

Jewish Museum London announces closure of current building

- Current building to close this Summer as Board develops plans for new museum fit for the future, in more prominent location
- Activity will continue online and in temporary venues as part of transition plan – with more details to be announced in due course
- Board's decision also reflects the need to make the museum more sustainable into the future.
- Centenary vision to develop a new museum to engage a wider audience with the rich heritage, creativity & hospitality of Jewish culture

Thursday 1 June, London - The trustees of Jewish Museum London today announce that they are preparing to close the current site in Camden's Albert Street.

Jewish Museum London houses and displays the UK's nationally designated collection of Judaica, as well as collections from the Jewish Military Museum, United Synagogue and Jewish Historical Society of England.

Since opening in 2010, the museum's home in Camden has been the site of transformative exhibitions and events, and the home of its award-winning education programme. JML was awarded National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) status by Arts Council England in November 2022, securing £224k in annual funding until 2026.

However, as with many similar institutions, Jewish Museum London has also faced unanticipated rising costs, which has prevented its return to producing temporary exhibitions. The board's decision also reflects the need to make the museum more sustainable into the future.

Jewish Museum London is the smallest Jewish museum among major European cities, despite being home to the second largest Jewish community and boasting the second largest collection. The museum is unable to meet all the demands of its successful schools programme in the current site, while the exhibition space is relatively small, and is not sufficient for the future ambitions of the organisation.

The collections will move to specialised storage so that the Collections team can continue working on projects, the Learning team can continue with their award-winning programmes, and researchers can continue to have access to objects online.

The sale of the current site, consisting of a Grade II Georgian town house linked to a modern warehouse-style building, will release funds for Jewish Museum London's interim operational costs, contribute towards the new museum site, and seed money to support the future capital campaign. This will bring to reality the museum's centenary vision of developing a more modern, engaging and inspiring visitor experience in a new, more prominent location.

In the meantime, visitors will be able to encounter the collection in new and different ways as the museum explores elements of its vision in consultation with audiences and the wider Jewish community. Discussions are currently underway with partners to explore temporary exhibition and education spaces for the collection. The museum continues to work very closely with Arts Council England on its plans and gratefully acknowledges their responsiveness and support. The museum is also in dialogue with The National Lottery Heritage Fund, which provided valuable initial support for the development of the building, as well as subsequent funding, about further support for these plans.

Since reopening post-pandemic, the museum's model of operation changed from programmes for the general public, such as temporary exhibitions, in order to focus on a new learning and engagement model, working with a variety of audiences including schools, families and older people.

The museum's programme celebrates Jewish life, faith and culture, helps to tackle prejudice and antisemitism, and supports wellbeing. The impact and reach of this work can be seen across a range of initiatives, which are planned to continue after the museum has left its current building:

- 20,000 school students per year now engage with the museum's programmes, learning about Jewish life, culture and religion, including through in-person workshops at the museum, outreach visits to schools, loans boxes, travelling exhibitions for schools, virtual classrooms and virtual broadcasts about Jewish Festivals.
- The online learning portal used by students and teachers has over 119,000 users each year.
- Over 600 older people per year in Jewish and other care homes, both in person and online, participate in reminiscence programmes based around the museum's collections.
- The museum has a significant national *Inclusive Judaism* project which connects with diverse Jewish Communities around the country and represents their stories. The museum website has a library of inclusive images used in RE teaching conferences to ensure Judaism teaching in schools is representative of the Jewish Community.
- A new lending library of museum collections objects has been created with planned loans to different regions from autumn 2023.

Nick Viner, Chair of Jewish Museum London, said: "As we approach our centenary, Jewish Museum London is at a crossroads. We have an extraordinary opportunity to re-envision the museum for the future. We are deeply grateful for the commitment and generosity of countless

people who have made the site at Albert Street a home to ground-breaking exhibitions and our award-winning education programme. Our decision to sell the current building is not taken lightly, but as trustees it's our responsibility to consider the longer-term sustainability of the museum. As the collection leaves Albert Street for a new temporary home, it will also create opportunities to experiment, as we develop the new vision for Jewish Museum London together with all our stakeholders."

Tonya Nelson, London Area Director, Arts Council England said: "We know how important Jewish Museum London's collection is to the museums sector and the British Jewish Community. We want to ensure that the nationally outstanding collection is preserved and accessible for generations to come and continue to work closely with the museum to make sure this happens.

"We are aware of the challenges being experienced by Jewish Museum London and are working closely with the board, the leadership team and stakeholders to support the museum as it addresses its financial resilience and determines the options available to them."

Stuart McLeod, Director of England - London & South at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "Jewish Museum London plays a hugely significant role in sharing Judaism and Jewish culture through its collections and successful education programme. Its global importance means that it needs to evolve into its next centenary and ensure it is accessible to all. We remain in active discussions to help secure the best possible future for Jewish Museum London and look forward to working with the team."

Jewish Museum London is also working with Camden Council on its transition plan and vision, including proposals for temporary exhibition and education spaces. Precise timings for the closure of the museum will be announced in due course.

Georgia Gould, Leader of Camden Council said: "Jewish Museum London is a nationally important institution with its roots in Camden. At a time of rising antisemitism its significance cannot be overstated. The museum's work in education, exhibitions, dialogue and as a definitive archive of Jewish life makes an extraordinary contribution to London and beyond. We are excited to support its continuing development as the museum approaches its centenary.'

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Background Notes

Founded in 1932 by Professor Cecil Roth, Alfred Rubens and Wilfred Samuel, the Jewish Museum was originally located in Woburn House in Bloomsbury, it moved to an elegant early Victorian listed building in Camden Town in 1994.

The London Museum of Jewish Life was founded in 1983 as the Museum of the Jewish East End with the aim of rescuing and preserving the disappearing heritage of London's East End – the heartland of Jewish settlement in Britain. While the East End has remained an important focus, the museum expanded to reflect the diverse roots and social history of Jewish people across

London, including the experiences of refugees from Nazism. It also developed an acclaimed programme of Holocaust and anti-racist education.

In 1995 the two museums were amalgamated. Between 1995 and 2007 the combined Jewish Museum ran on two sites, but with a long term aim to find the means to combine the two collections, activities and displays within a single site.

Following years of planning and fundraising the museum bought a former piano factory behind the Camden Town site and raised the required funds to combine and remodel the buildings. The new Museum opened to the public on 17 March 2010 and its award-winning education and exhibition programmes have attracted popular and critical acclaim.

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