

Supplementary information for The Imagination Museum Co-commission 2026-27, with the Horniman Museum and Gardens and Trinity Laban

Nature + Love project

Nature + Love is a transformational project at the Horniman Museum and Gardens to inspire a greater understanding and appreciation for the world we all share.

Through the new displays, destinations and programmes across the Horniman, we will encourage people to connect with nature in ways which work for them, make the Horniman more sustainable, accessible and inclusive, recognise the impact of the climate and ecological emergency, and help to protect and celebrate the natural world.

The completion of Nature + Love in early 2027 will round off our celebrations of 125 years since the Museum first opened in 1901.

Find out more about the project here: <https://www.horniman.ac.uk/project/nature-love/>

New gardens areas

Two new destinations in the [Horniman Gardens](#), opening in Spring 2026, will encourage visitors to explore outdoors.

Nature-themed play area



On the site of the Old Boating Pond we will create an exciting nature-themed play area for families to have fun together, along with a new Café.

In the play area, families are encouraged to: meet a robin, find a fox, follow a grass snake, spot the butterflies, and help a bee.

Nature Trail



Also in this area of the Gardens we will introduce a new gate onto the historic [Nature Trail](#) where there will be improved information and accessibility.

One of London's oldest nature trails, it is an urban oasis for plants, insects, birds and mammals. Our Nature Trail was once part of the Great North Wood. This forest stretched for miles across south east London and provided people with fuel and materials for centuries. Many species, such as stag beetles and pipistrelle bats, oak trees, woodpeckers and purple hairstreak butterflies, live here. The Nature Trail was once part of the Crystal Palace and South London Junction Railway. After the line closed in 1954, wildlife returned. The Horniman has managed the Trail since 1972, introducing a pond, a meadow and log piles.

Sustainable gardening zone, and community garden



At the top of the site, a new Gardens nursery will feature a large terrace overlooking the grounds, and workshop space for visitors to engage with sustainable gardening. Nearby, a new community garden will be run with local groups.

In this space, people can find out about what we are doing to make the Horniman more sustainable, like:

- collecting rainwater from the roof of our Gardens Nursery and store it in large tanks underground, so it can be used to water the gardens
- planting a micro-forest using the 'Miyawaki method', based on how forests grow naturally, encouraging young trees close to grow quickly and shield the Gardens from road pollution
- choosing plants that are better adapted to the dry summer conditions that are more common in London due to climate change
- creating a rain garden, a shallow dip in the ground designed to slow and catch water during heavy rain, preventing flooding

Mindfulness prompts, developed by participants in our outdoor social prescription wellbeing programme, encourage people to take a mindful moment to engage with nature. For example:

- Find something unusual that sparks your imagination. What else could it be? Let your mind soar and be playful.
- Have a look for an animal, big or small. Can you observe and follow its movements? Feel the rhythm and musicality in its motion.
- Make your way towards a texture you're attracted to. What is distinctive about it? How does it feel? Is it rough, smooth, hard, soft? Touch with care.
- Find a tree that you're drawn to. Why has it captured your attention? Imagine its roots beneath you. What messages is it sending?

- Pause and take a moment. Consider your surroundings. Let yourself be drawn to something new. What does it make you wonder?

New indoor areas

Two new gallery spaces will open in the museum early 2027.

Natural History Gallery



The new gallery is a redesign of our existing Natural History Gallery, retaining the much-loved character of the space but updating the messaging and content (and the walrus!). Beautifully curated displays, along with co-produced interventions by community and school groups, will explore human's relationship with the natural world and big ideas for how we can all positively shape its future.

The gallery will include fossils, skeletons, plants, taxidermy animals, models, artworks and cultural artefacts, along with interactives, audio-visual displays, tactile objects and opportunities for participation. Curated displays, along with co-produced interventions by community and school groups, will explore the amazing diversity of the natural world past and present, our relationship with nature, and big ideas for how we can all positively shape its future.

Children's nature gallery



Next door will be a fun play space designed with and for local families to inspire a lifelong love of nature in under-5s. Activities will encourage children to explore species that can be found in and around our Gardens – bees, butterflies, thistles, foxes, robins, grass snakes.

Spring Fair and Audience



The performance is planned to take place in the Horniman Gardens as part of our Spring Fair in early April 2027 (either Saturday 3rd or Saturday 10th). The Fair attracts 2000+ visitors, who are generally families with young children. Many come from our immediate local area.

The event runs between 11 am and 4pm and takes place whatever the weather. Visitors can take part in lots of activities, fun and games, enjoy live music, and find seasonal treats at food stalls.

The performance at the Fair should:

- Encourage a wide range of people visiting the Fair to engage socially and connect with the natural world
- Inspire people visiting the Fair to love and protect nature.

The Fair is a ticketed event, so the Gardens will only be accessible to people who have tickets. We will supply an allocation of free tickets for the participants in the performance. The Gardens areas accessible to ticket holders will include the new nature themed play area, sustainable gardening zone, and community garden.

Access to other areas of the site is unrestricted during the Fair:

- The museum building will be open as usual, and free to access to anyone.
- The Nature Trail will be open, and accessible via London Road (not from the main Gardens), but if we have strong winds that weekend, it may need to close at short notice for safety reasons.

Appendix 1: About the Horniman Museum and Gardens

Introduction to the Horniman

The Horniman Museum and Gardens is an inspiring, surprising, family-friendly, free attraction in South London's Forest Hill. Founded by wealthy tea merchant and collector Frederick John Horniman, the museum first opened in Horniman's house in 1890. Since then, our collection has grown tenfold and includes internationally important collections of Anthropology and Musical Instruments, as well as an acclaimed Aquarium, a Butterfly House and Natural History collection.

Today, the Horniman is London's only museum where environment, ecology and human cultures can be seen side by side at a global scale.

For more about the Horniman's history and ethos see: www.horniman.ac.uk/our-history

Natural Sciences collections

Our [Natural Sciences collection](#) contains over 250,000 biological and geological specimens from London, the UK and all continents of the world. They were collected from the mid-19th to the early 21st centuries, and are used for display, learning, and research. The collection is wide ranging, and includes taxidermy, skeletons, pinned insects, fossils, minerals and rocks, models, dried pressed plants, fungi, shells, and birds' eggs.

Alongside this, we have an extensive [Handling Collection](#) of 3500 objects and natural history specimens, which is housed in the Hands-on Base in the museum.

Our [Living Collections](#) include an Aquarium in the basement of the museum building, our Gardens, a Butterfly House, and an Animal Walk.

Some examples of collections that will be on display in the new Natural History Gallery are:



The [Horniman Walrus](#)



Other taxidermied (stuffed) animals and birds



A cast of a Velociraptor dinosaur skeleton



Jewel beetles and other insects



Nests and eggs – like this hummingbird nest



Elephant skull, and other skeletons



Historic books and artworks – for example [Philip Henry Gosse](#)



Dioramas: scenes showing animals in natural environments



Fossils – like this ammonite



Minerals and natural resources – like this block of amber