# French philanthropist steps in as UK museums face crisis in funding educational visits



Smaller museums across the UK are grappling with significant financial constraints that hinder their ability to facilitate educational visits, a situation underscored by Frédéric Jousset, a French philanthropist dedicated to enhancing cultural access for British children. Jousset, who has established himself as a notable figure in the arts, articulates a pressing concern: British children are missing vital opportunities to engage with the arts due to inadequate investment in cultural institutions.

In a statement reflecting on the disparity between the UK and other European countries, Jousset remarked, “The public spending to support cultural institutions is just higher [in France].” This assertion is backed by a report from the University of Warwick in conjunction with the Campaign for the Arts, revealing that while the UK's overall culture budget has been slashed by 6% since 2010, France has significantly increased its cultural expenditure by 25% during the same period.

To bridge this funding gap, Jousset's non-profit organisation, Art Explora, recently launched the "Time Odyssey" project at the British Museum. The initiative aims to fund approximately 100,000 museum visits, covering essential school transport costs, which will particularly benefit children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Jousset emphasises the importance of making museums more accessible, especially for those who find such spaces daunting; he likened the experience of visiting a museum to entering a church, where formal decorum often overshadows genuine engagement.

A recent survey highlighted the alarming trend of reduced school trips, particularly in more deprived areas. According to the Sutton Trust, 50% of school leaders reported cutting educational outings, a sharp increase from previous years. For schools in the most disadvantaged areas, that figure rose to 68%. This escalating challenge is echoed in findings revealing that 60% of UK teachers had refrained from taking their classes to museums in the past year, revealing a stark gap in cultural education.

The financial viability of many cultural institutions is also under threat. A survey conducted by the National Lottery Heritage Fund disclosed that 78% of heritage organisations are experiencing budgetary pressures, leading to drastic reductions in educational and community outreach programmes. A staggering 37% of these institutions have ceased or cut back their educational offerings, while similar proportions have scaled back their hours of operation.

Moreover, as the cost-of-living crisis takes its toll, many small museums face imminent closure. A report indicated that three in five small museums and galleries in the UK fear they may not survive due to a decrease in visitor revenue. This has raised alarms about the longevity and accessibility of cultural institutions that ideally serve as community hubs and educational resources.

Jousset’s involvement with Art Explora is not new; prior to "Time Odyssey," the organisation had successfully executed pilot programmes in several museums, including the Yorkshire Museum and the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter. Furthermore, initiatives like the mobile art gallery he supported in collaboration with Tate Liverpool have demonstrated a commitment to making art accessible beyond traditional settings. In 2021, his flagship venture, a 46-metre boat designed to bring art to coastal areas, showcased his innovative approach to cultural engagement.

While the recovery of school group visits post-pandemic has been promising, as noted by Bernard Donoghue, director of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, the escalating costs associated with transport and other logistical considerations continue to be formidable barriers. The situation encapsulates a broader narrative about access to education and culture, especially for youth in lower socioeconomic strata.

As we navigate these challenges, the focus must remain on enhancing monetary support and innovative approaches to cultural accessibility, ensuring that educational experiences are not losses borne solely by disadvantaged children, but rather opportunities for all young learners to engage with their cultural heritage.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4
2. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3
3. Paragraphs 5
4. Paragraphs 6
5. Paragraph 7
6. Paragraph 7
7. Paragraph 8

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2025/may/13/school-visits-uk-museums-shortage-means-philanthropist> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2025/may/13/school-visits-uk-museums-shortage-means-philanthropist> - An article from The Guardian discusses how smaller UK museums are facing financial challenges, leading to a shortage of means to support school visits. Frédéric Jousset, a French philanthropist, highlights that British children are missing out on access to the arts due to lack of investment. A report by the University of Warwick and the Campaign for the Arts shows that while Britain has cut back its total culture budget by 6% since 2010, France has increased its spending by 25%. Jousset's non-profit, Art Explora, launched the 'Time Odyssey' project at the British Museum to fund an estimated 100,000 museum visits, including school transport costs, for children across the UK. The initiative aims to address the funding gap and make museums more accessible, especially for children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The article also mentions previous pilot schemes involving various museums in the UK.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2023/apr/26/cuts-in-school-trips-in-england-hitting-children-in-poorer-areas-hardest-shows-poll> - A report from The Guardian highlights that cuts in school trips in England are disproportionately affecting children in poorer areas. A survey by the Sutton Trust found that 50% of school leaders had made cuts to trips and outings, a significant increase from 21% the previous year. The impact is more severe in the most deprived schools, where 68% of leaders reported cuts, compared to 44% in the wealthiest schools. The article underscores the challenges schools face in providing extracurricular activities due to budget constraints, particularly in disadvantaged communities.
4. <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/news/2024/02/rising-costs-force-museums-to-cut-opening-hours-and-education-programmes/> - An article from the Museums Association discusses how rising costs are forcing museums to cut opening hours and education programs. A survey by the National Lottery Heritage Fund revealed that 78% of heritage organizations are facing budget pressures, leading to reductions in services. The survey found that 37% of affected organizations have cut education and community programs, and 37% have reduced opening hours and public access. The article highlights the financial challenges museums are facing and the impact on public access to cultural institutions.
5. <https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2025/02/21/three-in-five-small-uk-museums-and-galleries-fear-closure-amid-declining-revenue> - An article from The Art Newspaper reports that three in five small UK museums and galleries fear closure amid declining revenue. The piece highlights the financial struggles faced by these institutions, with many reporting a significant decline in visitor numbers and income. The article discusses the broader impact of the cost of living crisis and underinvestment in UK museums, noting that while some European governments have cut costs, the overall level of public investment in culture in Europe remained significantly higher. The piece emphasizes the need for increased support to sustain these cultural institutions.
6. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nickmorrison/2023/04/25/schools-trips-face-the-axe-amid-funding-and-recruitment-crisis/> - A Forbes article discusses how school trips are at risk due to funding and recruitment crises. The piece highlights that half of school leaders in the UK are being forced to cut school trips and outings as a result of budget constraints and staffing shortages. The article underscores the challenges schools face in providing extracurricular activities and the impact on students' education and development. It also touches on the broader context of financial pressures in the education sector and the need for sustainable funding solutions.
7. <https://www.museumsandheritage.com/advisor/posts/rising-costs-put-free-school-trips-at-risk-warns-english-heritage/> - An article from Museums + Heritage reports that rising costs are putting free school trips at risk, according to English Heritage. The charity, one of the UK's largest providers of free school trips, has seen the cost per head for educational visits rise by 63% since 2019/2020. The article discusses the financial challenges faced by English Heritage and the impact on their ability to offer free educational visits. It also highlights regional disparities in school visits to historic sites and the importance of maintaining access to cultural education for all students.