



florence-nightingale.co.uk  @florencemuseum  @florencenightingalemuseum  florencemuseum

RESTRUCTURING OF THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE MUSEUM

- **Museum to close from end of February 2021 for foreseeable future**
- **Restructuring vital to protect long term future of Museum and its collections**
- **Staff consultation begins straightaway**

4/1/21 – Regretfully, but inevitably, the Florence Nightingale Museum must announce a **major review and restructuring of its operations and a period of consultation with staff**, in response to the damaging and continuing effects of the pandemic.

This review is designed to project the Museum's collections and the institution for the long term. If changes are not made now, the Museum will become financially insolvent before markets recover and visitors return in significant numbers.

Generous support from individual donors, as well as the **Art Fund, Arts Council England, and National Heritage Lottery Fund**, makes it possible for the Museum to re-open this month, in the increasingly unlikely event that the government's tier system is relaxed. However, **the Museum will be closed from 28 February 2021 for the foreseeable future, even when London is released from Tier 4 restrictions**, except for special one-off events. Visitor numbers just do not make remaining open financially viable.

The Museum is extremely grateful to all those individuals and organisations that have provided financial support throughout a traumatic year and remains open to all offers of support from interested parties.

Currently, the Museum - an independent charity - is **reliant on visitors for around 95% of its income**; and more than half of those are visitors travelling to London from overseas. Since March 2020, visitor numbers have reduced to such an extent that it is not feasible for the Museum to re-open at the moment.

Given that it is likely to be many months before anything like a return to normality, the Museum has no alternative other than to cut its costs significantly and to build a new operational structure far less dependent on visitors arriving at its front door.

Consultation with Museum staff is now beginning and, sadly, redundancies are likely, as the Museum looks to reduce costs significantly. Since March 2020, the Museum has made many savings and operational changes but there are few fixed costs that remain to be cut. Therefore, a review of staff roles and costs is, unfortunately, necessary.

When the Museum was first forced to close in March 2020, it was at its absolute busiest, in the early months of Florence Nightingale's bicentenary year and with record numbers of people visiting. Its new exhibition, *Nightingale in 200 Objects, People & Places*, was just ten days into its run. The closure curtailed all plans and the extended lockdown, and slow return to normality, placed the Museum at risk of permanent closure. The staff structures in place at that point reflected the increased level of activity; ten months on, the situation is utterly transformed and these staffing levels are unrealistic.

While the government's furlough scheme has covered significant staff costs, this is due to end in April 2021 and were it to be extended, the Museum would no longer be able to make its own essential contributions to the scheme, with current staffing levels.

As the Museum's structure changes, it is also **currently recruiting a number of new trustees** to its board, with appointments encompassing the skills required to begin a new phase in the Museum's development.

David Green, Director of the Florence Nightingale Museum, said, "The events of the past year have been devastating for so many. From our own perspective, to go from the furious activity and high visitor numbers of the early months of 2020, to instant desolation was a major blow, especially as this all happened during Florence's bicentenary year and the World Health Organisation's Year of the Nurse and Midwife. Since March 2020, we have explored every avenue and resource available to us, in order to keep the Museum operating. Throughout this turbulent time, we have received so much wonderful support from the Museum's visitors, as well as all manner of arts organisations, not to mention the dedicated and tenacious work of our staff. Now, the need for changes to the Museum's operation is vital to ensure that it has a future, particularly as it is extremely likely that the situation is unlikely to improve significantly for many months."

One of the few museums in the country dedicated to a pioneering woman, the **Florence Nightingale Museum** explores the life and work of the best-known figure in nursing history. It also celebrates nursing today and throughout history, telling the stories of such key figures as British-Jamaican nurse and businesswoman, **Mary Seacole** and **Kofoworola Abeni Pratt**, the first black nurse to work in the NHS. At a time when the lives of millions of people the world over have been placed in the hands of health workers, and the value of nurses has never been clearer, the Museum tells the story of the

mother of modern nursing and the people following in her footsteps today. Opened in 1989 and sitting in the grounds of St Thomas' Hospital, the Museum looks beyond the mythical 'Lady with the Lamp' tale to present a fully-rounded picture of Florence Nightingale, a visionary reformer, tireless campaigner and inspirational world leader in her field.

-ends-

For further information and images, please contact Michael Barrett on 020 8295 2424, 07813-558772 or mb@thepressoffice.uk.com