



Heritage  
Compass

# The Stradling Collection

## Background

The Stradling Collection was established by the late Ken Stradling, who travelled the world buying for design store The Guild in Bristol. Ken amassed an extensive personal collection of over 2000 items of 20th and 21st century design and applied arts, with ceramics, glass and furniture including rare pieces from makers in Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and America, as well as the Bauhaus movement. In 2006 he set up a Trust, donating his collection, along with start-up funds and a building in central Bristol. The charity was established to make the collection available for the benefit of artists, makers, students and the general public. Since then The Stradling Collection has operated the building as a gallery with free entry, albeit with limited opening hours, creating special exhibitions with guest curators, and often lending pieces from the collection to other museums and galleries. The organisation is run largely on a voluntary basis with just two part-time freelance support staff.

By the time the Stradling Collection joined the Heritage Compass programme in 2023, the trust was in a challenging financial situation and in the midst of a process of change. Much of the initial investment of funding had been spent, and there had been little additional fundraising apart from some small grants. Ken Stradling sadly passed away in 2022, leaving his house to the trust. A number of new trustees had joined the Board, offering additional skills and fresh perspectives. This bequest and the change in organisational leadership had created an opportunity for the trust to rethink the long term business model and put the organisation on a sounder financial footing.



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## What The Stradling Collection needed from Heritage Compass

The Stradling Collection joined Heritage Compass at a time of transition, when they were thinking about how the organisation should develop. Their priorities were to use the training modules and mentoring support to consider their options and develop a business plan. The ambition was to identify ways to expand their programming while generating enough income to be self-sustaining. The trustees had to think through their options for how to use the additional funding which will come to the Trust when the sale of the house is finalised, with the aim of investing to secure financial sustainability while keeping the collection intact. Given that the collection is not officially designated in any way and the Trust is not accredited, there was an understanding that grant funding opportunities are limited and that other forms of income generation will be important. Heritage Compass offered an opportunity to work with a mentor to explore options for fundraising and income generation.

## Planning for growth and impact

The trustees have worked closely with their critical friend and mentor to develop a more ambitious plan for the Trust, based on addressing key operational challenges and making strategic decisions for the future. The trustees undertook a review of governance, identifying that the Trust needed to establish more robust and efficient processes, policies including acquisitions and disposals needed to be reviewed as did the deed trust, as it only allowed for the appointment of five trustees.

The trustees also looked at how the organisation had been working, identifying that while the gallery was very much appreciated by those who knew it, it was something of a hidden treasure in Bristol and many people weren't aware of its presence. Further work to develop audiences was needed, with a focus on attracting more of their core audience before reaching out to under-represented groups. There was also a need to appraise various options for using their current building, which has further income generating potential but is not fully accessible. Various options including studio rental and development of a small adjacent car park have been considered.



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## How Heritage Compass has been useful

The participating trustees found much of the Heritage Compass training content helpful, particularly the sessions on governance and business planning. As a result of the Heritage Compass programme and the extensive work undertaken by the current board, key decisions have been made and a plan is in place for the future development of the Stradling Collection. This includes the appointment of a Director to lead the management and development of the charity, to be funded initially from Ken Stradling's bequest of his house, with the longer term aim to be self-sustaining through increased income generation. A fundraising strategy is in place and the Trust is making a series of applications which are more focused to funders' needs and requirements and better presented. The Trustees have worked closely with their Heritage Compass mentor on fundraising, and have been able to access further consultancy support which is intended to upskill the Trustees to be more confident in writing their own bids.



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## What The Stradling Collection needs next

At this point, The Stradling Collection is consolidating its current position while waiting to appoint their first Director, an investment which should make a step change in the Trust's impact and sustainability. The Trust needs continued access to advice and guidance, specifically around income generation and communications, but also in considering how best to make use of the property asset they hold.

### Advice for other organisations

As a small volunteer organisation, not all of the models and examples used in the training sessions will be relevant – take what you need from the training.

Your critical friend and mentor will help you to apply the learning from the programme in a way which is relevant to your organisation.