Mike Constable,  
Mel Corner, Francesca Cox, Claire Cumming,  
Randie Cush, Janine Derbyshire, Pat Ferrins, Jane

Findlay, Sharon Heal, Olivia Hewkin, Helen Johnson, Ed Lawless, Helen Maclagan, Natalie McKie, Becki Morris, Olivia Perdew, Charlotte Pratley, Julia Radburn, Sarah Scarlett-Farr, Jack Shuttleworth, Deb Skinner, Penelope Thomas, Connie Wan, Jeff Watkins, Ashley Watson, Joanne Wilson, Vanessa Winstone, Mohan Zhu.

Chris Kirby, as outgoing President, opened the meeting at 10.20am.

15/1 Apologies for absence  
Ruth Buttery, Sue Constable, Roger Shelley

15/2 Minutes of the last AGM held on 19th March 2014  
It was agreed that copies of the Annual Report would be made available by email or hard copy on request. The minutes of 19 March 2014 were approved as a true record of the meeting.

15/3 Matters Arising  
Chris spoke briefly about some of the outcomes of the business planning meetings which he had led the committee through during the summer of 2014.

15/4 Presidential Address  
Chris gave his outgoing presidential address. He summarized the key findings of the 2014 annual report and highlighted the work done by the MidFed council during the year, including the

business planning meetings referred to above.

The president thanked members of the council and others who had given their time and support over the year, including James Grimster at Orangeleaf for help developing the new Midfed.org website and Rachel Heath and Nicki Leake – from Culture Coventry who had helped with membership and events.

Chris then handed over the Presidential Chain to Jonathan Wallis to begin his two year term as President. Some of the key reports from Council officers were then summarized as follows.

15/5 Honorary Secretary's Report  
There had been various changes on the MidFed council during the year. Zoe Renilson had stood down as Honorary Secretary at last year's AGM, and as her post had not been filled, personal member Laura Waters had been acting Honorary Secretary for much of the year. Peter Field moved from being Past President to being Membership Secretary with the resignation of Jennifer Thomson. Jonathan Wallis from Derby Museums had agreed to be President elect.

When Helen Sharpe moved on from the website and publicity officer post in 2013 personal member Roger Shelley had taken up the post on a temporary basis. For 2014-15 recognising the amount of work it entailed, the post was taken up

jointly between personal members Vicki Slade and Hannah Steggles, and personal member Claire Whitbread took on the project of developing a new website working with Orangeleaf's James Grimster. Towards the end of the year, Stacey Bagdi joined the council as joint Events Secretary West alongside Alexa Buffey.

Arts Council England kindly loaned a room at their Birmingham offices for a series of business planning meetings during the summer months.

#### 15/6 Honorary Treasurer's Report

It was reported that the accounts, as seen in the annual report, had been examined by independent auditors Iain Rutherford and Danielle Kennell and agreed.

It was noted that the figures for personal and institutional memberships had been recorded the wrong way around in the 2014 column.

#### 15/7 Appointment of Examiners

It was agreed to ask Iain Rutherford and one other to examine the reports next year.

#### 15/8 To elect Officers of Council

Current officers staying in post:  
President – Jonathan Wallis  
Past President – Chris Kirby  
Honorary Treasurer – Simon Davies  
Joint Events Secretary East – Ruth Buttery

Joint Events Secretary West – Stacey Bagdi

Web & Publicity Officer – Hannah Steggles

Web & Publicity Officer – Vicki Slade

Peter Field had announced his intention to step down as Membership Secretary and Alexa Buffey had announced her intention to step down as Joint Events Secretary West. Both would become personal members of Council. Laura Waters agreed to take the role of Membership Secretary for the coming year.

Applications for the vacancies of Honorary Secretary (Olivia Hewkin) and Joint Events Secretary West (Dr Connie Wan) had been received and they were welcomed to the Council.

This left one vacancy of Joint Events Secretary East.

#### 15/9 To elect Members of Council

Continuation of posts (check dates)

Personal Member – Alexa Buffey

Personal Member – Peter Field

Personal Member – Roger Shelley

Personal Member – Claire Whitbread

An application for a personal member vacancy had been received from Dr Sarah Scarlett-Farr and she was welcomed to the Council.

This left one personal member vacancy on the Council.

#### Co-opted members

Steve Le Mottee (East Midlands Museums Service) had agreed to continue as a co-opted member. Isobel Churcher had left her role at ACE and a successor to approach had not yet been identified.

#### 15/10 Presidential address

Jonathan Wallis introduced himself as the new President of MidFed. He outlined a number of issues facing museums and cultural organisations: funding is reducing, visitors have less money and more pressure on their leisure time, and staff have less money and time for training and development. So what can the MidFed do?

Museums must continue to care for collections, work with communities, share stories and not just about the past but equip people for tomorrow and beyond. We've forgotten this and we need to look beyond the sector for solutions and help.

MidFed needs to do more – approximately 4000 work in the Midlands but we have less than 50 members. We need to encourage membership by making our meetings more accessible, more central. We have the best museum/heritage courses in the country in our region and need to work better with Nottingham Trent, Leicester and Ironbridge and their students to

build our networks. Events should facilitate networking and relationships. The structure of meetings must change to allow time to see venues and learn from workers. We must adapt to be more social- this will give us the voice to support and advocate for those who work in museums.

The new president looked forward to an exciting few years as the organisation adapted to a new, exciting and more social way of working which he hoped would grow membership by the end of his presidency. He thanked the membership for the opportunity to make a difference.

#### 15/11 Any other business

There was no other business.

The AGM closed at 11.05am.

### **Notice of Annual General Meeting 2016**

The Annual General Meeting of the Midlands Federation of Museums & Art Galleries will be held on 16 March 2016

#### **Agenda**

Apologises for Absence  
Minutes of the last AGM held on 19th March 2015  
Matters arising  
Presidential Address  
Appointment of New President  
Honorary Secretary's Report  
Honorary Treasurer's Report  
Appointment of Examiners

To elect Officers of Council  
To elect Members of Council  
Vacancies on Council.

**Mid Fed Contact Details**

General and website/publicity enquiries  
midfed@googlemail.com

Conference Bursaries, AGM and Council  
Business:

Jonathan Wallis, President  
Head of Museums and Museum and Art  
Gallery Development  
Derby Museums Trust  
Derby Museum and Art Gallery,  
The Strand, Derby, DE1 1BS  
jonathan@derbymuseums.org

The Annual Report was edited by Olivia  
Hewkin – January 2016

**Midlands Federation of Museums and Art Galleries: Accounts for the year  
ended 31st December 2015**

**Annual Accounts for 2014**

<b>Income</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>
Meetings:	£325.00	£615.82
Membership – personal:	£925.00	£285.00
Membership – institutional:	£379.51	£950.00
<b>Total income:</b>	<b>£1,629.51</b>	<b>£1,850.82</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Meetings – travel expenses:	£215.50	£98.35
Meetings – room hire:	£247.50	£60.00
Meetings – catering:	£405.00	£1,696.61
Refunds	£434.50	£12.00
Officers' expenses:		£133.50
Grants and bursaries	£180.00	£875.00
Website		£41.88
Visioning		£3,330.00
Rebranding (logo)		£2,283.30
President's chain		£126.65
RAC direct debit	£38.88	
<b>Total expenditure:</b>	<b>£1,521.38</b>	<b>£8,657.29</b>
<b>Summary</b>		
Excess Income over Expenditure	£108.13	-£6,806.47
Current Account balance, beginning of year	£8,781.91	£15,588.38
<b>Current Account balance, end of year</b>	<b>£8,890.04</b>	<b>£8,781.91</b>