



The Horniman Public Museum and Public Park Trust Draft Corporate Plan 2025-28

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1. Introduction

The Horniman is London's only museum where environment, ecology and human cultures can be seen side by side at a global scale. This means that we are in a perfect position to place focus on the interlinked issues of climate, biodiversity and social inclusion and to promote a sense of agency.

This corporate plan covers the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2028. It has been developed at a time of economic uncertainty, and is based on a set of assumptions about inflation, pay, and visitor numbers that may need to be revised over time (particularly given that a major capital project will be underway during the period). In accordance with practice and in response to this uncertainty, this three-year plan will be updated every year to adjust to changing circumstances.

2026-27 will be a key year in this plan as it sees both the completion of the Nature + Love project and the 125th anniversary of the opening of the Horniman. We will be celebrating both events and using them to maximise support and engagement. The successful delivery of Nature + Love will be our highest priority.

This corporate plan comes at a pivotal moment for the Horniman, as we respond to the challenging external environment with a renewed focus on our core purpose and the operating culture we need to deliver on our priorities.

2024 was a period of leadership change for the Horniman, with three new Trustees joining in February and a further three soon to be appointed. The executive team is very different, with a new Chief Executive (Gordon Seabright), Director of Finance and Corporate Services (Michelle Edward), Director of Content (Peronel Craddock) and Director of Audiences and Income (Annie Duffield) joining Kirsten Walker, the Director of Collections Care and Estates. This new team, the Section Leads and the whole staff and volunteer group are committed to building on the post-Covid reset agenda, increasing our impact and effectiveness. For clarity and to respond to the new environment the Reset Agenda will no longer be a separate strategy, and relevant elements have been incorporated into the Corporate Plan.

2. Mission, Values, Behaviours and Priorities

The Horniman's Mission is our anchor, a constant that reminds us of our commitment to building connections and conveying a spirit of optimism:

The Horniman connects us all with global cultures and the natural environment, encouraging us to shape a positive future for the world we all share.

A set of Values were developed through staff consultation in 2023/24 and these underpin everything we do:

- We are **inclusive** and **welcoming** to everyone
- We are **caring** and **respectful** towards each other, our visitors and all our stakeholders
- We are **friendly**, open and positive, embracing collaboration and fresh ways of thinking.

Organisational culture is how we live and breathe our agreed Behaviours in our work and with each other:

- Amplifying diverse voices, histories, and perspectives
- Being environmentally sustainable and encouraging biodiversity
- Communicating clearly and with warmth
- Encouraging creativity and enterprise

These must be made more than words. We must make good on our promise to make decolonisation, diversity, equity and inclusion, and environmental sustainability, core to our being. This means not only a focus on audiences and staff, but also reflecting our responsibilities towards communities whose heritage is represented in the Horniman's collections, and to the planet we all share. We will strive always to discuss the "how" as well as the "what" when making decisions at all levels.

In 2025/26 we plan collectively to revisit our Values. During recent consultation with Section Leads, staff shared that they felt our Values may not be sufficiently distinctive

to influence what we do and how we do it in the long term. Our current values will guide our work until we revisit them.

2.1 Horniman Priorities

We have reviewed the organisational priorities presented in the previous Corporate Plan (2024-27). We have set a new, overarching priority:

- **Empowering teams:** enabling staff at all levels to influence decision making and fostering a culture of cross-team collaboration that can move at pace with new ideas and address challenges supportively. The significance of this, and the effort that will be required, should not be underestimated. But through a refreshed approach we can make our other priorities more attainable:
- **Diversity:** engaging and listening to diverse audiences, indigenous source and diaspora communities, staff, volunteers and partners, taking active steps towards decolonisation, equity and inclusion
- **Environmental and social impact:** making a positive difference to people and the planet through our activity and projects, particularly Nature + Love
- **Digital transformation:** investing in staff's digital training, development and literacy alongside digital infrastructure to enable greater ambition, efficiency and security
- **Income generation:** building creative and profitable activities to enable all our work, greater relevance and, business resilience

3. Financial Resilience

- Our grant-in-aid funding from the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) as an Arm's Length Body (ALB) along with our National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) funding from Arts Council England (ACE), has been vital to our survival over recent years.
- However, from 1 April 2023, the Horniman was no longer eligible for the ACE funding stream, which comprised £964,097. DCMS have provided flat funding to compensate for this loss for 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26. However, there is no commitment to continue the funding beyond this period. The lack of certainty over such a vital element of our funding remains the organisation's greatest risk, as its loss would be a threat to our continued operation.
- The remainder of our funding will continue to be generated through a range of ticketing, membership, education, commercial and fundraising activities.

4. Framework Plan 2020-30

In October 2019 Trustees approved a ten-year framework plan to deliver our priorities through a combination of revised programming and a series of capital projects relating to our buildings and Gardens. The major capital projects comprised two strands: the Nature + Love project and refurbishment of the main entrance. A new framework plan will be required during the term of this document, but we will delay work on a new strategy until progress with Nature + Love gives us confidence that we have capacity.

The **Nature + Love** project was established as our first priority; it improves access to and use of outdoor spaces, which is particularly important as our research on visitors and non-visitors shows that nature and the outdoors are key interests of under-represented segments. The project also modernises the 60-year-old displays in our historic Natural History Gallery to help engage people in mitigating the climate and ecological crisis. Nature + Love focuses on mobilising our love and concern for future generations to spur action on current climate and ecological challenges, and consists of the following:

- creating a new outdoor destination to include children’s play, a new children’s café and improved access to our historic Nature Trail.
- establishing a Sustainable Gardening Zone with a new plant nursery, sustainable planting and activities encouraging improved health and wellbeing, and a programme to encourage adult skills development
- refurbishing the Natural History Gallery and Nature Base
- delivering an ambitious learning and engagement programme.

The project is now in delivery phase. Effective delivery is important in proving to current and potential funders that we provide value for money and high-quality project management.

During the term of this Plan we will develop a project to address the second part of the framework plan, refurbishment of the main entrance. This project is likely to cover additional elements to improve the Museum and Gardens, but given our necessary focus on N+L it is unlikely to impact on the team’s workload during 2025-26.

5. Corporate Goals

The ongoing **corporate goals** which give structure to this plan and our activity remain as stated in the ten-year framework.

Goal 1: Access

We will use the collections and Gardens to stimulate curiosity, wonder and a sense of agency, promoting opportunities for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds to contribute to, participate in and enjoy exhibitions, educational programmes, activities and events – both face-to-face and online.

Delivers against priorities: Empowering Teams, Diversity, Social Impact, Income Generation and Digital transformation

One of our most significant areas of work this decade is to widen our audiences so that the profile of our visitors more closely reflects that of the overall London population.

We will address intersectional audience segments comprising more diverse demographics and work to increase representation of those currently marginalised in our spaces. We will deepen our efforts to decolonise the presentation of our collections, embedding equitable approaches to representing indigenous knowledge and ways of being and seeing. A refocused public programme of exhibitions, events and engagement will be delivered through a blend of digital, outreach, outdoor and indoor activities. Our work is informed by our **Audience Champions Group**, **Access Advisory Group** and **Decolonisation Working Group**, and their respective action plans.

We will also be mindful that the composition of our employee and volunteer team has a significant impact on the perception of potential visitors that the Horniman is a place for them, and will align our recruitment practices more closely with our EDI intentions.

We will strengthen our relationships with public and educational sector partners, including collaboration with the London Borough of Lewisham as a member of the **Lewisham Strategic Partnership** and (as the largest cultural organisation in Lewisham) in the delivery of Lewisham's cultural strategy. We will work with GLA on the Mayor of London's cultural agenda and with TfL and others on initiatives to facilitate active and public service travel to the Horniman and other cultural locations.

We will also play our role as a member of the complementary **Civic University Agreement** partnership led by Goldsmiths, University of London. We will develop existing relationships with school, university, community and cultural sector partners to enhance our programming and extend our audience reach, and develop new partnerships, for example with the Royal College of Art. Our 125th anniversary year in 2026 will be an opportunity for the borough and our community to celebrate and we aim to develop engaging content to mark this significant occasion.

Goal 2: Collections

We will care for and develop the collections so that they can be made as accessible as possible now and into the future.

Delivers against priorities: Empowering Teams, Diversity and Environmental and social impact

We will continue long-established London and UK-based partnerships around collections research and development, for example with UCL, University of Brighton, and UAL. Working with communities, we will develop and pilot new approaches to community-led collecting, focusing initially on Caribbean collecting. We will continue to work with communities to develop culturally appropriate approaches to care, management and use of collections, prioritising ancestral remains, and developing the Handling Collection as a resource for learning.

Nationally, we will continue to work primarily with museums with similar collections to develop mutually supportive programmes around collections development, while supporting smaller institutions and other sector support initiatives. We will continue to

lead the **Museums and Galleries Touring Exhibitions Network** (MAGNET), which received a grant from Arts Council England in 2023 to develop a programme of touring exhibitions among 12 partners. We will also contribute to Arts Council England's Towards a National Collection programme, the creation of a virtual national catalogue of museum holdings, as we improve our knowledge and data management and make more of our collections accessible digitally.

While the primary focus of this plan period, coinciding as it does with N+L, will be the Natural History collection, we will embed an integrated approach to Music, involving our collections, our staff expertise, musicians, audiences, schools and local communities, with a strong digital component. This will generate an exhibition on the South London origins of dubstep in 2027, enhance our spaces with regular music programming, support Community Thursdays, and enhance our music offer for secondary schools.

We will continue to develop links with organisations in Nigeria and Australia following the transfer of ownership of the Benin and Warumungu material held by the Horniman, and with Ghana through the continuation of the **Rethinking Relationships** project led by the Pitt Rivers Museum. Our policy of supporting appropriate restitutions will continue, and while this is important for its own sake it will also enable us to strengthen relationships with communities and cultural organisations worldwide.

We will also build on existing partnerships in support of our **Project Coral** programme, our Aquarium-led international project dedicated to coral reef conservation, with the aim of increasing the project's impact in affected regions and its visibility in the UK.

Goal 3: Shaping the future

We will effectively manage our resources and become more financially resilient so that we can continue to develop and share our collections, estate and expertise for the widest possible public benefit.

Delivers against priorities: Empowering Teams, Income generation, Diversity, Environmental and Social Impact and Digital Transformation

Fundamental to our plans to make the Horniman accessible to all audiences is our work to diversify our own staff and volunteers. This issue is the foremost one being addressed by our **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Working Group**, which has specific annual targets. We will support the People of Colour staff network, the LGBTQ+ network, and the Staff Wellbeing group and initiatives, and recognise and celebrate the contribution of our volunteers. We will nurture the next generation of museum professionals through careers days, work experience and student placements, as well as our joint MA in Anthropology and Museum Practice with Goldsmiths.

During this plan period we will achieve a significant increase in earned income across our commercial and fundraising workstreams. We will revitalise our membership and benefactor programmes, building an increased philanthropic revenue stream

alongside our current work with trusts, foundations and other institutional funders. This will include the **launch of a legacy scheme** and the introduction of **commercial partnerships**. During early 2026 we will launch a children's café as part of the Nature + Love project, while growing our event delivery and hire businesses.

Our staff are involved with many networks supporting the sector and the local community as trustees, governors and mentors. The past few years have seen the Horniman speaking authoritatively as a local, global and sector leader on environmental activity. Ironically, though, our environmental performance requires improvement, particularly regarding carbon reduction, so we will place a new focus on action towards achieving net zero. We will implement practical steps across the organisation to **reduce our carbon emissions** and pollution and **increase the biodiversity of our site**, sharing our successes and failures in line with our responsibility to give a sense of agency to our visitors and local community.

We will continue to implement our information technology and digital transformation strategy. During this period, we will focus on ensuring that staff across the organisation are equipped with the right systems and security for them to function in the most efficient and secure way. This will be achieved by further developing our use of Microsoft 365, strengthening cyber security by obtaining and maintaining **Cyber Essentials** certification, and by improving and upgrading our network, software, systems and general IT infrastructure. We will also continue to integrate our **customer relationship management (CRM)** systems within the areas of ticketing, membership, fundraising, and streamline processes with further system enhancements where possible.

The staff, volunteers and Trustees of the Horniman Public Museum and Public Park Trust will make every effort to realise these plans over the next three years.

Michael Salter-Church
Chair

Gordon Seabright
Chief Executive