

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Midlands Federation of Museums and Art Galleries (the MidFed) is an independent organisation with individual members who work and volunteer in museums, galleries and heritage sites across both the East and West Midlands. For over 75 years we have represented the views of our members and engaged them in training, learning and networking opportunities. Recently our members have expressed their concern to us regarding the proposed reductions to funding for Birmingham Museums Trust by Birmingham City Council. This is the reason that I am writing to you.

We understand the pressures that Birmingham City Council faces over the next few years. Reductions in funding from central government and increases in the percentage of funds that are ring-fenced or committed to statutory services make budget setting for any authority a challenge.

We feel that the value of museums for learning, community cohesion, well-being and economic growth is far in excess of the financial cost of these institutions. Birmingham Museums Trust most recent annual report (<http://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/about/our-organisation/policies-plans-and-reports>) clearly shows some of the outcomes that the museums trust has given for Birmingham and its people. Birmingham Museums through their work directly or indirectly contribute to four of Birmingham City Council themes.

These include:

**Prevent family breakdown**

Formal and informal learning for children and families has seen over 110,000 local school children engaged in learning through the museum's collections and 225,000 people engaged in events and activities that help to bring families together. Museums provide unique opportunity for hands on learning that can engage a myriad of learning styles and interests, improving aspirations and soft skill development.

**Maximise the independence of older people**

The volunteer programme operated by the museum has engaged over 700 people in the last year alone, many of them older people, keeping both their minds and bodies active.

**Sustainable neighbourhoods**

65 community groups have been engaged in museum programmes helping to bring Birmingham's diverse community together. The recent development of the Birmingham History and faith galleries has not only provided the opportunity for diverse communities to shape the exhibitions, creating a sense of civic pride and belonging, but have created a platform for celebrating the diversity that characterises the city.

**Economic growth and jobs**

Since 2012 when the Museum Trust was formed the 1.2 Million visitors have helped Birmingham Museums gain over £20M in media coverage for Birmingham, and generate an economic value of £30M for the city. The Museum Trust also supports other museums and cultural institutions across the city and wider region, which also adds to the economic benefit. Any reduction of support in this area will be very hard felt by our members.

The proposed budget reduction will severely reduce Birmingham Museums Trusts ability to work with Birmingham City Council to meet its objectives and make Birmingham a better place to live and work. Since Birmingham Museums Trust was formed in 2012 they have delivered an improved service for the people of Birmingham at the same time as reducing their reliance on Birmingham City Council by generating more of its own income. The Museum Trust is on a slow and difficult path that will continue to see City Council contributions falling as funds are raised elsewhere to continue to improve the Trust's work. Cuts of this nature will have the deepest impact on those who are in greatest need, those families on low incomes, the older generation and those who are not in Education, Employment or Training.

The MidFed believes that Birmingham City Council should consider a reduction in the proposed budget cut to Birmingham Museums Trust in 2017-2020. This would allow the Trust to continue to find ways of generating their own budgets and make savings in a measured way which will have the least impact on the people of Birmingham and ensure a sustainable service for future.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Wallis

President  
The Midlands Federation of Museums and Art Galleries