

# A CULTURE OF LATES



# List of Contents

## A report into the historic, current and potential role of UK museum Lates within the context of the night-time economy

### List of Contents

- 02 Foreword
- 04 About Culture24 and this research
- 05 Definitions
- 06 Executive Summary
- 09 Introduction
- 13 Evidence & Findings:
  - 1. *The Culture of Lates*
  - 2. *Lates' Role In The Night-Time Economy*
  - 3. *Programming, Charging and Quality*
  - 4. *The Social Space*
  - 5. *The Big Picture: Regularity and Festivals*
  - 6. *Professional Practice*
- 50 Conclusion
- 53 Summary of Related Reports and Acknowledgements

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# Forewords

Nick Stockman  
*Campaigns Manager, Culture24*

*“This museum will be like a book that is open and not shut.”  
 Sir Henry Cole, first Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1857*

Of all the challenges faced by the museum/gallery sector at the beginning of 2018, one of the least recognised is the need to open the doors more! But the fact is that the doors to some of the most inspiring, versatile, grand, commonly-owned premises in the UK are shut for a large proportion of the available time.

Since the turn of the century the occasions on which visual arts venues are open after 5pm alongside their performing arts cousins have become much more numerous. Over the next fifteen years, if the sector is supported, it could be as normal to walk through the doors of a museum at night as it is to enter a theatre.

The element of theatrical experience is what marks out after-hours events (Lates) in a museum or gallery as something different to a daytime visit. Lates can be seen as a more social, experiential and affordable alternative or complement to visiting a blockbuster exhibition and, as such, if the experience is high quality, it will be highly valued by the audience.

Lates can potentially do for venues’ empty spaces what Airbnb’s platform does for homeowners’ spare bedrooms – create a channel by which new people can be attracted in and new income generated.

As the night-time economy contributes £66bn to the UK annually, if we can develop Lates as a distinct strand of museum practice the museum/gallery sector can build capacity and reach untapped demand, creating new and increased income streams and attracting new people into their spaces. We have the opportunity in this country to create a Culture of Lates – a situation where opening museums and galleries beyond 5pm is normal. If we reach that point it will help ensure museums and galleries remain relevant and appealing to ever-more demanding audiences.

Now that would be worth keeping the doors open for a little longer!



Nick Stockman  
*Campaigns Manager  
 Culture24*

Lucy Woodbridge  
Head of Visitor Events, Natural History Museum

'A Culture of Lates' documents, in unprecedented depth, after-hours events in museums and their role in the night-time economy. It is much needed benchmarking that the sector will be able to relate to – I am not aware of any research that is so specific to my own world. Not only does it show us where we stand, it helps us to think beyond our own front door to the wider economy that is growing around us and that we are an integral part of. Every museum public programmer is responsible for their own 'Culture of Lates'. Recognising the importance of the work you do in your institution is the first step towards more certainty in an uncertain world.

As the political climate has moved towards cuts and austerity, we have an opportunity to make our own contribution to change, which will have a positive impact on the wider economy. What we have that is so unique is the ability to create one-off and magical experiences. We can make enchanted moments; we are able to take visitors into a different space, an escape from a fast-paced world. By creating events for visitors we are also doing something incredible for our institutions – generating income while enhancing their appeal to an audience that may not naturally choose to visit. By taking a commercial approach we will help guarantee their sustainability for generations to come.



*I strongly believe in the principle of free access to culture and heritage in this country: it is our right to learn who we are, where we came from and about the world around us. To ensure continuing daytime free access, we have to work towards self-sufficiency so that when the cuts impact, our work can continue to thrive.*



I started my career as a public programmer at the Royal Air Force Museum, London. As a medium-sized museum in underground Zone 4, the directors were keen to increase visitor numbers through events and activities. Over four years I worked with my colleagues to create a programme that brought in a new audience, made the collection more accessible and generated an income. The Museum now programmes a wide variety of ticketed events including cinema, music, interpretive performance and much more. The programme is a fundamental part of the Museum's strategy.

I strongly believe in the principle of free access to culture and heritage in this country: it is our right to learn who we are, where we came from and about the world around us. To ensure continuing daytime free access, we have to work towards self-sufficiency so that when the cuts impact, our work can continue to thrive. To do this we must look at how we best utilise the hours after closing of normal daytime operations and how we can leverage revenue from an opportunity that is waiting to be grasped.

I urge you to read this report and ask yourself, what is your role? How have you made an impact? What more could you do? Most importantly – do you want to be part of a Culture of Lates? If the answer is yes, fantastic – you are part of a movement which will ensure a bright future for our sector.



Lucy Woodbridge  
Head of Visitor Events  
Natural History Museum

## About Culture24 and this research

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Culture24 is a Brighton-based independent charity which supports arts and heritage organisations to have the confidence, imagination and skills to connect meaningfully with audiences of today. Culture24 has produced Museums at Night, the UK's twice yearly festival of museum after-hours events (Lates) since its beginning in 2009.

A **Culture of Lates** is the UK strand of a three part study by Culture24 into the impact of Lates on the night-time economy (NTE). Designed to complement each other, the **Airbnb** funded report, **Late Like A Local** and the **Winston Churchill Memorial Trust (WCMT)** supported report, **An International Culture of Lates**, contain evidence, findings and recommendations for NTE policymakers and museum and gallery programmers.

All data, charts, maps, reports and literature referred to in this report can be obtained for free by emailing [LatesResearch@culture24.org.uk](mailto:LatesResearch@culture24.org.uk) and requesting the login details to the **Culture24Research Google Drive**.

The aims of the combined studies are:

- To produce data and insights from 15 years of UK Lates programming to establish terms of reference and a coherent framework, upon which programmers and policymakers can base future decisions
- To map the historic, current & potential capacity, impact and value of UK Lates, supported by international insights, within the context of the night-time economy
- To gain insights into the current thinking of cultural and heritage organisations in relation to Lates programming
- To better understand the motivations behind the visiting choices made by modern cultural audiences
- To help establish a supportive eco-system for Lates to thrive in

The report is peppered with quotes from programmers and policymakers interviewed in Mexico, Australia and Russia; their insights are chosen for their relevance to the discussion here. All of these insights are extracts from the full WCMT report available from the Culture24 research Google drive.

# Definitions

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Lates are events which start after 5pm that take place in Museums, Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Heritage Sites and Sacred Sites and Historic Houses. For the purposes of brevity the word museums is used as shorthand in this report to refer to venues of all types where applicable.

This report makes no distinction between the terms 'Lates' and 'after-hours' as related to events. We are aware that some venues and venue programmers regard Lates as a term only used by large venues, or only used to describe charged-for income-generating events (or in some cases used to describe only free events). As no agreement exists which defines or limits the term Lates to meaning one type of after-hours event, we have used it to indicate any type.

The term 'extended hours' is used in this report to mean an extension of the museum's normal opening hours, whether accompanied with extra programming or not.

'The Night-Time Economy (NTE) refers to all economic activity taking place between the hours of 6pm and 6am.'<sup>01</sup>

Placemaking refers to 'a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value'.<sup>02</sup>

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01. Mayor of London's New London Plan, November 2017, Chapter 7, 7.6.1 <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draft-new-london-plan/>

02. Project for Public Places, 'What is Placemaking?', [https://www.pps.org/reference/what\\_is\\_placemaking/](https://www.pps.org/reference/what_is_placemaking/) [31st December 2009]

# Executive Summary



*A Culture of Lates is a commitment by policymakers and museum programmers to invest in Lates as the industry's contribution to the UK's night-time economy. It is a mentality which once adopted would make Lates and extended openings essential components of a location's diverse night-time cultural offer and help keep museums at the heart of their communities.*



Evening and night-time events in museums and galleries (Lates) have been a feature of UK nightlife since 2001 when the Victoria and Albert Museum started a regular night ("Friday Lates", now in their fifth year at South Kensington," V&A Annual Report and Accounts 2004-2005). The UK Lates scene is one of the most mature offers in the world, with museums and galleries all over the country intermittently or regularly opening up late for events.

However, no mapping exercise has ever been conducted to quantify the volume, assess the quality, evaluate the role and forecast the opportunities that Lates represent for the museum sector, the public and the UK's night-time economy.

This report represents a first attempt at lifting the lid on this strand of museum public programming to give us an insight into the contribution Lates make to the NTE, the issues they raise and the value they have in the context of reduced public funding but increasing public demand for more choice in after-work leisure activities.

This research's evidence and findings point to healthy prospects for the growth of Lates in the UK and can be seen as a roadmap for future development. It is important that we create a **Culture of Lates** in the UK to develop coherence and a joined-up approach to capacity building from venues and policymakers.

A Culture of Lates is a commitment by policymakers and museum programmers to invest in Lates as the industry's contribution to the UK's night-time economy. It is a mentality which, once adopted, would make Lates and extended openings essential components of a location's diverse night-time cultural offer and help keep museums at the heart of their communities.





## Key Findings

The research findings can be grouped into eight key points:

1. Lates thrive when they are well supported and **integrated into a venue's core offer**
2. Lates make an increasingly **significant contribution to a diverse night-time economy**
3. Lates are a source of **income generation** and a proven route to **new audiences**
4. Creating a **social space** is the key to successful Lates events
5. Innovative programming raises **quality and increases income**
6. **Regular and festival Lates** event programmes combined build capacity and sales
7. **Evaluation** focused research leads to high quality programming and better policy decisions
8. Museum professionals want opportunities to **share Lates programming knowledge**, experiences and good practice

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, we recommend to all stakeholders that:

1. Regular extended opening and/or after-hours events are integrated into **venues' core provision**
2. Lates must be **part of an area's night-time economy strategy** and supported with effective marketing
3. Lates should become an **established part of museum strategy**, valued and nurtured by leadership
4. **Museums should be community hubs**, perceived as social spaces that are open when most people can use them
5. Museums adopt the 'ladder route' to developing both **regular and festival** Lates event programmes
6. **Structures and platforms** are created that help museums get their product more effectively to market and enable customers to access information and tickets more easily
7. Lates event data is used by museum directors to **engage with national and local night-time economy policymakers**
8. Regular opportunities are created for **programmers to meet and share knowledge**

# Introduction

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As we start 2018 the UK is pulling out of a major international trading block and free movement of labour system in a way and on a scale that has not been attempted anywhere else in the world before. We are also eight years into an austerity programme with no end in sight which has remoulded the role of the state in public service intervention. The psychological state of the museum sector in February 2018, when this report is published, can be characterised as anxious as years of cuts take their toll. Resilience is the watchword – risk, boldness and innovation are not so commonly heard.

For the first time in two decades domestic visitor numbers to museums and galleries are declining in central London.<sup>04</sup> The 2016 visitor figures released by the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions confirm that although big London museums and galleries still take up nine out of the top ten places, seven of them reported decreases on their 2015 visitor numbers.<sup>05</sup>

The big picture is nuanced – it may be that regional venues are benefiting at the expense of the capital, though they too are struggling with budget cuts. As this research is concerned with after-hours events, daytime attendance figures provide a context not a data input. Where these figures are relevant is the sense many institutions have that as they struggle to maintain numbers and retain loyal customers during the day, the night time represents an opportunity to attract new, younger audiences.

## London & Beyond

In London, the research indicates that the bigger players who have traded in this area for many years are looking hard at what they are doing to see how they can improve their offer and balance audience development and income generation.

There are large venues that are achieving impressive numbers: Tate Modern's Uniqlo-sponsored Friday Lates regularly attract over 8,000 people a night and the Natural History Museum attracts well over 60,000 people to both free and ticketed after-hours events annually. The National Portrait Gallery regularly reaches capacity with its free weekly Friday offer, yet some other venues of significant size are yet to find the niche that would enable them to offer a regular programme.

At the same time more small and medium-sized venues both in and out of London are recognising the benefits of Lates and are starting to dip their toes in the water. Many of these venues are not reluctant to charge an admission fee; they see charging as a necessity and want their customers to value the events they programme.

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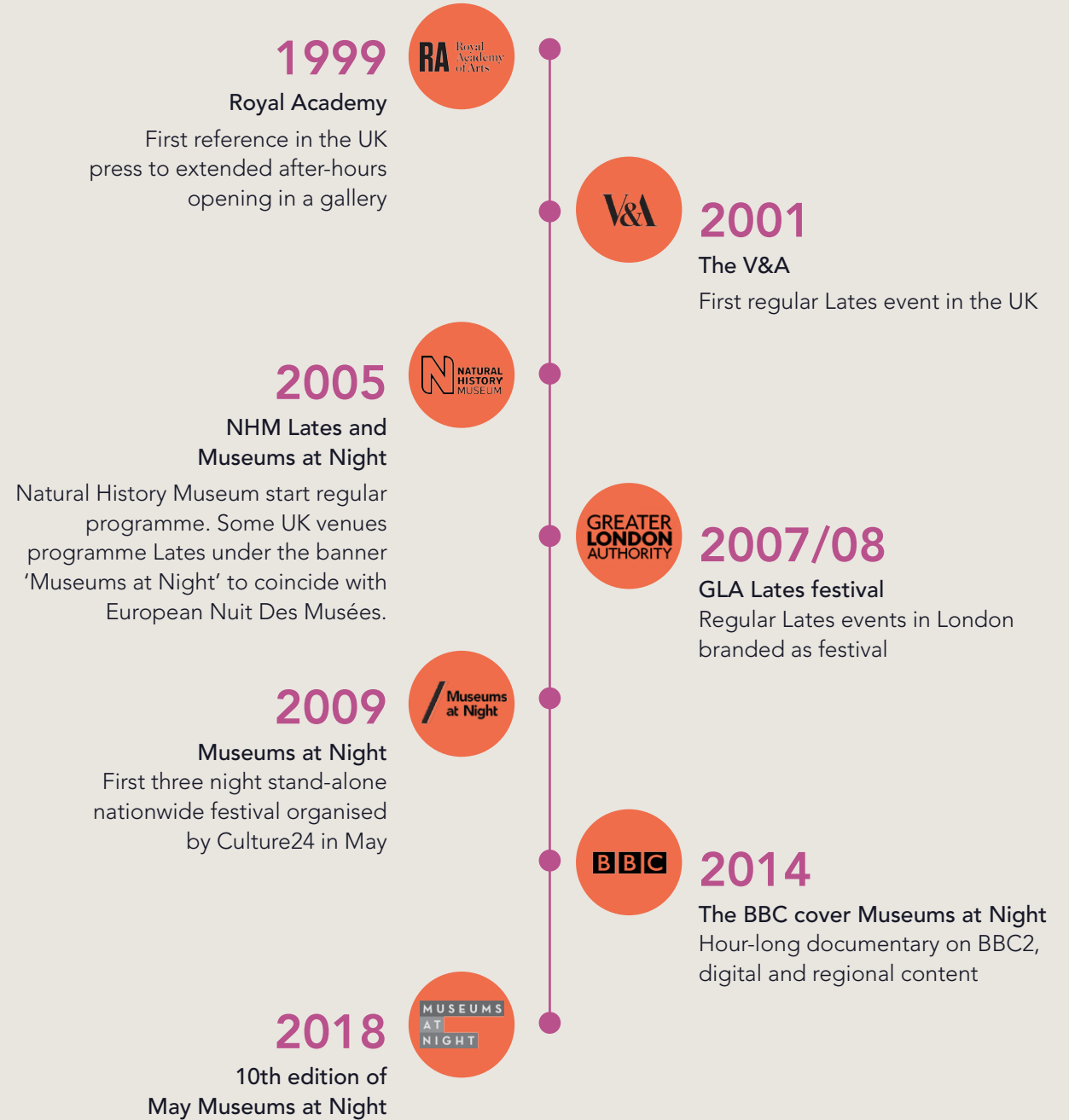
04. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-31533110> accessed 22/12/2017

05. <http://www.alva.org.uk/details.cfm?p=423> accessed 15/01/2018

# UK Lates Timeline

## History of Lates

The history and current context of UK Lates events



On Sunday 18 April 1999 the Independent newspaper reported that “the Royal Academy [had] decided to open round-the-clock for one day only, becoming the first British gallery to open for 24 hours non-stop” for their Monet exhibition.<sup>06</sup> Not long after this, in 2001 the V&A started their Friday Lates programme and the idea that a visit to a UK museum was restricted to the daylight hours became a thing of the past.

Fast forward to 2005: the Natural History Museum was embarking on their journey into after-hours programming and a handful of venues were opening late for the first time under the banner of Museums at Night, as part of the Campaign for Museums’ Museums and Galleries Month in May. Museum opening hours in the UK were now changed forever.

Now in 2018, the year of the tenth edition of the national and centrally organised Museums at Night festival, some parts of the UK, such as London and Manchester, have a mature Lates offer. When the big London museums experimented with Lates in the early years of the new millennium they might not have expected that they would become the feature of the museum offer they are now.

Lates are popular with many museums because they regard them as a good way, some say the best, of attracting new audiences that are usually younger than their average visitor. Audiences respond well to Lates because they are on at a time when most people can access them.

## UK Research Methodology

Most strands of museum practice, such as collections, learning and marketing, have data-backed research to inform decisions on future practice and developments. This is not the case with Lates. Several studies have made reference to Lates, some of which are referenced here, but Culture24’s literature review has not uncovered a single piece of research entirely dedicated to museum after-hours events. The primary aim of this research is to produce useful data and benchmarking to inform future decision making and establish after-hours events as a strand of museum practice worthy of serious reflection and dedicated consideration.

We approached this research project as an opportunity to:

- 1) map the historic and current UK Lates scene based mainly on the data from the Culture24 database supplied by venues programming Lates events since January 2009; and
- 2) gauge venue programmers’, NTE policymakers’ and the public’s experience, views of, and need for Lates based on interviews and surveys.

We also conducted an in-depth survey of the London venues taking part in the October 2017 Museums at Night festival and drew on venue and visitor data from Museums at Night festivals since 2009. The data and feedback that comprised the Airbnb-sponsored cultural tourism component of the research was taken from surveys of hosts on Airbnb and workshop sessions attended by Airbnb hosts and venue programmers.<sup>07</sup> We did not have access to venue daytime and after-hours visitation comparisons or year-on-year after-hours event attendance comparison figures, data that would be useful for future research.

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06. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/hordes-cant-get-in-for-love-nor-monet-1088312.html> accessed 25/10/2017

07. See the ‘Late Like A Local’ report on the Culture24Research Google drive

**Datasets Summary** – for access to the Culture24 Research Google drive contact Culture24 [LatesResearch@culture24.org.uk](mailto:LatesResearch@culture24.org.uk)

Input	Time-frame	Main Statistics
Venue-generated Lates event listings information on the Culture24 database	Downloaded and interrogated April – June 2017	Over 18,198 extended hours and after-hours event records since 2009 <a href="#">List of data fields on Culture24Research Google drive</a>
Airbnb data	Received in May 2017	Host and guest data from 2016 <a href="http://www.weareculture24.org.uk">For more detail see Late Like A local report www.weareculture24.org.uk</a>
UK public surveys	April – September 2017	<b>1076</b> total responses – <b>703</b> filled out a form on the Museums at Night website, <b>373</b> responded to a public survey conducted by Research Now and the Audience Agency <a href="#">Public survey response data on Culture24Research Google drive</a>
UK venue programmer & night-time economy expert interviews	April – September 2017	32 Interviews <a href="#">List of questions, who was interviewed &amp; which organisations on Culture24Research Google drive</a>
Hosts on Airbnb survey responses	15-19 May 2017	104 total responses <b>Brighton:</b> 29 hosts responses <b>Manchester:</b> 17 host responses <b>Devon &amp; Cornwall:</b> 58 host responses
Airbnb host and museum/gallery event programmer meet-ups	29 August, 5 & 6 September 2017	<b>Brighton:</b> 9 Airbnb hosts, 6 venues <b>Penzance:</b> 13 Airbnb hosts (18 on waiting list), 5 venues <b>Manchester:</b> 7 Airbnb hosts, 3 venues
International interviews	July & September 2017	<b>Mexico City:</b> 13 interviews with 29 venues, <b>Melbourne:</b> 10 interviews with 10 venues and NTE experts, <b>Sydney:</b> 11 interviews with 11 venues and NTE experts, 1 presentation, <b>Moscow:</b> 8 interviews with 8 venues <a href="#">Full list of people &amp; venues interviewed on Culture24Research Google drive</a>
Data from London venues participating in the October 2017 Museums at Night festival	Input data July – October 2017, output data October – November 2017	31 (out of 33) venues responded to survey on behalf of 42 (out of 46) event instances. <a href="#">List of the questions asked on Culture24Research Google drive</a>
Evaluation from a number of Museums at Night festivals	2009 - 2016	Feedback from visitor and venue surveys (2015 and 2016 Connect! Project evaluation conducted by the Catherine Rose office)

# Evidence & Findings

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## 1. A Culture of Lates

Compared to the performing arts – theatre, music and dance – night-time events in museums are in their infancy. A few UK museums and galleries have been programming Lates since the turn of the century, but it was nearly a decade before some would come together under one banner. In 2009, Museums and Galleries Month, which for several years had been an annual month-long showcase for the sector in May, was distilled down to a weekend of after-hours events. Led by Culture24, it was now branded Museums at Night and designed to attract new audiences to museums after-hours.

The Museums at Night festival originally took place over three nights in May but has now expanded to four nights in May and three in October over Halloween. Alongside presenting these events on the Museums at Night festival website, all non-performing arts venues can post any of their events, day or night-time, all-year round into the Culture24 database. It is these venue-generated listings, uploaded since 2009, that comprise the bulk of the data used in this research.

By interrogating this data we can start to map the historic and current UK Lates landscape and start to draw some conclusions about the extent to which a Culture of Lates currently exists in this country and how we can help to nurture it if it does. That evidence could support the museum sector to make the most of its assets, to enable it to stand alongside the established night-time high street cultural offer with confidence, and attract people from all walks of life through its doors in the evening.

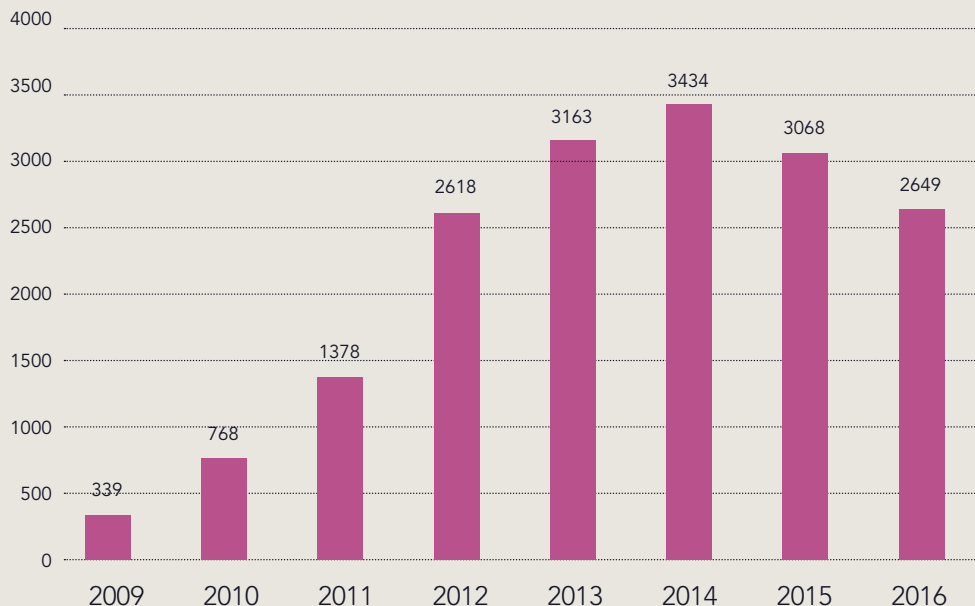
*“By developing a Culture of Lates museums can become centres of evening activity, striking a balance between unlocking new streams of income and reaching new audiences, meaning that both visitors and the institutions benefit.”*  
– Lucy Woodbridge, Head of Visitor Events, the Natural History Museum

## Lates Events Since 2009

The download of all events commencing after 5pm registered with Culture24 between January 2009 and April 2017 revealed 18,198 after-hours event instances. We estimate that 25% of the total Lates events programmed in the UK are registered on the Culture24 database so there may have been as many as 72,000 Lates events in this period.

Does this number of Lates events indicate that a Culture of Lates exists in the museum and gallery sector already, or is this still a drop in the ocean compared to what may be possible in the next decade?

It can be seen from the annual figures (Chart 1.1) that after a huge increase in the numbers of events for five years the numbers of events have dropped since 2014. Although we only have complete figures for the first quarter of 2017 the indications are that numbers have steadied rather than increased on 2016.



(Chart 1.1, Lates events on the Culture24 database)

There are a number of possible explanations for the decrease in numbers since 2014. Funding cuts have hit local authority venues particularly hard and this may be inhibiting their ability to devote budget to activities deemed 'non-essential'. Culture24's resources may also be a factor. Between 2012 – 2014, project funding enabled Culture24 to devote significant resources to supporting venues to supply their listings, which wasn't sustained in 2015 and 2016.

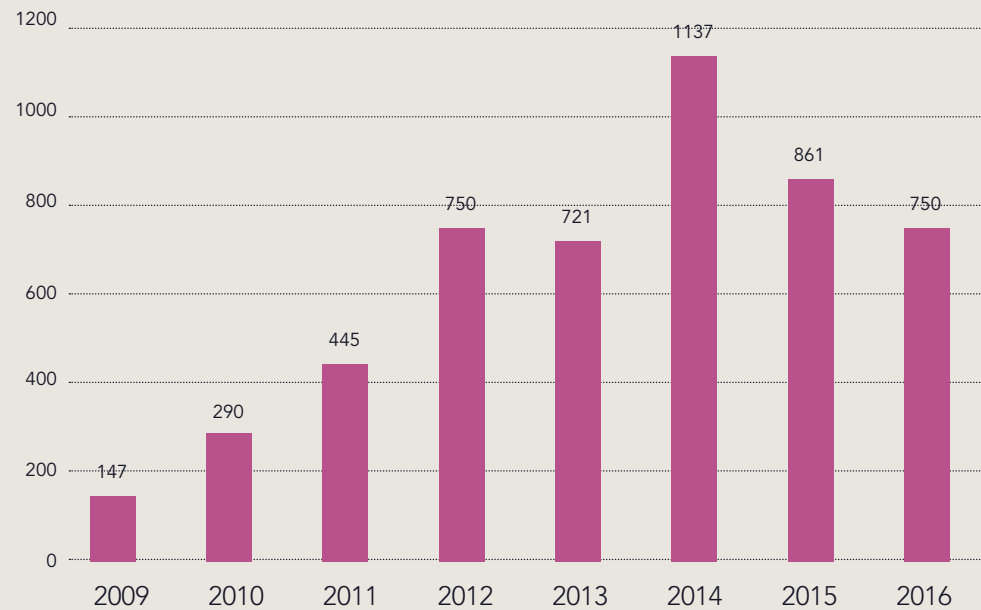
The number of events in the Museums at Night festival has declined since a peak of 853 in May and October 2015. Culture24 works with independent partners around the country who deliver branded offers with high local recognition. Museums and Galleries Scotland<sup>08</sup> run Festival of Museums<sup>09</sup> in Scotland, Open Culture<sup>10</sup> produce Light Night<sup>11</sup> in Liverpool, Tyne and Wear Archives & Museums<sup>12</sup> coordinate the longest running regional Lates festival, The Late Shows<sup>13</sup> in Newcastle and Gateshead and Creative Tourist<sup>14</sup> are responsible for the newest cluster, Manchester After Hours.<sup>15</sup>

08. <https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/>
09. Festival of Museums <http://www.festivalofmuseums.co.uk/>
10. Open Culture <http://culture.org.uk/>
11. Light Night <http://lightnightliverpool.co.uk/>
12. Tyne and Wear Archives & Museums <https://twmuseums.org.uk/>
13. Late Shows <https://thelateshows.org.uk/>
14. Creative Tourist <https://www.creativetourist.com/>
15. Manchester After Hours <https://www.manchesterafterhours.com/>

While all these organisations have focused on raising the quality of events in their clusters over the last couple of years, the decline in festival numbers has been most marked in May outside of the cluster areas.

2,555 venues programmed a Lates event or extended their hours beyond five o'clock and registered the event on the Culture24 database during the period January 2009 to April 2017. The number of venues peaked at 1,137 venues in 2014 but in 2012, 2013, 2015 and 2016 the numbers have ranged between 721 – 861 (Chart 1.2).

### Number of Venues by Year



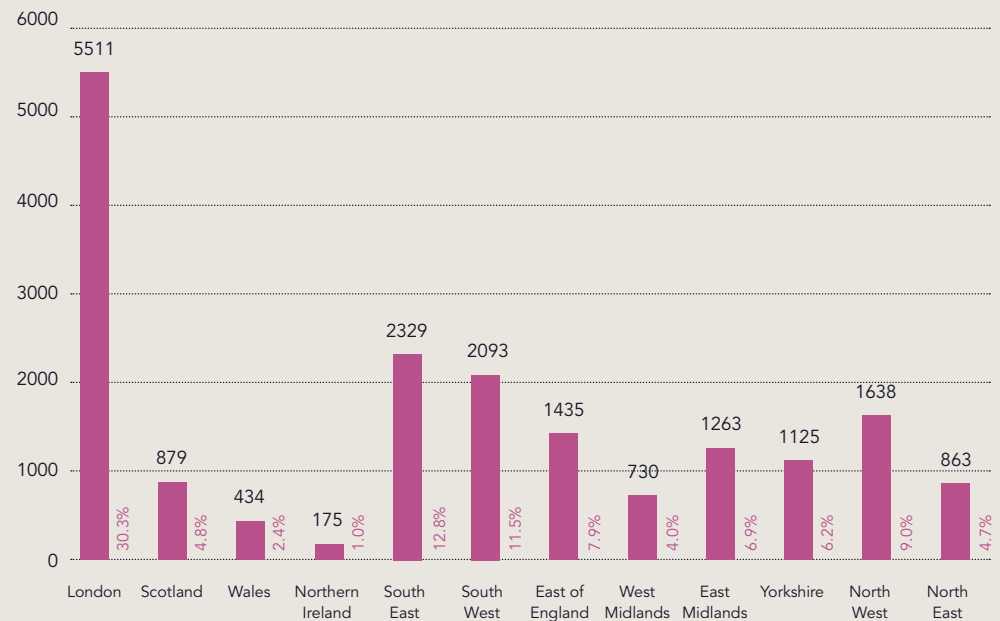
(Chart 1.2, Total number of UK venues programming Lates, Culture24 database)

Lates are well established in the UK museum sector but the number of events, and venues programming these events, has dipped in the last couple of years.

### Regional Differences

Though the mid-decade spike and subsequent dip in total numbers are reflected throughout the UK, the total number of events programmed per region over the period is not consistent throughout the country. 30% of the UK's registered Lates events took place in London – the same amount as in the South East, South West and Yorkshire and Humberside combined.

### Events by region and nation



(Chart 1.3, January 2009 – April 2017 Culture24 database)



London also offers more events per capita than any other region, a third more than the next best region – the South West. There are English regions with major cities, notably the West Midlands with Birmingham and the North West with Liverpool and Manchester that one might expect would offer more events, however this is not the case (see Table 1.1).

	London	South East	South West	North West	East of England	East Midlands	Yorkshire	Scotland	North East	West Midlands	Wales	Northern Ireland
Events numbers	5511	2329	2093	1638	1435	1263	1125	879	863	730	434	175
Population	8,173,941	8,634,750	5,288,935	7,052,177	5,846,965	4,533,222	5,283,733	5,373,000	2,596,886	5,601,847	3,099,086	1,851,621
Events per capita	0.00067	0.00027	0.00040	0.00023	0.00025	0.00028	0.00021	0.00016	0.00033	0.00013	0.00014	0.00009
Ranking	1	5	2	7	6	4	8	9	3	11	10	12

(Table 1.1, Number of events on Culture24 database January 2009 – April 2017 & Population statistics, 2011 Census: Usual resident population and population density, local authorities in the United Kingdom, Office for National Statistics. 2012.)

The number of events on offer in the North West outside of the May festival is particularly low; the proportion is only 3.9% (702) of the national year-round total, compared to London’s 26.7% (4,860) or the East of England with 5.6% (1,012) despite a smaller population and no major city on the scale of Liverpool or Manchester.<sup>16</sup>

If we are to create a UK-wide Culture of Lates then we will need to focus on regional cold spots, to increase the quantity of events on offer and the number of venues opening late.



*If we are to create a UK-wide Culture of Lates then we will need to focus on regional cold spots, to increase the quantity of events on offer and the number of venues opening late.*



16. See Folder 1, Culture24Research Google drive

## Barriers Venues Face to Programming Lates

The barriers most frequently cited by venue programmers we talked to that prevent more venues from producing more Lates events are a lack of public demand (or in London too much competition between venues for audiences); lack of money; and lack of staffing resource. However, if a Culture of Lates was adopted by the public, and going to a museum at night became as commonplace as going to the theatre or cinema, and people were prepared to pay a realistic price, then these barriers could be overcome.

## Audience Demand

If venues were encouraged to put more Lates events on, could they be confident that people would attend?

As part of the public surveys conducted for this research, 1,074 respondents were asked, 'Would more after-hours events or extended hours in your local cultural venues make you interested in attending more often?' 72.9% responded yes, 19.4% maybe and only 7.7% said no, suggesting that the demand for more events is high.

The feedback from surveys and sessions with hosts on the Airbnb platform also pointed to more demand for events. 79% answered yes to the survey question, 'Do you think it's important for your town to have a variety of cultural events available during the evening?' This was backed up by verbal feedback from host and venue meet-up sessions. Many hosts were keen to be involved in the marketing of future Lates events to guests, should there be more in their area.

**MuseumsatNight.org.uk**<sup>17</sup> has been a stand-alone digital marketing platform since March 2015. The site is now experiencing a significant increase in traffic. Measuring the time period in the lead-up to the October festival, 27th July to 31st October, the number of users rose from 42,022 in 2016 to 86,933 in 2017. This is particularly impressive as, unlike in 2016 when the site featured a funded marketing campaign attracting large numbers of users, there was no equivalent additional driver of traffic in 2017.

Most of this new traffic was referred from Facebook where unaffiliated event marketing companies are profiling Museums at Night as a stand-out event, driving users to the festival website. These website visitors were looking for local Lates events in their home towns that in a lot of cases didn't actually exist, with demand in London, Cardiff, Southampton and Liverpool far outstripping supply.

In the 14 months between 06/09/2016 and 22/11/2017 Culture24 received 124 PR emails from venues and PR companies specifically plugging Lates events or programmes of Lates events. At a rate of nearly nine a month, the volume of marketing communication is another indication of how much supply has grown.

## Programming Approach

All over the UK there are museum directors and programmers pushing the envelope and re-orientating their venues towards a more open approach to opening hours. The Great North Museum in Newcastle, the National Army Museum, the Natural History Museum, the National Gallery in London and the University of Cambridge Museums Group are all either embarking on or reinventing their Lates offer after having done some serious thinking about it.

Marilyn Scott, Director of Lightbox in Woking specifically refers to a culture she is trying to engender in her organisation:

*"What we hope is that we build a regular Lates audience who will come whether there's anything on or not, because obviously the café is open, the shop is open so there are other things but we're just trying to really build the kind of culture for people to come in on our Lates."*

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17. [www.MuseumsatNight.org.uk](http://www.MuseumsatNight.org.uk)

This is demonstrable commitment, a readiness to take risk and a willingness to build opening late into a plan, the kind of action usually only taken in larger venues in the past, but now being adopted by smaller suburban organisations.

In most cases the venue must take the first step and start or increase their programming: the shop must be open, as it were, before the customers can come in and buy the goods. In Edinburgh, National Museums Scotland (NMS) has recently seized upon an opportunity that has been on their doorstep for decades – the Fringe. The NMS now present a whole Lates programme as part of the Edinburgh Fringe and although the extra visitors to the city in August must help, Claire Allan, Learning Manager, notes that they also attract: *“People within Edinburgh who might not otherwise think about coming to a night out at the museum, but they’re looking for something to do during the Festival.”* In this case the venue responded to untapped demand: they are fortunate to be in a city with the world’s greatest arts festival and are taking advantage.

Throughout the UK and the rest of the world the places that have a significant Lates programme are the ones where inspirational people are taking the lead. They may work at venues or at city authorities but it takes some determination, leadership and vision to initiate and develop Lates programmes against a background of squeezed public finances and tightening culture and art budgets.

In Moscow, where a culture of late opening in museums and galleries is well-established, Maria Privalova, General Director of the Moscow Central Library talked about Moscow’s latest annual Library Night and the central library’s event: *“We were picked by Moscow Department of Culture to work till 6 o’clock in the morning, we saw it as an interesting task, we didn’t fight it so we had to figure out how to do it”*.<sup>18</sup>

As part of a multi-faceted event, they offered a prize of a foreign holiday for two to the person who devised the most creative rewrite of a classic book into a horror story. The venue threw in a free breakfast provided by a local health food company and managed to keep 80 people in the venue till 6am.<sup>19</sup>

The Art Gallery of New South Wales (AG of NSW) in Sydney has produced Art After Hours since 2003. About four years ago the relationship with their main programme sponsor came to an end. Ashlie Hunter, venue producer told us:

*“There was a moment of switching over through partnerships, and there was a gap and the programme became absorbed into core funding. So it was obviously a priority and a successful thing that we said that this will operate with or without sponsorship...it was a matter of going ‘Well, the show must go on, this is such a vital part of our flagship programme. I think that the Wednesday night programme, and Wednesday night access is just a priority point now and I think our priority is to open more and more going into the future’.”*

Prioritising Lates may mean taking the plunge as the AG of NSW did, opening up later one day a month in order to extend into the evening, or maybe taking one less corporate hire. It could be a way of making money, but once late opening is established as a key part of what a venue offers audiences it becomes part of the venue’s corporate culture and core provision.

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*Once late opening is established as a key part of what a venue offers audiences it becomes part of the venue’s corporate culture and core provision.*  
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18. See An International Culture of Lates report on Culture24Research Google drive

19. See case study, An International Culture of Lates

## The Culture of Lates Chain

How can these aspirations be converted into action? How can mindsets be changed to embrace a Culture of Lates and create a virtuous circle?

This report demonstrates that it is possible for the sector to develop its thinking and, where needed, change approach. The major stakeholders are the museums themselves, the policymakers and funders and the event-going public, all of whom stand to gain if the offer is right. Creating an environment where museums, galleries and libraries are open late into the evening is dependent on people both inside and outside the arts and culture sector working together.

To help visualise the process by which change can happen, we have created the Culture of Lates Chain. We have identified seven key attributes that when put together can lead to a place having a Culture of Lates.

At the top of the chain sits the aim and the achievement of a Culture of Lates – this both starts the chain and is its eventual successful output.

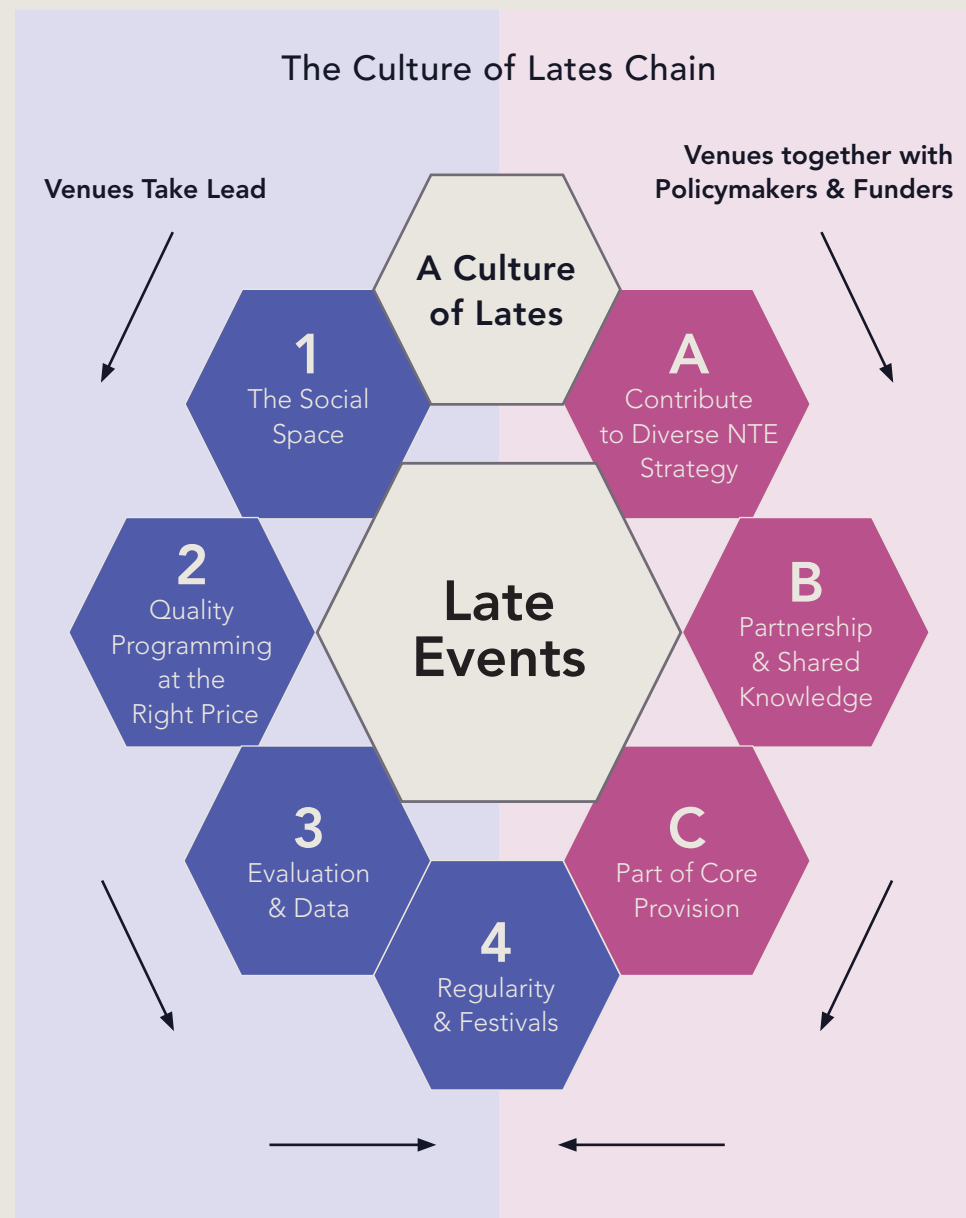
The links on the left-hand side of the chain describe the actions venues need to take:

- 1) Become a social space
- 2) Devise quality programming
- 3) Evaluate the programming

These actions will, hopefully, lead to successful events. A further development would be to share ideas with other venues that could lead to a:

- 4) Commitment to complementary regular activity and festivals

This is the key point at which the venue should be in dialogue with policymakers as it is making a significant contribution to the night-time economy.



The chain works in the other direction too. On the right hand, pink side of the diagram, policymakers may also consider a **Culture of Lates** to be a desirable thing in their area, in which case they would want to start talking to their local venues whether or not they have an existing offer. Creating these partnerships between venues and organisations such as local authorities or Business Improvement Districts is vital to integrating Lates into a location-based strategy.

Independent support organisations such as Culture24, Creative Tourist in Manchester and Open Culture in Liverpool for instance, can create the connections to help facilitate these conversations. Structures and platforms need to be created that help museums get their product more effectively to market and these types of organisations are best placed to deliver them.

Ideally, each venue's Lates programme would develop and be supported by partner organisations to the point where it is considered so essential to both the venue and the town's offer that it becomes part of the venue's core provision. Policymakers and venues both play a part in this process and either party might initiate it, but it is when they are working well together that a **Culture of Lates** is most likely to establish and thrive.

Each component of the Culture of Lates chain derives from evidence and findings in this report. Some of the components are explained in detail in their own sections, for instance, Component One – The Social Space. Others, such as Component Three – Evaluation and Data, are referred to across multiple sections of the report.

Creating a Culture of Lates in a location takes political will, institutional commitment and individual dedication. It's not easy but it can be achieved, and having all three factors in place is a potent recipe for success.



*Structures and platforms need to be created that help museums get their product more effectively to market...*



## 2. Lates' Role in the Night-time Economy

If it is important that the museum sector develops a fresh mind-set around extending their opening hours, then how their new offer integrates with the night-time economy is an equally important part of the equation. For Lates to play a significant role in the NTE, policymakers must be aware of Lates and supportive of them.

Currently there is a gap between practice – the existence of a distinct night-time programming offer in museums, and policy – the published description of that offer in policy documents and how Lates fit into the wider context of the NTE. There is an opportunity now to bridge that gap to produce positive impacts for both the museum sector and those people who interact within the NTE.

*“When we’re talking about the night-time economy we’re not just talking about pubs and clubs, we’re talking about everything which people might like to do at night... we need to have a night-time economy which is accessible to all... and one really crucial part of that is that our museums and galleries are available to people at night.”* – Philip Kolvin QC, former chair of the London Night-Time Commission told us.

## Value of the Night-Time Economy

The NTE in the UK was reported to be worth £66bn annually, in 2010.<sup>20</sup> The membership group for London’s business leaders, London First, has published figures that value London’s NTE at £26.3bn annually and culture and the creative industries are major contributors to this value.<sup>21</sup>

In the UK several industry bodies champion the night-time economy including the Night Time Industries Association and the Creative Industries Federation, placing particular emphasis on protecting existing bars, pubs and clubs which have seen numbers fall in the last decade and developing the night-time cultural offer.<sup>22</sup>

The Greater London Authority (GLA) have signalled how much they value the NTE by convening a night-time commission, initially chaired by Philip Kolvin QC and appointing a Night Czar, Amy Lamé. Other cities around the world have similar positions including the Night Mayor of Amsterdam while other UK cities such as Manchester are also reported to be investigating the merits of creating similar posts.<sup>23</sup>

20. <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/may/06/uk-night-time-economy-now-has-its-own-industry-group> (accessed 28/12/2017)

21. <http://www.ey.com/uk/en/newsroom/news-releases/16-08-11---london-24-hour-economy-could-be-worth-nearly-30bn-annually-by-2030--new-research-reveals> (accessed 28/12/2017)

22. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-38609692> (accessed 28/12/2017)

23. <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/whats-on/music-nightlife-news/greater-manchester-night-czar-calls-12839693> (accessed 28/12/2017)

## Lates Role in NTE discussions

Though clearly less associated with a night-time cultural offer than theatres, cinema, clubs and music venues, museums are specifically referred to as an NTE factor in several published reports.

The Heritage & Culture section of the Mayor of London’s draft New London Plan (2017) highlights the benefits of “diversify[ing] the range of night-time activities, including extending the opening hours of existing daytime facilities such as libraries, galleries and museums.”<sup>24</sup>

In the 2016 ‘Manifesto for the Night-Time Economy’ Philip Kolvin QC said: “There is no reason why services such as libraries and art galleries cannot operate on one or more nights per week so as to produce greater synergies with the leisure economy.”<sup>25</sup>

For a Culture of Lates to really take hold in a city, NTE policymakers must recognise and support the role Lates can play and leadership teams in museums that programme Lates must realise the powerful contribution they can make to their town or city’s NTE.

If Lates are making a contribution to an area’s NTE and discussions are happening at policy level, the role that Lates play in these discussions can be split into two groups: explicit and implicit.

Explicit is when Lates are being used as a lever to diversify the night-time economy as a consequence of published policy, as they are for example in Sydney and now in London. Implicit is when they are not part of a documented policy but are however performing that function, as in Moscow.<sup>26</sup>

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*For a Culture of Lates to really take hold in a city, NTE policymakers must recognise and support the role Lates can play and leadership teams in museums that programme Lates must realise the powerful contribution they can make to their town or city’s NTE.*

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24. [https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draft-new-london-plan/Chapter 7, Policy HC6, Supporting the night-time economy, B3](https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning/london-plan/new-london-plan/draft-new-london-plan/Chapter%207,%20Policy%20HC6,%20Supporting%20the%20night-time%20economy,%20B3)  
 25. <https://cornerstonebarristers.com/cmsAdmin/uploads/night-time-economy-final.pdf> (accessed 25/01/2018)  
 26. See An International Culture of Lates

## A Diverse NTE

Of the many issues that policymakers are dealing with in the context of the night-time economy, the role of alcohol is one of the most integral. Alcohol sales and consumption are the lifeblood of many businesses that rely on night-time trade for their custom.

Alcohol will be an important part of night life for many years to come. There are night-time establishments whose offer is orientated around alcohol with entertainment and/or culture secondary: bars. There are establishments whose offer is orientated around entertainment and/or culture, where alcohol is the secondary offer: they can be referred to as venues. These range from music venues and theatres to museums and galleries. There are also premises like nightclubs that reside in a grey area which makes this distinction simplistic, however if the balance of a city's night-time offer is too weighted towards just bars or just venues the result is a monoculture. If a city's night-time offer consists of a balance of both, then it can be described as diverse.

Museums can potentially make a significant contribution to diversifying a city's night-time economy as they can offer a product that has the features of both a venue and a bar (and in some cases a nightclub).

Graeme Evans (New Events in Historic Venues For London Metropolitan University Cities Institute, 2010) concluded that Lates can "reposition historic venues" and "provide a more positive alternative to the mono-use and problematic occupation of the city that represents a major barrier to evening and night-time economic activity for most resident and tourist visitors."<sup>27</sup>

A diverse night-time cultural offer is now the stated aim in London, as it is in many cities around the world. The Mayor of London wants to "create a more diverse and inclusive night time culture and economy."<sup>28</sup>

In Sydney it is possible to track a journey from consultation through policy to implementation, which led to the City of Sydney council funding a series of regular weekly Lates, branded Culture Up Late, in the summer of 2017. The specific intention of this policy, and these events, was to contribute to the diversification of the city's NTE.<sup>29</sup>

Dr Tim Williams, CEO at The Committee for Sydney (CFS), which describes itself as "*an independent think tank and champion for the whole of Sydney*," says: "*It's a very critical discussion for us because we're trying to get a more diverse and vibrant NTE in economy ...we just want to extend the pleasurable day a bit longer than 6 o'clock. Global cities have a diversity of offer and it struck us that museums and galleries at night is part of that transformation.*"<sup>30</sup>

In Sydney and Mexico City local authorities are working with venues to increase the capacity of this strand of programming and policymakers in London are now aligning with this thinking. "*This is all a question of priorities*," says London's Night Czar Amy Lamé, "*I'd just like to help support any museum, anywhere in London who wants to look at expanding their offering at night in any way, shape or form.*"

27. For charts, derived from data from the Culture24 database, relating to the types of venues that are programming Lates in the UK see folder 2 on the *Culture24Research Google drive*

28. [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/culture\\_and\\_night-time\\_economy\\_spg\\_final.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/culture_and_night-time_economy_spg_final.pdf) Culture and the night time economy' - Supplementary Planning Guidance, 2017, Chapter 4

29. More detail in An International Culture of Lates

30. <http://www.sydney.org.au/who-we-are/about-us/> (accessed 27/09/2017)



## Venues Partnering with Local Organisations

Organisations such as Business Improvement Districts<sup>31</sup> (BIDs) and schemes like Purple Flag<sup>32</sup> encourage and support a diverse night-time economy and there is evidence that museums are contributing to this. In Sheffield the local BID is funding a series of Museum Lates as part of their strategy to keep people in the town centre after work. Their monthly Live Lates<sup>33</sup> events are part of Alive After Five until at least October 2018 and are a strong example of culture and retail working together to extend productive trading hours and diversify the night-time economy.<sup>34</sup>

Touchstones Museum, Art Gallery & Café in Rochdale include Lates in their active role in their BID: "This is one of the key strands of Touchstones' involvement in the emerging Business Improvement District and Place Board. Working in partnership with the council to understand the need for a cultural offer, the museum has created a programme of events and activities in the evenings and weekends that contributes to the vibrant night-time economy."<sup>35</sup>

In Greater Manchester, Sarah Evans, Arts and Museums Officer at Bury Museum told us: "We're one of the few boroughs in the Greater Manchester area who have a Purple Flag award. That's to do with safe night-time economy and when we got our first assessment the fact that we do events in the evening was actually a big plus for the town."

Many UK venues recognise the importance of being part of a local strategy plan and working with other organisations. In Plymouth, Peninsular Arts are: "Very plugged into a city initiative organisation called Plymouth Culture. The university is very interested in the night time, maybe not the economy necessarily but the ambience, the evening ambience, the cultural offer... that's very much a discussion with the city and the university," said Director Sarah Chapman.

Damian Etherington, the Senior Collections and Learning Curator at Ipswich Museum said: "We feed into those wider council priorities, and having the museum opening on extended hours or different hours is a way of giving people in the town a way of interacting with our service."

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31. <http://britishbids.info/about-bids/what-is-a-bid/> (accessed 27/09/2017)

32. <https://www.atcm.org/purple-flag> (accessed 27/09/2017)

33. <http://www.museums-sheffield.org.uk/blog/2017/4/live-lates-2017> (accessed 27/09/2017)

34. <http://www.sheffafter5.com/>

35. Mendoza Review, 2017, Understanding and Addressing the Priorities for Museums in England Today, IV

## How Museums Contribute to a Diverse Night-time Economy

Museum Lates are not necessarily dry spaces that only appeal to people who want to remove themselves from environment, with alcohol in the evening. They are a place where a drink can be consumed but at the same time as enjoying a meal, a band or a talk.

Museums are in a particularly strong position to cater for people starting their evening off by enjoying four hours or so of creative programming, with the option of consuming alcohol in a measured way as part of a cultural experience. If they wish, visitors can then go on to a nightclub or another late night offer.

Certainly we found that food and beverages play an important part in the programming content that museums historically and currently offer. Whether offering events about food and drink, accompanied by food and drink or both, food and drink was a part of the offer of 5,756 events on our database, beating music and performance into second place with 4,435 events (although many of these events probably featured a combination of music, food and drink).

In London the non-performing arts and heritage sector has a rich diversity of venues to offer the consumer, ranging from iconic museums and galleries such as the British Museum, V&A and Natural History Museum to smaller, more specialised venues like the Grant Museum of Zoology, part of University College London. Dean Veall is the Learning and Access Officer at the Grant Museum who were Lates early adopters: *“The market has expanded massively which is posing a big challenge for us, to continue to get audiences at our events.”* For the Grant Museum, like many London venues, the challenge is how to stay ahead of the game with so much competition for night-time consumers’ spend.

Hosts on Airbnb were asked what they thought would be most valuable to their guests from a list of options. They were very clear about what they think their guests are looking for from a night out in a new place.

Thinking about your guests, which of the following options would be most value to them? (Please select your top three responses)



(Chart 2.1, Hosts on Airbnb survey responses)

They chose, *“A great selection of bars and restaurants nearby,”* as their first choice and, *“A good mix of local culture and heritage venues open in the evening nearby,”* as their second choice. A Lates event can combine these two options into one great offer under one roof: the challenge for Lates event programmers is to devise an offer that is attractive in a very competitive market.

67.5% of public survey respondents, the highest number, chose: *“Programmed events featuring artists, writers, bands, performances etc”* when given a number of response choices to the question: *“What could cultural venues offer after-hours that would attract you to visiting them?”*. Visitors want to be entertained when they attend a Late but are they prepared to pay for the show and if so how much are they prepared to pay?

### 3. Programming: Charging & Quality

Museums, galleries and libraries are unusual in that they programme events in the evening but don't always charge an admission fee. Does this give Lates a competitive edge or is it a wasted opportunity to generate new income?

The debate in the sector about charging takes place against a backdrop of reduced public subsidy when museums are required to raise money from other sources. "Broadly speaking, museums do need to increase and diversify their income further. This will enable them to build sustainable and resilient models."<sup>36</sup>

Kate Rolfe, Head of Events at the National Gallery explained how her venue is developing its thinking to ensure it can offer after-hours programmes in the future. She said: *"It's important to balance the need to make these events financially sustainable with our objectives for audience development, there's commercial opportunities there that people need to make the most of."*

The fact that charging for admission to events is even debated is largely due to the perception that free events are thought more likely to attract people who do not currently visit museums. This research has produced valuable data and knowledgeable feedback about the value and price that venues put on their programming. Combined with evidence from published sources, the following section looks at the evidence in order to come to some informed conclusions about the value of free and charged-for Lates events.

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36. Mendoza Review, 2017, executive summary, page 9

## The Proportion of Free to Charged-for Events

A comparison of free to charged-for Lates events registered on the Culture24 database since 2009 shows that a majority of events are charged for. There were 12,950 (71%) charged-for event instances (event instances count events that take place on more than one occasion) and 5,262 (29%) free event instances registered between January 2009 and the end of 2016.

	Total
Charged	12,950 (71%)
Free	5,262 (29%)

(Table 3.1)

An analysis of the pricing data on the 18,198 Lates events in the Culture24 database shows that the trend is moving towards charging:

	Charged	Free
2009	48%	52%
2010	51%	49%
2011	65%	35%
2012	69%	31%
2013	78%	22%
2014	68%	32%
2015	71%	29%
2016	78%	22%

(Table 3.2)

Culture24's evaluation has always been focused on the Museums at Night festival when events are more likely to be free, so the proportion of charged-for events is a lot higher than we expected to find. Only 26% of events outside the festival are free, compared to 38% of festival events, so events outside of the festival are a lot more likely to be charged for.

	Total	In Museums at Night Festival	Not in the Festival
Charged	71%	62%	74%
Free	29%	38%	26%

(Table 3.3)

Venues programming charged-for events are more likely to use Culture24's marketing platform to help sell tickets, so the database may carry a disproportionate number of charged-for events compared to the national average.

## Charging and Pricing in London Compared to the Rest of the UK

As the cost of living is higher in London than most other parts of the UK, it would not be surprising to find ticket prices are higher in the capital. 33 London venues participated in the October 2017 Museums at Night festival, programming 40 events and 46 event instances; 38 of these event instances (83%) were priced. These figures represent the highest proportion of charged-for events seen in any dataset we've studied in or outside of the festival. In fact the figures show a lower proportion of free events in the festival (17%) than we normally find outside of the festival (26%).

All but two participating venues filled out the survey, so although it is a much smaller sample than the 8 years of data from the Culture24 database, it presents a very accurate picture of the October festival in London. It shows that these venues (ranging from Pollock's Toy Museum to the Houses of Parliament in size), saw an opportunity to generate income as well as attract new audiences.

The venues also backed the quality of their programming with a higher than normal ticket price. The average ticket price (of priced events) in the October festival was £16.14, a much higher than normal average ticket price which historically sat somewhere at the high end of between £5 and £10 (Table 3.4 – percentages for charged events only on the Culture24 database).

Price Bracket	Total Events	% of Charge
£0.01 - £5	2630	20%
£5.01 - £10	3790	29%
£10.01 - £20	2442	19%
£20.01 - £50	757	6%
> £50	308	2%
No Price Given	3023	23%
Charged total	12950	

{Table 3.4}

If customers are prepared to pay more for tickets to Lates in London, indicating they like the product, is there an opportunity to attract greater numbers of people to more events? The October festival surveys indicate that more events reached capacity than ever before, with 70% capacity reached overall. This still only represents around 6,000 attendances in total so perhaps there is enough demand for venues to programme their more popular events more frequently?

Some data from the Museums at Night October 2017 festival in London indicates that charging does not necessarily reduce attendance numbers to Lates: we asked participating venues for information regarding their charging, capacity and ticket sales.

The total capacity reached of all charged-for events in the festival (83% of total) was 70% whereas the total capacity reached of all free events was only 58% (17% of total events). That free event capacity total was skewed by one very large 5,000 capacity venue attracting less than half their capacity, but it does show the popularity of events even when charged for at a relatively high ticket price.

Culture24’s data might be expected to show more charged-for events at a higher price in London than in the rest of the UK. However, the proportions of charged-for (71%) and free (29%) events are exactly the same, although prices are higher in London when compared to the rest of the country (Table 3.5, excluding London). There are over half as many events in London as the rest of the country combined in the £5 – £20 brackets, and nearly half as many events in London as the rest of the country combined in the top two price brackets. It is only in the lowest price bracket that the rest of the country has three times the number of events as London.

Clearly venues can charge a little more in London, and with the after-work market consisting of both Londoners and commuters there is a big pool of potential visitors to draw from. For London venues, for whom costs are higher, the ability to earn more from their events is an important opportunity. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for venues just outside of London.

Charged Total	London	of charged	Excluding London	of charged
£0.01 - £5	522	14%	2108	23%
£5.01 - £10	1391	36%	2399	26%
£10.01 - £20	854	22%	1588	17%
£20.01 - £50	225	6%	532	6%
> £50	91	2%	217	2%
No Price Given	750	20%	2273	25%
Charged Total	3833		9117	
Free	1658		3604	
Total	5491		12721	

(Table 3.5)

## Charging Outside London

Suburban areas adjacent to big cities are some of the most difficult locations for attracting visitors to evening events. The Woking Lightbox is situated in the commuter belt of South West London. A high proportion of their potential audience commute to London for work. If Lightbox are to attract these people to their after-hours events, they are up against the draw of the capital's nightlife as well as local competition. Lightbox did their homework and identified a potential new market, the commuter, and devised a programme based around comedy nights to attract them. Director Marilyn Scott told us:

*"It's really nice to be able to do something good close to home, that has come out of the evaluation and a lot of people said we always felt that if you wanted high quality cultural experience it only happened in London. I think there is a bit of a perception with running events like this in museums and galleries that you are very good at what you do, which is showing pictures and showing exhibitions, but you're not necessarily very good at doing other things and people had sometimes bad experiences of going to events in museums that had been a bit, well not great, and people were certainly saying to us we're so impressed with the quality of the acts, the way it's organised, you know the opportunity to have a drink and do all those kinds of things that you'd expect to do in London, and gosh how amazing we can actually do it a couple of hundred yards from where we live."*

By programming a high-quality offer at a time when people can enjoy it, Lightbox are succeeding in challenging their local audience's expectations regarding what the venue has to offer.

37. <https://www.colleendilen.com/2016/04/06/schedule-is-the-top-influencer-of-visitation-to-cultural-organizations-and-nobody-is-talking-about-it-data/> (accessed 25/01/2018)

38. See Culture24Research Google Drive

## Scheduling Events

Scheduling is important to ticket-buying customers and therefore it is essential that venues programme Lates on the right nights. Cultural data blogger Colleen Dilenschneider, asserts: "If a visitor-serving organization is not operating when people can or want to visit, then those people aren't going to visit."<sup>37</sup>

The Culture24 data 2009 – 2017 shows that 27% of the total registered event instances take place on a Friday and 23% on a Thursday, the two most popular nights to put on events.<sup>38</sup> There are actually more non-festival Lates on Wednesdays (2,261) than Saturdays (1,708) which suggests that many Lates are targeted at an after-work audience. This is sensible if events start early and finish before 10pm, as many talks do. However if events include music or other artistic content and are socially orientated, including a food and beverage offer, then an event that continues later into the night on Saturdays when most people don't have to get up for work the next day would be attractive. The data suggest Saturday nights are currently underused as an evening to programme Lates events on.

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*Saturday nights are currently underused as an evening to programme Lates events on.*

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## The Factors That Influence How Audiences Perceive Value

The evidence on schedule driving visitation decisions supports the case for Lates, but doesn't establish whether those after-hours events would be more likely to reach new audiences if they are free or charged for.

How much an experience is valued is an indicator of how successful it will be in attracting an audience: people with very little disposable income have to be very discerning about what they spend it on.

Addressing the proposition that Director of Derby Museums, Tony Butler posted on Twitter "Why does @Beamish Museum welcome more visitors on lower incomes compared to other free museums when they charge £20, 4 October, 2017" Lindsey Green wrote in her article, 'Why don't they come? Visitors on low income and the myths around admission':

"The fundamental misconception within the sector has been that providing low-cost/free experiences means that you will be accessible to everyone. This is lazy thinking and completely misunderstands how people think about money. It suggests that if you're on a low income you don't spend on things you find valuable. The people who are on low income that I have spoken to talk about how they like free stuff. But there's a flip side; they also value things more when they pay for them."<sup>39</sup>

Daytime free entrance into many UK museums and galleries is rightly cherished. The transition from day to night does enable venues to charge (some even close for a short time before reopening and charging) although many do so at a very low price point (see price bracket table, page 29).

Some venues consider this 'extra' provision as an extension of their free daytime programme. Sometimes the programming can reflect this strategy with very little extra being offered to the visitor after dark compared to daytime.

Opening up museums at night for free without extra programming can be a valuable community resource. However, it is difficult for venues to sustain and doesn't attract many people unless there is a really clear offer focused

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## Opening up museums at night for free without extra programming can be a valuable community resource.

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on a community of interest. Gemma Herries, Emerging Artists Coordinator at Newcastle's Holy Biscuit Gallery, explained: *"We're a very community-focused gallery. We find those out-of-hours events help us talk to people as opposed to people just walking in, having a very brief conversation and then going off again."*

What factors contribute to a visitor deciding whether or not to visit a museum at night? Colleen Dilenschneider's 'Know your own bone' blog uses data to evidence the assertion that price is not the deciding factor when people choose cultural organisations to visit. In her article 'Admission Price is not a Primary Barrier for Cultural Center Visitation' she says, "Free admission is not a cure-all for engagement. In fact, data suggests that free admission has relatively little sustained impact on attendance."<sup>40</sup>

James Gray, Marketing and Audience Development Manager at the William Morris Gallery and Vestry House Museum told us why his venue has moved to charging for their Lates events:

*"We felt that to keep running these kinds of events (Lates) for free undervalued them – for the artists, the audience and the organisers. By charging a reasonable price you send a message that this is a high-quality programme that's worth paying for. Income from ticket sales also means we don't have to be so reliant on diverting funding from other areas of work, allowing us to experiment and take more risks."*

39. <https://medium.com/frankly-green-webb/why-dont-they-come-visitors-on-low-income-and-the-myths-around-admission-price-ebf8b1da1f69> (accessed on 26/01/18)

40. <https://www.colleendilen.com/2016/05/04/admission-price-is-not-a-primary-barrier-for-cultural-center-visitation-data/> (accessed 25/01/2018)



## Quality Programming

For people on any income level to place enough value on a museum Late ticket the quality of the offer must be of paramount importance. Ella Roberts, Communications Manager at the Britten-Pears Foundation's Red House, thinks that without a quality offer it is not worth opening up late. *"It needs to be something special, it needs to be value added"*, she said.

Quality means different things in different contexts. For the Holy Biscuit Gallery it means the freedom to confront difficult issues, as Gemma Herries explained:

*"We have had exhibitions previously that have talked about sexuality, talked about gender, we really, really don't want to shy away from those issues at all, we don't have any sort of policy where we wouldn't discuss anything, we want to show really good high quality art work and have that standing as a good quality contemporary gallery."*

For other venues, quality could refer to innovative programming, big name acts or unusual ways of reaching audiences who don't usually attend. This research has found examples of high quality programming all over the country, and researchers have experienced plenty of great after-hours work both within and outside of the Museums at Night festival over many years. From the hundreds of ground-breaking after-hours events that are devised and programmed every year in the UK, a small selection of different types of quality programming are listed here as examples of good practice.

The Handel & Hendrix Museum in London runs imaginative evening events with an informal atmosphere, encouraging visitors to behave as if they were friends calling on Jimi Hendrix. Bart's Pathology Museum has a long-standing Lates events calendar full of surprise and challenge, e.g an Edible Body Farm event about corpse decomposition. Some big London museums are also the unwitting hosts to guerrilla tours, clandestinely organised, that challenge the presumptions upon which the existence of the institution that hosts them are built.

The Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester has built a reputation for programming bold events and attracting new audiences. They programme music and spoken word for the local South Asian community, and have held a darts competition using artist-made surrounds that attracted a largely white male working class audience.

After School Club at the Natural History Museum trades on a commodity even young audiences are not immune to: nostalgia. The event recreates the museum school trip experience, including hands-on activities and a silent disco.

Sometimes innovation means doing things slightly differently: *"We are just about to have a Wildlife Disco, which is a slightly more esoteric, where we've got these three DJs coming in that do these mixes of 1970s wildlife recordings"*, said Caroline McDonald, Museum Manager at the Great North Museum, in Newcastle.

One mark of high quality programming could involve the venue doing everything possible to involve the community in the event's production, as Damian Etherington did at Ipswich Museum: *"We gave a community takeover night and let people vote on what they wanted to do, that attracted 350 people. We made a poster that said "Do you want to take the museum over for a night? Send us your ideas"* and then made a very small application form and that produced a lot of interest and a lot of community groups, which we now work separately with on other projects."

Both Lightbox in Woking and the University of Cambridge Museums reported great success with comedy nights: *"Comedy seems to be very popular, so there's an improv group called "Do Not Adjust Your Stage" they do quite a nice format where experts can talk for 5 or 10 minutes and then they'll do skits off the back of it,"* Jenny Bull, Events Coordinator at University Museums Cambridge, told us.

High quality programming can also lead to other big wins for an organisation, Donna McColm, Associate Director, Audience Engagement & Learning, National Gallery of Victoria told us: *"I think we've underestimated the power of programming for a long time, but we are now beginning to realise the potential for programming to drive visitation, revenue, membership, and further engagement with our audiences. I think that's a critical evolution for programming in museums."*

*"A lot of people who come [to Lates] are young professionals. They say, 'Oh I had a blast, it was amazing, the museum was all lit up, it was like a party, you had dinosaurs and stuff,' and then they enquire about doing their Christmas party here,"* added Matt Ravier, Manager of Programming at the Australian Museum.

Programming costs money and to do it well often a lot of money – ask any theatre or music venue manager. Once a venue decides to programme into their extended hours, can they be expected not to charge? Furthermore, if they don't charge are they building in a reliance on ever-diminishing public funding, creating an unrealistic expectation in the customer and undermining the value of the event in the visitor's eyes?

In the UK larger institutions generate income from blockbuster, high-impact *"large-scale loan"* exhibitions.<sup>41</sup> These shows are charged for, can be difficult to get it into without membership and are often criticised for being overcrowded. In the minds of visitors, are Lates events a more accessible and participatory alternative or complement to blockbuster shows?

Instead of equating Lates with an extension of free daytime access, which is not based around events, they must be perceived by the museum sector for what they are – additional programming, which costs money if it is of high enough quality. If the museum sector values its Lates events highly enough to charge for them then the visitors will be prepared to pay for tickets as long as they feel they are getting value for money.

Can the sector offer free extended hours and fairly priced charged events, and successfully balance audience development and income generation? Are the two aspirations even mutually compatible?

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Are Lates events a more accessible and participatory alternative or complement to blockbuster shows?

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41. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/mutualart/making-the-best-of-the-bl\\_b\\_1614492.html](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/mutualart/making-the-best-of-the-bl_b_1614492.html) (accessed 22/12/2017)

## 4. Programming: The Social Space

Demographic and social changes are driving changes in leisure habits, and both museums and policymakers must be alert to these developments. As city centres are gentrified and brownfield sites built on to supply much-needed housing, more people are living alone and separately from their families. Cultural events are social occasions where people can meet new friends. If we accept that the museum has a role in diversifying the night-time cultural offer, then making this space where people can meet each other could start turning the NTE debate away from anti-social to social behaviour.

In her Winston Churchill Memorial Trust report Korantema Anyimadu concluded: "Make it social: People like social activities. Make the museum a space where people can come together and have fun!"<sup>42</sup>

### An Excellent Offer

Museums potentially have all the ingredients visitors seek for a good night out. They are often in large buildings, many of which are situated in easy-to-reach locations. Many UK museums have superb facilities and they all have a dedicated workforce. Most venues are licensed to dispense food and beverages and can open late if they wish. Additionally, they contain treasure in the form of objects, from which stories can be extracted and used to create themes and topics for events laced with novelty and mystery. Museums appreciate that they have these attributes, but to exploit them they have to think about their assets not simply as a way of educating people but as a means to entertain them.

If there is a single indicator of the difference between the experience of visiting a museum during the day compared to visiting in the evening, it is the extent to which the visit is a social activity. When people attend evening events in museums many do so in friendship groups or with their partners, without children, and consider their visit foremost as a leisure activity not a learning opportunity. Many venues programme with a focus on creating a social space, but some venues still struggle with this concept and prefer to lead with learning – there are often strong feelings on either side of this divide, often under the same roof of a museum.

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42. [https://www.wcmt.org.uk/sites/default/files/report-documents/Anyimadu%20K%20Report%202015%20FINAL\\_1.pdf](https://www.wcmt.org.uk/sites/default/files/report-documents/Anyimadu%20K%20Report%202015%20FINAL_1.pdf)

## Which Demographics Do Lates Attract?

Many visitors to museums and galleries during the day are teachers, parents, or grandparents, with children; evening opening is intended to attract a younger set of adults and a more diverse audience. Most venue programmers interviewed for the research named young adult audiences as the most sought after target demographic they are seeking to attract with night-time programming.

Culture24 data from surveys of visitors to previous Museums at Night festivals indicates that Lates events do attract a new audience. The evaluation of the 2012 May Museums at Night festival found 5,000 visits (4% of all visitors) from people who said they had never visited an arts venue before.<sup>43</sup> In 2011 64% of festival attendees were under 45 years of age and 38% of visitors were new to the Museums at Night venue they visited.<sup>44</sup>

Other data sources also demonstrate that Lates appeal to a younger audience: *Late night museums: The new nightlife* (Alice Vincent, 2013) found 95% of Science Museum Lates attendees to be aged 18-35.

Museums at Night visitor surveys have consistently shown that most people attend events with friends or partners. Analysis of feedback from visitors who attended Lates events that were part of Culture24's Connect! project in 2015 & 2016 show 32.6% attended events with friends, 32.6% with partners and only 17.1% with family.<sup>45</sup>

This is despite the fact that most Lates events registered on the Culture24 database are described by the venues registering them as 'family friendly' (8,539, 66.1%) as opposed to 'Aimed at Adults' (4,388, 33.9%). This may be a natural tendency by venues not to hedge their bets and portray their event as attractive to as wide an audience as possible. However, this could also indicate a disconnect between the kind of events that venues programme and who they target, and the kind of after-hours programming that visitors really want.

There could be two very different markets here with different audiences. If venues programme early evening events starting around 5pm and finishing before 9pm, they may still attract families. However, events that run until 11pm and feature a licensed bar are less likely to be for or attract families with children. There is room for both in the ecosystem of after-hours programming, possibly even on the same evening in the same venue.

As Lates events become more sophisticated, the ability and opportunity to be more precise and nuanced about who an event is targeted at would be a useful addition to any Lates marketing platform.

In many cases, the people who want activities for their children during the day or early evening also want to go out with their friends at night. Councillor Jess Miller from the City of Sydney used herself as an example of a working mum desperate to find things to do with the kids during the day, but added, *"That's the woman who needs a cocktail at 7 o'clock on a Friday night and she will pay good money for that. She's probably got 20 friends she hasn't seen in six months that she'd like to invite to have an adult conversation with...and doesn't want to go to a bar."*

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*As Lates events become more sophisticated, the ability and opportunity to be more precise and nuanced about who an event is targeted at would be a useful addition to any Lates marketing platform.*

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43. See report on Culture24Research Google docs

44. See report on Culture24Research Google docs

45. See report on Culture24Research Google docs

## The Social Experience

Shared social experience is a key part of a successful Lates event, and in Mexico City museums are extending this concept beyond the confines of the museum walls to be a key element of the journey to and from the events. The organisers of 'Noche de Museos', the Mexico City version of Museums at Night, are working with an independent company, similar in structure to a UK social enterprise, to provide a bicycle tour as an alternative way of navigating between their festival events.

Working with local transport providers, as Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums (TWAM) the producers of the Late Shows have done for years to help visitors navigate round Newcastle and Gateshead events, is not new but the way the Mexico City bicycle scheme creates a cohesive group does go a step further.<sup>46</sup>

This is an example of a Lates event or festival offering an opportunity for people to gather in groups to meet new people outside of their social circle, while still being with the friends they came with.

The Natural History Museum recognises the social experience as an important element of a successful night. *"It is really good to build on that social engagement where the visitors can work with each other as well as individually and build that sense of community"*, Beth Stone, Head of Learning and Audiences, told us.

The places and times in which people socialise are changing across the UK. Many people work late hours, have night shifts or jobs with irregular hours, while retail, arts and culture consumption, transport and vital services all continue to offer opportunities after 5pm. When we imagine what the future city will be like, late-opening museums should be part of the plan. Changing work and leisure patterns influence the way cities are designed, and increasingly citizens play a role in creating these new environments through placemaking.

Community involvement is fundamental to the placemaking concept. Nina Simon's book *The Participatory Museum* (2010) addressed falling visitor numbers to US museums and the lack of diversity in audiences by advocating a community-led approach to museum programming. She said, "Co-creative projects start with community as well as institutional needs," a fundamental shift from the orthodox curator-led approach.<sup>47</sup> Again, Lates can play an important role here as a platform for experimentation, inclusivity and access.

The Mendoza Review highlighted the positive outcomes for museums in taking a placemaking approach: "Contributing to placemaking and local priorities helps museums play a part in their communities and in local decision-making".<sup>48</sup> If communities are to take a deep and meaningful role in the functioning of a museum, opening late needs to be a part of the plan.

Shared social experience is a key part of a successful Lates event.

46. See *An International Culture of Lates – Museum Bike Tours Mexico City case study*

47. <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/chapter8/>

48. Executive summary, page 10

## The Role of Artists

Museums have worked with artists for many years as a way of interpreting their collections and objects through the mediation of a unique and different pair of eyes. We asked venue programmers whether they thought the night time a particularly good forum for artists to tease new insights from their collections, as opposed to daytime.

Joanna Essen, Learning Programmer at Compton Verney said, *"Yes, because they always think of things and ways of using the site in ways that we obviously wouldn't. [The] project wouldn't have happened in the way that it did, if it hadn't been an after-hours event."*

Visitors lose their inhibitions at more social, fun-orientated evening events which is important if they are attempting a new art activity. *"People who maybe hadn't thought that they were interested in doing a drawing session would do something...I think people react differently to it after hours, certainly,"* said Claire Allen, Learning Manager of the sites and events team at NMS. Venue programmers felt artist-led activities work well during the day too, but many emphasised that the night time added an extra, atmospheric element that couldn't quite be matched during the day.

## Participation

Artist-led activity is a slightly misleading term as the most successful events of this kind are often as much about audience-doing as artist-leading, as Jessica Pinson, Events Programme Manager for Culture Coventry pointed out: *"It's the making nights, it's when we put out loads of stuff that kids usually get to do but adults get to do them instead, so masked balls are brilliant because people will literally work for 2 hours on a mask or a hat."*

Giving adults the chance to be playful as well as social is a big part of a successful museum Late and leads to more new knowledge being absorbed.

Culture24 co-produced an adult treasure hunt game, Rainbow Makers, at the Whitworth Art Gallery in 2016. Devised by artist Tine Bech, it gave the participants permission to play, amongst friends and people they didn't know, by providing them with the temporary use of a vest covered in LED lights the colour of which could be changed via remote control.<sup>49</sup> The night time uniquely allows for the use of colour and light in a way that is less effective during the day and is a time when adults feel they can play, particularly if they don't have the responsibility of looking after children.

The Art Gallery of NSW has grasped this idea of a museum as a social space. Ashlie Hunter, the venue's 'Art After Hours' producer said: *"People probably want to have more hands-on experience, they want to have more immersive experiences, they want to be more interactive, they don't want to just be spoken to."*

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49. [http://museumsatnight.org.uk/tine-bech/#.WlOwLKhI\\_cs](http://museumsatnight.org.uk/tine-bech/#.WlOwLKhI_cs)

## Catering

Food and beverage (F&B) are as important as music in creating an atmosphere of sociability at a museum. Many museums in the UK and around the world feel they have no choice but to farm out their F&B offer to third-party providers. This works very well in a lot of cases but it does limit the amount of money a museum can potentially earn from their after-hours programmes.

Earning a decent margin from food and drink can help to sustain performing arts venues, allowing them more flexibility to take risks with programming by taking pressure off the necessity to break even from ticket sales alone. If more museums programmed more after-hours events it might become viable to bring more F&B offers in-house.

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*If more museums programmed more after-hours events it might become viable to bring more F&B offers in-house.*

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## Challenging Perceptions

Lates programming has responded to visitors' desire for social occasions. Date nights, speed dating and events where the opportunity to meet a potential new partner is an explicit part of the offer are not uncommon in museums, and could be another way that venues fulfil their social cohesion role. This is a positive antidote to the often edgy atmosphere that permeates a town centre on a weekend night, which has led to so much debate around alcohol consumption and the night-time economy.

In some towns in the UK, the problem at night has been less about anti-social behaviour than a lack of any activity at all. Damien Etherington at Ipswich Museum was clear about their town needing to encourage social night-time behaviour with a fascinating example that neatly confronts two stereotypes:

*"[There] was a rap night organised by one of our trainees that attracted just over 100 BME young 18 to 24 year olds into the museum...the kids on the night were literally taking the bottles and placing them individually one bottle by one bottle into the bin, not even dropping them in the bin; by contrast some people we have in, wearing their high heels and drinking glasses of wine, are more disrespectful to the place than any other group."*

Ashlie Hunter, at the Art Gallery of New South Wales put it succinctly:

*"A lot of people come into the gallery and say I don't know where to start, I don't know how to access it, I don't know what I'm supposed to think, maybe I'm missing something here. Well we give people permission to just come in and be in an art gallery, find this as a civic space, find it as a place to then find inspiration and be moved."*

Museums have many ways to attract visitors at night: perhaps the challenge is not so much what kinds of events to programme, but how often the events should take place.

## 5. The Big Picture: Regularity & Festivals

When deciding on the frequency of their Lates programme, venues can choose to take part in national or regional festivals, go it alone with a regularity that suits them, or programme when the opportunity presents itself (such as when an anniversary links with items in their collection). From the venue's perspective these options all have their own rationale: from the audience's point of view consistency is helpful when making attendance decisions.

*"I think that regularity is a really key thing...so it just becomes stitched into the life of London."* Paul Broadhurst, Head of Night Time Economy and Music at the Greater London Authority

### Comparisons with Performance Venues

If a theatre programmed an event on a Tuesday one week, a Thursday two weeks later, then nothing for two months until a series of three nights from Thursday to Saturday it would be an unusual programming decision. That sort of ad-hoc approach to programming is not a feature of performing arts venues. Yet, that is the way some museums have approached Lates programming.

It is now much more widely accepted that if at all possible, providing the audience with a consistent regular offer gives Lates programming the best chance of succeeding. Beth Stone at the Natural History Museum explains: *"I think once you've got something that's part of a regular offer people get to know and understand that and rely on it."*



## Frequency

For most of the UK venue programmers interviewed for this research, a regular programme meant either a weekly or, more commonly, a monthly offer. Most UK museums and galleries open late less frequently than that or not at all. The Museums at Night festival gives venues the opportunity to open late for at least one night a year, possibly two. Unless there is also a regular local or regionally organised programme a rare example of this took place in Cambridge (Twilight at the Museums), if venues want to open late more regularly than twice a year, then they need to do so without the external support that comes with being part of a festival.<sup>50</sup> They are free to do so if they wish and enjoy the rewards if they are successful but the risks associated with going it alone might be considered greater.

There are various other patterns of frequency used by venues: some prefer not to risk opening late around Christmas, while others avoid the summer holiday period. Other venues do well in the summer, though – for example, the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh where the festival brings in millions of additional summer visitors to the city.

Culture24 data suggests spring and autumn are the most popular seasons for Lates but these numbers are swelled by Museums at Night festival events. If these two quarters continue to boast the highest number of Lates events, then museums should explore more ways of working with the tourist sector to use Lates events to attract more cultural tourism when occupancy is a little lower than in the summer high season.<sup>51</sup>

There may be wide agreement that a regular programme is a sensible offer, but what the frequency of that offer should be is a much trickier point to settle on. Customer demand, competition both from other venues with Lates offers and other night-time options, staff availability and market pressures are all factors that venues weigh up when deciding on how frequently to programme Lates. Support (or lack of it) from outside the venue, both from other local museums or galleries and/or from other organisations, such as local authorities, can also affect these decisions.



*Museums should explore more ways of working with the tourist sector to use Lates events to attract more cultural tourism*



## International Regular Offer

In all the places visited for the international research, institutions and local authorities were also grappling with how best to make a regular offer work and how regular that offer should be. Mexico City's Noche De Museos (literally, 'Night of the Museums') is the clearest example of city administrators and venues reaching a consensus that keeping it regular works.

Noche De Museos (NdM) has taken place on the last Wednesday of the month in Mexico City since 2009. 105 venues have taken part since its inception, 30 or 40 venues now regularly take part and 10,000 people attend each month.<sup>52</sup>

This combination of a commitment to regularity and collaboration has created the world's first, biggest and only monthly large-scale city-based Museum Lates festival. Similar types of enterprises, such as the Whitechapel Gallery-run First Thursdays programme do occur in the UK, but is there customer demand for more?<sup>53</sup>

50. <https://www.museums.cam.ac.uk/whats-on/twilight-at-the-museums> (accessed 4/01/2018)

51. See *Late Like A Local*, Culture24, 2018

52. See *An International Culture of Lates*, 2018

53. <http://www.whitechapelgallery.org/first-thursdays/>

## Customer Demand for Lates

A large majority of public survey respondents (72.9%) replied yes to the question, 'Would more after-hours events or extended hours in your local cultural venues make you interested in attending more often?' indicating that in general the public would like to see more after-hours events in museums.<sup>54</sup>

However, gauging customer demand for specific offers is more difficult. Culture24 has found that, though teenagers may be moving away from Facebook, the 21 – 40 age group still function in this space to organise their events-based social lives. People use Facebook to find out about and declare they are going to events, though that doesn't always convert to attendance. Large increases in visits to the Museums at Night website in 2017 compared to 2016 indicate that, once information about Lates events seeps into Facebook, it attracts a lot of positive attention.

Proving some level of customer demand, whether through Facebook or other social media, might be evidence enough to kick off a new programme of Lates. In some ways moving from no events to an occasional offer is an easier step to take than developing from an occasional offer to a regular night or taking the plunge to increase the frequency of a regular offer. This is why collaborating with other venues or being part of a bigger festival can work so well for venues looking to increase their capacity.

## A London Lates Festival a Decade Ago

'New Events in Historic Venues' describes and outlines the successes of a Greater London Authority (GLA) Lates 'festival' spanning 2007 and 2008. The GLA Lates festival was a way of marketing regular events at predominantly bigger institutions such as the British Museum and the Tate by branding them as part of a festival. Although the evaluation summary produced in the Evans report is very positive, including the statement, "The 12 highlight events had a consequent economic benefit of £2.6m," the festival (and GLA Lates brand) did not continue into 2009.

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54. See Culture24Research Google drive

## London Regular and Festival Events

London is a leading global city attracting millions of visitors from around the world as well as from the UK. Its Lates offer may be one of the largest and most sophisticated in the world. 502 venues in London have registered Lates events in the Culture24 database since 2009, 19.6% of the total venues programming Lates events in the UK. There may be no other city in the world that can boast so many venues that have programmed Lates, but other factors will also contribute to establishing London as a global Lates leader. Does it have a regular offer to meet demand and does it have a big festival moment to compete with Moscow, Berlin, Mexico City and Paris?

Certainly when it comes to an annual festival moment London’s numbers fall short of comparable worldwide offers. Buenos Aires reported 800,000 visits to their Museums Night in 2013;<sup>55</sup> more than 100 venues took part in Berlin’s Long Night of the Museums in 2017 and in Croatia, Zagreb’s 2014 Museum Night attracted 138,278 people according to ‘The Night of the Museums event and developing new museum audience’.<sup>56</sup>

33 venues took part in London’s October 2017 Museums at Night festival attracting 6,000 people. The festival was very successful measured by a range of metrics, customer satisfaction (as reported anecdotally to Culture24 by venues), capacities reached and achieving higher than average ticket prices – but clearly it does not compete as an impactful festival on a global stage.

One of the biggest boosts the London museum and gallery sector could give to museum Lates public programming in the UK is to produce a world-beating annual Lates festival.

However, London isn’t the only part of the UK with mixed output that needs attention or shows gaps in provision.

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*One of the biggest boosts the London museum and gallery sector could give to museum Lates public programming in the UK is to produce a world-beating annual Lates festival.*  
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55. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long\\_Night\\_of\\_Museums](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Night_of_Museums) Wikipedia page, (accessed 4/01/2018)  
 56. <https://www.berlin.de/en/events/2091757-2842498-long-night-of-museums.en.html>

## The Data on Regularity

The Culture24 database gives valuable insights into how many and where the venues are that most regularly programme Lates or extend their hours.

From the Culture24 database of over 4,800 museums, galleries and heritage sites, 80 venues registered Lates events on the Culture24 system in every year from 2011 to 2016. 2,434 venues (including libraries) registered at least one Lates event during that period and it can be seen from Table 5.1 that the number of venues registering events roughly halves every year.

Number of years running Late events	Number of venues
2011 - 2016	80
5 Years	177
4 Years	342
3 Years	581
2 Years	1049
1 Year	2434

There are also notable regional differences in the number of venues with events in every year between 2011 and 2016 (Table 5.2). The two regions outside London that are performing relatively well are the ones with big Museums at Night festival programmes, the North West (Liverpool and Manchester) and the North East (Newcastle & Gateshead).

Region	Number of venues registering at least one Lates event in each year 2011 - 2016
East of England	8
South West	8
West Midlands	3
Yorkshire & Humberside	3
North West	11
Scotland	2
South East	6
North East	11
East Midlands	3
Wales	2
London	23
Northern Ireland	0

## Example of Regular Lates Programming Outside London

The Whitworth Gallery in Manchester has committed to a weekly Thursday Lates event. Ed Watts, Engagement Manager at the Whitworth, said:

*"We're open regardless of what is going on, so sometimes a Thursday Late can just be a gallery space that's open until 9 o'clock for people to visit, the café stays open and we do regular workshops and group meetings. I'd say there's not many weeks in the year that we have nights like that, we try and host at least one thing most weeks as more of an event."*

They also enthusiastically take part in Manchester's annual Lates festival offer, Manchester After Hours, *"We'd say we'd try and do something a little bit special for those moments to try and be slightly more ambitious or shine a light on the work we do, so we try and do those more playful, immersive things."*

This is a good example of combining a regular offer with a festival moment: a commitment to a weekly Lates programme, punctuated by a large annual event. This gives the venue the freedom to develop their own brand but also to come together with other organisations in the city and work collaboratively when the occasion demands.

Visitors need the certainty that an event will be repeated, combined with moments of thrilling surprise: they are simultaneously predictable creatures of habit and impulse buyers. The big moments are important: they can be seen as shop windows for the regular events – the shiny, eye-catching product, which draws people into the concept of Museum Lates.

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57. See details in *An International Culture of Lates*, 2018

## Festivals – Do Their Audiences Return?

The question of whether museum festival audiences return once the spectacular show reverts back to a more prosaic beat, is one that has exercised some previous research such as 'The Night of the Museums event and developing new museum audience'. This concern is of particular importance in Europe as Museum, Long, Light and White Nights are ubiquitous and popular. In the UK and across the world, event programmers try to avoid 'cannibalising' audiences (extra programming that doesn't attract new audiences) and are very conscious of too much programming achieving diminished returns.

As Maria Privalova says: *"What I was hoping to get from these kinds of cultural events would be linking it to continuing cultural consumption."* She is not convinced that she has seen that evidence yet. For her, Museum Nights should create a virtuous circle where visitation to a museum festival event leads to some other kind of cultural consumption, preferably involving returning to the venue initially visited: but there is a lack of certainty among museums around whether they achieve this and how to measure it. Ms Privalova's former research institute work on this using Net Promoter Score questions highlights the disparity between how a visitor rates their experience and the venue where the experience took place, illustrating the disconnect that exists for some people between programme and place.<sup>57</sup>

But if a visit to a Museum Late doesn't soon lead to a repeat visit is it a failure? Matt Ravier said about Jurassic Lounge:

*"It didn't matter to us if they didn't immediately convert to day-time visitors. It mattered to us that by the time they had kids or became old enough to become a donor or a member or hire a venue for a corporate event that the museum occupied a place in their heart. So it was more about keeping that point of contact for audiences as they grew older rather than suddenly converting them to coming during the day."*

Here in the UK, the Museums at Night festival and venues such as the Whitworth offer an ideal opportunity to test whether festival audiences return to the venue they visited. A survey could be devised to track attendance over a long period to a range of different events. More investment in research is needed if we want to get a deeper understanding of audience behaviour and if different types of people prefer regular or festival events. This evidence could then be used to try to attract more people to either type of event.

The Culture24 infrastructure (part of a range of services provided as part of Culture24's role as an Arts Council England funded Sector Support Organisation) could be used to help to support emerging hot spots and areas of best practice which only become apparent when data is aggregated in this way.<sup>59</sup>

For example we found that Cornwall and Devon venues have a nationally significant programme of Lates in galleries and arts centres (See Chart 5a). A small number of these venues are programming Lates in numbers that comparable venues in other parts of the country are not yet doing – although they may have just been particularly diligent at uploading their events to Culture24's system.

If more evidence is found to support this finding, venues in Devon & Cornwall programming these events could collaborate in a cluster (as other venues have done to market their joint offer together for Museums at Night in the past) to market as a local festival, reach many more people than they do currently and open up new routes to funding and income generation.

The most important factor to consider when planning for growth is to develop sustainably. There is no growth without risk but risk can be mitigated by evidence, experience, quality, skill and support. A step-by-step approach to increasing a venue's Lates programme may look something like this illustration of a Programme Development Ladder: starting at the bottom with no events and working up stage by stage until the venue has found a level that works for them.

59. <http://weareculture24.org.uk/services/data-sharing/>

More investment in research is needed if we want to get a deeper understanding of audience behaviour...

Events and Venues by Category in Devon and Cornwall



(Chart 5.1, venues programming Lates January 2009 – April 2017, Culture24 database)

The Programme Development Ladder could be used as a guide for museums that want to grow their Lates offer. The more venues in close proximity to one another that are committed to working together to develop a joint Lates programme, the more likely the right level of capacity can be reached for a given area. However, as Jenny Bull from Cambridge University Museums cautioned: *“The more you open late the harder sell it is.”* This programming development approach needs to be closely calibrated to the audience demand and constantly refreshed with high quality content.

This development approach is more likely to be successful if the sector can support workforce development initiatives and nurture the professional expertise of the museum staff and volunteers delivering the events.



*The Programme Development Ladder could be used as a guide for museums that want to grow their Lates offer.*



## 5. The Big Picture: Regularity & Festivals

One of the many positive aspects of the culture and heritage sectors is their workforce's eagerness to learn together, both from each other in the industry and from others outside the sector to evolve their offer, improve their service and reach more people.

However, Lates event programming is not an area that has benefitted from much analysis, focused support or industry-wide infrastructure investment. Rosie Eagleton, Events Producer for Sheffield's Millennium Gallery, Weston Park Museum and Graves Art Gallery pinpointed the gaps:

*"There should be a good strong network of people who can say, "Oh we did a live Late around this, and we worked with these people and they had some great ideas, so just that opportunity to network and share information and share stories of what's worked, to have an ideas bank really."*

As the programming focus, audience demographics and income generation potential for Lates are very different to those informing practice around daytime events, surely they should be treated differently.

### Lates Practice in the Context of Wider Sector Issues

Current sector initiatives such as the push to diversify the workforce championed by the Museums Association, the enquiry into a museum's civic role<sup>59</sup> and the Happy Museum Project<sup>60</sup> are examples of progressive ways in which the sector is addressing gaps between how the world is moving on and where orthodox museum practice finds itself. They are all attempts to grapple with the role of the museum as a service provider for changing communities with developing expectations.

We must not lose sight of the fact that progressive approaches won't succeed if the communities they are aimed at can't actually access the building, to enjoy the benefits of this fresh outlook for more than seven hours a day, five days a week.

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59. <http://civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk>

60. <http://happymuseumproject.org>



## What the Sector Said

Culture24 has supported venues to programme Lates for over ten years, during which time factors that may be holding back this strand of public programming have begun to emerge. The feedback from interviews with UK venue programmers has confirmed that a lack of focus, inadequate support, insufficient information and knowledge sharing are all areas with room for improvement. As pointed out in the Mendoza Review, local authority venues particularly suffer under restrictive marketing and IT conditions.

Venues need the confidence and support to programme high quality content, and the ability and freedom to market these events to their target demographic. We can group the challenges facing Lates programmers into four areas:

### **a) A lack of recognition that programming Lates is a distinct form of museum practice or agreement about what Lates primary purpose is**

We detected relief among the people we spoke to that this research was finally being conducted and hope that the report might lead to a more focused approach to Lates programming. Agreement and cohesion about what Lates are intended to achieve would result in a more focused and coordinated approach across the sector, more likely to accomplish the goals of audience development and income generation.

### **b) No agreement about where Lates sit within an organisation**

From the 30 interviews conducted with venue programmers it was clear that different organisations view after-hours public programming in very different ways. Interviews were carried out with a Head of Learning and Audiences, a Public Programmes Manager, a Curatorial Assistant and a Communications Manager, to name just a few of the varied job titles represented. In the main, responsibility for Lates seems to fall within either the Education and Learning departments or the Engagement and Public Programmes departments, sometimes both at the same time. There will always be a role for Marketing and Communications teams to support them.

Agreement on what Lates are intended to achieve would lead to more continuity between organisations as to which departments deliver Lates programmes and better clarity and messaging for audiences.

### **c) Little communication between programmers from different venues**

Venue event programmers were asked what support, if any, their organisation would find most helpful in reaching more and/or new audiences for their after-hours events. Responses ranged from help with evaluation to more social media sharing, but the most frequently mentioned requirement was the opportunity to share knowledge and experiences with peers.

The sector would benefit from a forum where staff who programme after-hours events can share knowledge, experience, best practice, and support and mentor each other.

### **d) Lack of data specifically relating to Lates events**

Culture24 has conducted evaluation on most of the Museums at Night festivals we have run since 2009. The reports are available to download for free from the Culture24 website.<sup>61</sup> However there are big gaps in knowledge that if filled could make a significant contribution to developing practice.

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61. [www.WeAreCulture24.org.uk](http://www.WeAreCulture24.org.uk)

## Best Practice

There is some very good practice to be found around the country that can be learned from and built upon. Woking Lightbox's use of local demographic data to build their programme; the collaborations in the clusters outlined in previous sections but also in areas like Bath, Stockport and Great Yarmouth in years past; public comments and various published reports by Rosie Eagleton, Korantema Anyimadu, Dean Vealand Danny Birchall<sup>62</sup> all help to establish Lates as a tangible area in its own right.

In London, where Lates have been established the longest, venues are questioning their assumptions and challenging orthodoxies about their programming. In Edinburgh, within the last few years NMS have embarked on an exciting partnership with the Fringe; while Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums use part of their Arts Council England Portfolio funding to facilitate The Late Shows across Newcastle Gateshead.

## Cultural Tourism

As part of Culture24's Airbnb-sponsored cultural tourism research, venue programmers were brought together with hosts on Airbnb to discuss ways in which they could help each other to offer more night-time cultural choices to Airbnb guests. It was evident how much the participants felt they benefited from the opportunity to spend some time together and how many opportunities they saw for working together in the future. The main insights from these meet-ups and the surveys that preceded them are documented in the report 'Late Like A Local.'<sup>63</sup>

## More Data Needed

Sharing knowledge, gathering data and reaching out to other sectors will also help the museum sector's advocacy role. If museum directors from all types and sizes of organisations are going to effectively promote the sector's role in the NTE then they will need to use convincing data and strong partnership working.

The 2009 study into Light and White Nights concluded:<sup>64</sup>

"In order to improve current understanding of the contribution of cultural events to the socio-economic well-being of urban places, it will be necessary to develop a knowledge base both qualitative and quantitative, that builds on pan-European and international experience to create robust methodologies for data collection and meaningful comparisons."

Nine years on the need for robust data is no less important, as articulated by the Mendoza Review when exploring how to grow and diversify audiences: "Using new technology to collect and analyse visitor data; and gathering other evidence to understand how best to serve their visitors."<sup>65</sup>

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62. [https://twitter.com/dannybirchall?ref\\_src=twsrc%5EGoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor](https://twitter.com/dannybirchall?ref_src=twsrc%5EGoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor)

63. Culture24Research Google drive

64. Light Night: An "enlightening" place marketing experience by Jiwa et al <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/doi/abs/10.1108/17538330910975883>

65. Executive summary, chapter 10

# Conclusion



This research project and the reports that have been produced from it are intended to start a debate about Lates. There are many more aspects of this subject that could be studied, many more people with varied opinions to talk to and lots of after-hours events still to experience.

It is worth stating that Lates are here to stay, their popularity with visitors (though not yet benchmarked against other comparable night-time offers) is demonstrated in the longevity of venues' after-hours programmes and the Museums at Night festival. However, many members of the public have never experienced a museum Late and more still have never heard of them. The museum sector has a popular product which many people have yet to experience – what an opportunity!

Many people from all walks of life find it easier to go to museums in the evening rather than during the day – the sector can devise attractive programming for all of them. There will be costs: staffing, security and utilities, just as there are costs associated with any economic activity. There will also be secondary economic impact benefits that, once evidenced, can be used to attract sponsorship from local traders.



*The museum sector has a popular product which many people have yet to experience – what an opportunity!*



*There will be secondary economic impact benefits that, once evidenced, can be used to attract sponsorship from local traders.*



What lies at the heart of the aspiration to create a Culture of Lates is a new business model that better utilises a venue’s assets. Museums cannot afford not to open for longer – the retail sector learned this years ago and initiatives like weekly late-night shopping Thursdays are now commonplace.

There are Lates leaders around the UK pushing boundaries and developing museum programming practice. They are eager and willing to share their expertise to support those initiating programmes. We need to create the conditions for connections between practitioners to be made.

There are places in the UK where the Lates offer is established but has the potential to develop further, and places where there are relatively few museums programming Lates. We need to support museums, wherever they are and whatever point on the programming ladder they are on, to communicate with new audiences in the language they respond to and through the media they spend time in.

There are industry commissions, implementation plans and strategy documents currently being worked on that this report could usefully feed into. The Mayor of London and the GLA are both devising night-time economy strategies and have both recognised the importance of including the museum sector in their discussions.

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*Museums cannot afford not to open for longer.*

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*We need to create the conditions for connections between practitioners to be made.*

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*We need to support museums, wherever they are and whatever point on the programming ladder they are on, to communicate with new audiences in the language they respond to and through the media they spend time in.*

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## Summary of Related Reports

How Lates, Light Nights and White Nights have featured and been represented in academic papers and reports since 2008:

### 2008 – White Night Rome

*Impacts and evolutions of the Italian cultural event “La Notte Bianca Romana”: a system dynamics approach.*

Stefano Armenia,  
Gloria Fiorani, Marco Meneguzzo

An examination of how the museum night in Rome could inform public policy elsewhere to bring about social and economic benefits, suggesting that Light Nights are a good idea both in terms of local and social development and economic benefit.

### 2009 – Various White Nights and Berlin’s Lange Nacht

*Light Night: An “enlightening” place marketing experience*

Jiwa et al

An individual’s participation in events related to culture and the arts can play an important role in developing sustainable communities and places, overcoming many of the negative social perceptions held with respect to the night-time economy by community groups across the UK

### 2010 – Lates, Light Nights and White Nights

*New Events in Historic Venues*

Graeme Evans for London Metropolitan University, Cities Institute

Refers to the beneficial role Lates can play in diversifying a city’s night time economy.

### 2010 – References to particular Lates event

*How are leading art galleries inspiring young people and educators through their learning programmes, interpretation and resources?*

Catherine Mailhac for the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust

Lates are represented as social occasions which attract a diverse, younger audience that if nurtured can reach many thousands of people (on one night in the case of Brooklyn).

### 2012 – References to and case study about Lates

*The Evening & Night-Time Economy: Realising the potential for Destination Organisations*

Visit England & Association of Town Centre Management

Features a Museums at Night Case study, defines the NTE and focuses on Purple Flag status and Light Night projects in Liverpool and Bury

### 2015 – Focused on audience development with reference to Lates

*Evolving Museums: Redefining cultural programming for an emerging adult audience*

Rosie Eagleton

### 2016 – Focused on barriers to diversity with reference to Lates

*Museums are...? - making museums matter.*

Korantema Anyimadu

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