

Case Study: Recovery Grant

In April 2020, in partnership with the Art Fund, MDEM launched a Recovery grant fund to support museums specifically in response to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Organisation: Museum of Timekeeping

Amount of grant applied for: £7609.00

Date of application: October 2020

Project Delivery: June 2021

In October 2020, the Museum of Timekeeping made a successful application which enabled them to relocate the collection of their Speaking Clocks into a larger exhibition space, create new interpretation for the collection and to create a shop in the former Speaking Clock gallery. The project was completed by June 2021.

The funding went towards:

- Professional removal firm
- Insurance during the move
- Interpretation panels
- Shop fittings including cash till
- Shop stock



Delivering the Project

This project took place over a 4-month period of forced closure due to the coronavirus pandemic. The Speaking Clocks needed to be decommissioned by Museum affiliates before being moved across to their new location. Before this could happen, 3 cases needed to be moved from their spot in the new Speaking Clock space into a holding area. One had to be scrapped as the glass door was damaged but 2 were moved into the new shop space to house a collection of Skeleton Clocks.

The grant allowed the museum to purchase shop fittings and a cash register. Much of the shop stock was also covered in this funding and the museum worked hard to ensure that the museum shop was innovative yet relevant, basing all purchases on time and timekeeping. They installed a book shop area with a mix of factual and fiction books all with a theme around time and a second-hand books area using donated books which are surplus to requirement.

This grant saw new interpretation panels designed and made for the Speaking Clock room, to modernise the space and ensure the exhibition is interesting and engaging to visitors. These were designed and fitted by Lab3media who the museum had worked with on a previous exhibition overhaul.

Key Challenges

Externally, the biggest challenge was working around the ever-shifting sands of the Governmental restrictions through the pandemic. This continually pushed back dates for meetings or to have work done on site. The museum was unable to begin the project in earnest until March 2021 due to Government closures / furlough / businesses being placed in lockdown. It was a highly frustrating time, however from the confusion came a learned ability to react, adapt and to become more resilient as a result.

Working with suppliers to produce bespoke shop stock was also more challenging than anticipated. Poor communication, reluctance to provide quotes and printers turnarounds being weeks / months rather than days were just a few of the issues encountered, but many lessons have been learned in all aspects of product creation.

The travel restrictions, particularly for the over 70s, also caused issues as they attempted to decommission the Speaking Clocks ready for relocation. The Electric Horology specialist Board member was unable to attend the museum in person and instead, they had to work with him and the rest of the conservation team remotely via email and Zoom to ensure the clocks were disconnected and their internal workings secured. While this was challenging it further shows how with a flexible attitude and a 'more than one way to skin a cat' outlook, you can achieve anything you put your mind to.

Project Outcome

This grant allowed the museum to turn what otherwise would have been a fallow period in its development into one of activity, growth and progress. As a direct result of this financial assistance, they now have a shop providing them with a vital additional funding stream and a brand-new exhibition space which gives visitors more information and easier access to the speaking clocks as well as allowing the museum to restart group tours for small groups 6 months earlier than planned, given that the exhibition spaces are large enough to comply with social distancing regulations.



They have ensured that the new exhibition is inviting for families with space in the centre of the room for family activities and somewhere to sit for those who wish to. The shop has a range of affordable gifts including stationery and toys to appeal to a family market as well as high end / bespoke goods for the more discerning visitor.

This funded project has meant that the museum is now open to the public again, and visitors can see a forward-thinking, positive environment dedicated to the mission statement of improving the public profile of horology in an informal education setting. It has given staff and volunteers alike a new energy and pride in the museum and has given an excellent starting point from which to evolve future museum exhibitions.