Gardens & Museums IT

Issue 27
Autumn 2026

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If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact us via it@museums.ox.ac.uk

Welcome

Welcome to Issue 27 of the Gardens & Museums IT Newsletter.

The leaves are tumbling, the squirrels are squirrelling, and the days are getting shorter (and colder) – it's officially autumn!

While many are settling back into work and preparing for the University year after the summer break, we're breathing a collective sigh of relief that we've made it through! Summer has been quite relentless for us, continuing much as spring ended.

So, what have we been up to?

We've navigated a particularly challenging end to the financial year, with constraints on equipment production and availability resulting in orders being cancelled at short notice and a fair amount of hunting, gathering and leveraging existing relationships to fulfil requirements.

And, of course, no summer would be complete without a plethora of AV projects, with work taking place across the Ashmolean Museum, Museum of Natural History and Pitt Rivers Museum.

Finally, the other big news is that we've moved! You'll still find us at the Ashmolean and in the Cast Gallery, but our position has risen a couple of levels – quite literally – and we're now occupying part of the Mezzanine. And super excitingly - we have windows!!

To see how we're settling into life on the Cast Gallery Mezzanine, along with updates on what else we've been up to and what's coming next, please read on…

All the best

Carl

What's been going on? And what's coming?

Purchasing Update

The purchasing of certain electrical equipment continues to be a significant topic of conversation across the industry, with prices continuing to rise and some technology becoming increasingly scarce and difficult to source.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, we look at the challenges this presented towards the end of the financial year, as well as the considerable work involved in navigating them. Looking ahead, these pressures are expected to continue for some time, so it's important that we plan accordingly.

With this in mind, if you know (or even suspect) that you'll have an upcoming requirement for new IT equipment, please get in touch with us as early as possible. This will allow us to advise on current pricing and availability, explore the options available, and help avoid the difficulties that can come with ordering too late. The earlier we know about your requirements, the better placed we'll be to help.

DiSSCo (Distributed System of Scientific Collections)

The DiSSCo project at the Museum of Natural History is an exciting new initiative that we've been pleased to get involved with. We've been helping with the initial setup, including sourcing and installing computers for our new DiSSCo colleagues.

We're looking forward to continuing our involvement and seeing how this exciting project develops.

Cabling at the Botanic Garden…

In our last newsletter, we included an article on cabling, and in October we had the opportunity to put some of that into practice when we were asked to support the Botanic Garden with some computer and desk cabling concerns.

This was a great example of how cabling can quickly become a problem. Over the course of a few hours, Aidan and I stripped out the existing setup, measured and installed new cabling where needed, while reusing existing cables wherever possible.

And, as you can see from the before and after pictures, it made quite a transformation!

So, as mentioned in our last newsletter, if you have a similar situation in your space, please do get in touch - we may be able to help.

What's been going on? And what's coming?

Colleague Feedback Survey

It's that time of year again when we ask you a few questions to find out how we're doing and, importantly, to capture your thoughts, opinions and overall satisfaction with the service we provide.

This year's survey will be open from 3 - 24 November, and we'd really appreciate you taking a little time to respond. Your feedback helps us understand what we're doing well, where we need to improve, and any changes we should be considering to our IT offering.

The responses we received from last year's survey provided valuable evidence to support conversations, negotiations and developments across our service. And if you're interested in seeing what we discovered last year, you can find the report on our website: https://it.museums.ox.ac.uk/article/service-reports .

So, please keep an eye out for the email inviting you to take part, and thank you in advance for taking the time to share your thoughts with us.

Printing…

Work on printing has continued throughout the summer as we review the current state of play, taking into account the variety of vendors currently in use, the scale of printing across the organisation, and the differing requirements at each site.

One requirement common to all sites, however, is security.

With this in mind, and following a period of exploration (as detailed in our Summer Newsletter), we've recently purchased PaperCut and will now be looking at the best approach to implementing it.

Excitingly, PaperCut not only offers improvements to printing security but also has the potential to reduce paper waste and energy use through better monitoring and management. It also opens up new possibilities for our printing service, including the introduction of wireless printing.

We'll share more information as this work progresses and our plans for implementation take shape.

Computer Replacements - Apple and Windows

Although we're only just into Autumn, planning is already underway for our 2027 computer replacement programme across both Windows and Apple devices. Where it makes sense to do so, we're looking to bring some replacements forward to November and December 2026, rather than waiting until January and February 2027.

If your computer is scheduled for replacement, we'll be in touch with you directly, so please keep an eye out for our emails. Equally, if you think you may be due a replacement and are experiencing issues with your current computer, please do get in touch and let us know.

A challenging end to the Financial Year…

So, it's been a couple of months since the end of the 2025/2026 University Financial Year, which was probably one of the most challenging financial periods I've experienced.

It's always a fairly tricky time, as I'm sure many of you will appreciate, but this year was particularly challenging due to the ever-changing availability of technical equipment, alongside frequently fluctuating costs.

Why was this year more challenging?

As mentioned earlier in this newsletter, purchasing IT equipment continues to be challenging. Availability can change quickly, prices continue to rise, and longer lead times mean we increasingly need to plan and order well in advance.

To put this into context, a standard laptop currently costs around £975 ex VAT, compared with approximately £750 a year ago, while typical delivery times have increased from around 3–6 weeks to 6–8 weeks.

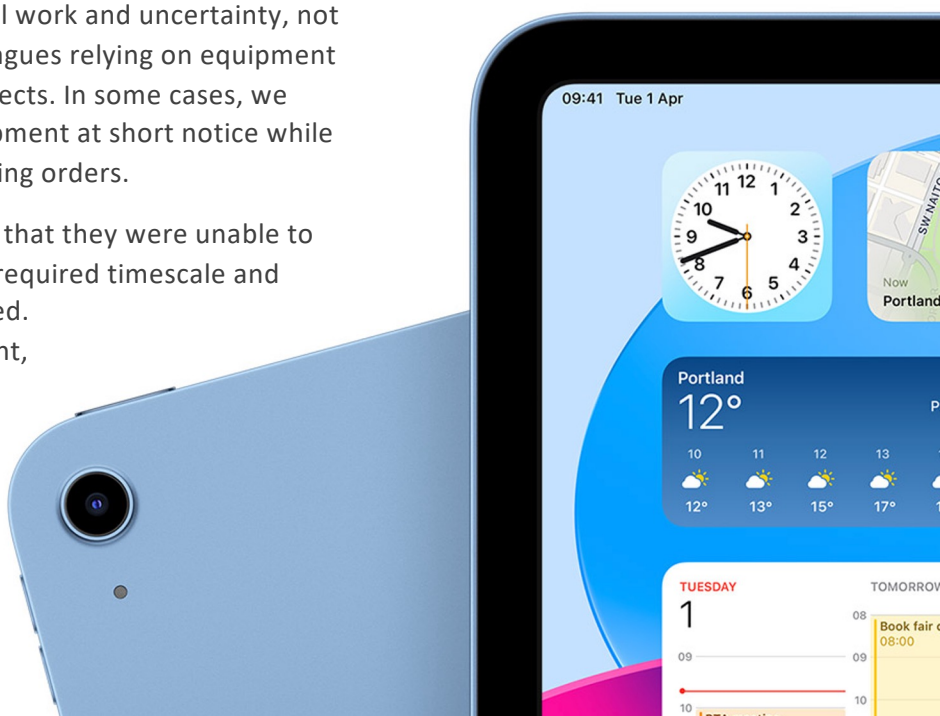
While this makes purchasing more complicated, it wasn't what made the end of this financial year particularly challenging.

Despite significant forward planning, we had placed a large number of orders well in advance, at agreed prices and for equipment shown as available. Unfortunately, the equipment simply didn't arrive. Despite regular communication with suppliers, by the beginning of July we still had more than £20,000 of outstanding orders that needed to be fulfilled before the end of the financial year.

This created considerable additional work and uncertainty, not only for the team but also for colleagues relying on equipment for new starters and upcoming projects. In some cases, we needed to provide temporary equipment at short notice while continuing to manage the outstanding orders.

By mid-July, the supplier confirmed that they were unable to fulfil most of the orders within the required timescale and that they would need to be cancelled. And we could reorder the equipment, but at newly increased prices and without guarantee of delivery.

With just two weeks remaining until the end of the financial year, this left us in a particularly difficult position.



A challenging end to the Financial Year...

How did you overcome the problem?

One thing we're really good at - and I guess it comes with working in IT - is having a backup plan. That doesn't just apply to outages and emergencies; it also means making sure we have options when it comes to suppliers, equipment, pricing and availability. We work with a considerable portfolio of suppliers, and building and maintaining those relationships takes time and effort. But in this instance, one of those relationships really paid off.

I've worked with Advania since 2016, before joining GLAM. While we've regularly used them for computer and AV peripherals such as webcams and headsets, we'd never previously used them to supply computers and laptops. Faced with our situation, they stepped in and were able to take on almost all of the outstanding orders at a reasonable price. Just as importantly, they provided transparent information about availability, regular updates on our orders and, whenever something became unavailable, quickly offered alternatives while remaining mindful of our rapidly approaching deadline.

For around three weeks, I was speaking with our Account Manager four or five times a day. The number of twists, turns and pivots needed to get everything over the line made it feel almost like a full-time job in itself! But, with incredible support from Angela and the team at Advania, we did it! It was a challenging few weeks, but also a great example of why maintaining strong supplier relationships – and always having a backup plan – really matters.

So, what next?

Working with suppliers is an ongoing process and having confidence in their ability to provide a reliable and efficient service, alongside transparent and honest communication, is critically important. While price will always be a consideration, sometimes the quality of that relationship and service is just as important - if not more so.

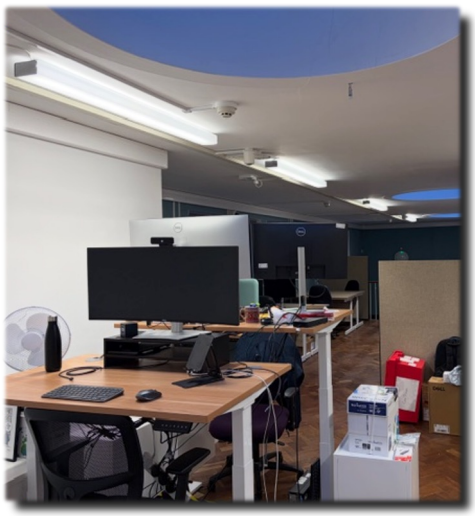
Advania were already one of our key suppliers, but the way they supported us during such a challenging period significantly strengthened our trust in them. Their responsive and service-focused approach aligns closely with the way we work and, importantly, adds value to the service we're able to provide.

So, what have we learned? We now have another trusted supplier who can support us in ways we weren't previously utilising. Those three weeks were incredibly challenging and required a significant amount of time and effort, but without that support the outcome could have been very different.

It also reinforces why talking to us when you need to purchase technical equipment can be really valuable. While defined purchasing routes exist across the University, having alternative options is extremely important. The relationships we've built with our preferred suppliers, alongside other University suppliers, give us greater choice when sourcing equipment - and, as this experience demonstrates, can make a considerable difference when things get tricky.

Ultimately, it's not simply about finding the best price. It's about having the right relationships, options and experience to find a solution when it matters!

We've moved! Settling into life on the Mezzanine...



Anyone who has recently come looking for us in the Cast Gallery Basement will have noticed that we're no longer there. Nothing nefarious has happened - we've simply moved. And when I say moved, we've gone not one, but two floors up!

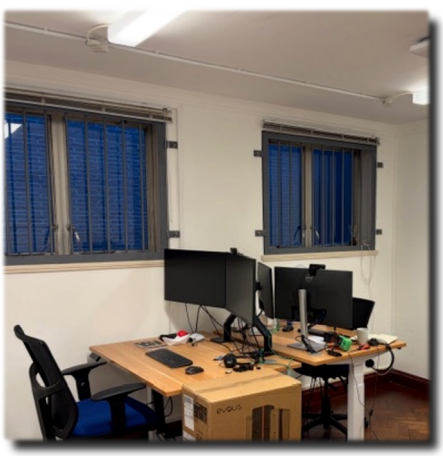
After a summer where our office regularly reached temperatures of over 30 degrees, we were offered the opportunity to relocate to the recently refurbished Cast Gallery Mezzanine. Suffice to say, we leapt at the chance to head upstairs.

You'll be pleased to know we've quickly adjusted to the change in altitude and, more importantly, we now have windows - and they open!

But all jokes aside, the move has made a massive difference to us. Being jam-packed in a small basement space, coping with the heat during the summer and limited daylight during winter has been especially challenging at points, so our new surroundings have given the whole team a real lift.

So, there are a few thank yous to make. I'm conscious that the opportunity arose as part of wider changes, but I'm incredibly grateful to those who considered our wellbeing and advocated for us. A big thank you to Rachel and Roger for making this possible, and to our ever-incredible Facilities Team - particularly the dynamic duo of Cat and Simon - for all their hard work getting us moved in. From relocating furniture and mounting screens to resolving some unexpected power socket adventures (sorry again, Simon!), their help has been invaluable.

I'd also like to thank my team, for their speedy and efficient response to the change in what was quite a short timeframe, but also for doing this alongside managing and maintaining the continued support demand and progression of the various projects which are in-flight.



It would have been nice to take a moment to pause and focus on the move, but in our profession that's never really a reality! But as it stands, we're still settling in and working out how best to use the space, and how to make it feel a little more homely. With our respective holidays and time away, we haven't yet had much time with everyone together to establish the right balance and layout, but we're getting there.

In the meantime, if you'd like to say hello, check out our new digs, or need some face-to-face IT help, please pop up and see us on the Cast Gallery Mezzanine. And I'm not sure I'll ever get tired of saying "pop up" instead of "pop down"!

GMIT Open Sessions – Autumn 2026

The Gardens & Museums IT Open Sessions for the Autumn months have been arranged with the details available below.

So, if you're new to the Gardens & Museums and would like to meet us, or have an IT, Audio Visual or Information Security question or matter to discuss then please do come along.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Date	Location	Time
Monday 5th October	Seminar Room Pitt Rivers Museum	11.15AM – 12.45PM
Wednesday 4th November	Headley Lecture Theatre Ashmolean Museum	2.00PM – 3.30PM
Wednesday 9th December	Seminar Room Pitt Rivers Museum	11.15AM – 12.45PM

The sessions will offer an opportunity….

- **To meet us face-to-face in an open forum to discuss any matter.**
- **To discuss or get advice on any IT issues or problems which you may have, whether big or small.**
- **To discuss any upcoming projects or innovations within your respective departments and location.**
- **For new members of staff to meet with us and receive an overview of IT within the University and the Gardens & Museums.**

Cyber Security - Autumn Update

Information and Cyber Security continues to be a key topic across both the University and the wider IT industry. As this has become a regular feature in the newsletter, we've brought together a few of the latest updates and reminders below to help keep everyone informed.

Information Security & Data Privacy Awareness Training

First of all, a big thank you and well done to everyone who has already taken the time to complete the training. A recent update on progress showed an excellent completion rate across GLAM, which is great to see.

For anyone who hasn't yet completed the training, please keep an eye out for any reminders you receive and try to complete it as soon as you can.

It's worth remembering that the training is mandatory and needs to be completed within the required timeframe. And if it remains outstanding, access to your University email may be suspended. Aside from being inconvenient, this could have a significant impact on your ability to work, so we'd really like to help everyone avoid reaching that point.

So, if you receive a reminder that your training is due, please take a little time to complete it as soon as possible. The training and further information can be found here:
https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/digital/cybersecurity

SMS and Voice Authentication being retired by Microsoft

For some time, we've been recommending the use of an Authenticator app or USB security key in preference to other multi-factor authentication (MFA) options, such as SMS and voice calls.

And although the University hasn't yet made any University-wide changes to the MFA methods that can be used, new University members have only been able to use an Authenticator app or USB security key since October 2025. We're now expecting a wider move towards these more secure authentication methods in the future as Microsoft is also changing its approach to authentication.

They will shortly be retiring the use of SMS and voice authentication and using passkeys as the preferred method. Passkeys can be set up using Authenticator apps, USB security keys and compatible password management software.

The University is currently discussing these changes with Microsoft and considering how best to introduce them across the University. And once the plans and timescales have been confirmed they will be communicated.

However, if you'd like to get ahead of the changes and improve the security of your MFA at the same time, please feel free to get in touch with us at it@museums.ox.ac.uk . We'll be happy to talk you through the options and help you get set up.

Cyber Security - Autumn Update

Patching & Vulnerabilities...

You may have noticed an increase in messages asking you to update applications, update your computer or restart it. We appreciate that these requests can be frustrating and disruptive. Unfortunately, they're a necessary response to the increasing cyber security risks we face, alongside University and industry requirements to address security vulnerabilities within defined timeframes.

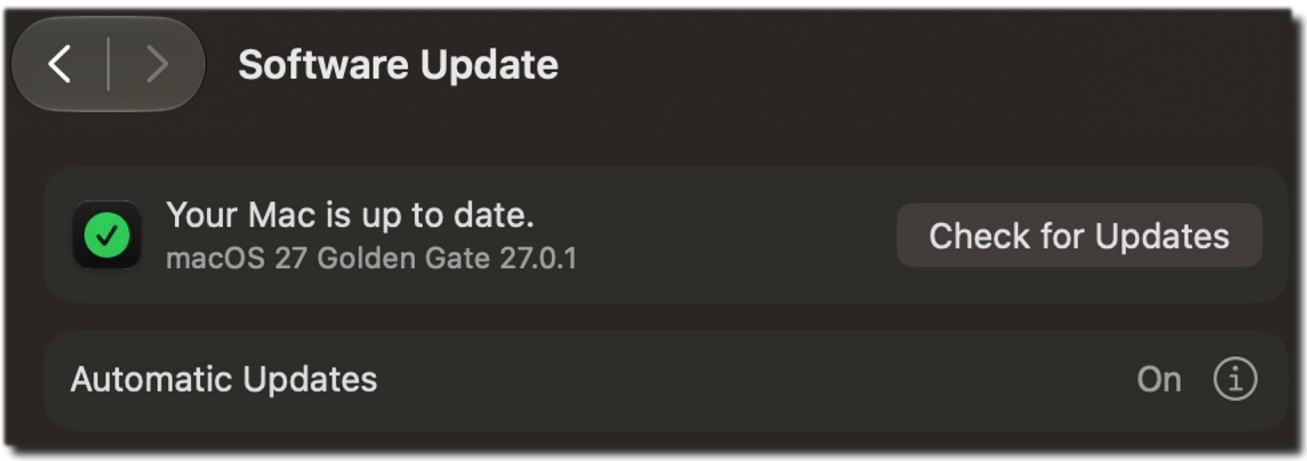
To help us manage this more effectively, we'll soon be introducing a stricter update schedule for computers and devices which we directly manage (Apple MacOS, Apple iPadOS and Microsoft Intune - this does not currently include CONNECT computers).

What does this mean for you? Well, when an update becomes available, you'll have 7 days to install it, with reminders during this period. If it hasn't been completed after 7 days, the update will be applied automatically and, where required, your device may restart.

We appreciate this has the potential to cause some disruption, but keeping computers up to date is an important part of protecting both you and the University from cyber security threats.

To minimise disruption, please install updates when prompted and restart your computer at least once a week. Doing so will give you greater control over when updates take place and help avoid automatic restarts at inconvenient times.

We really appreciate your understanding and for helping us keep our systems secure!



Service & Support Statistics – 1st May to 31st July 2026

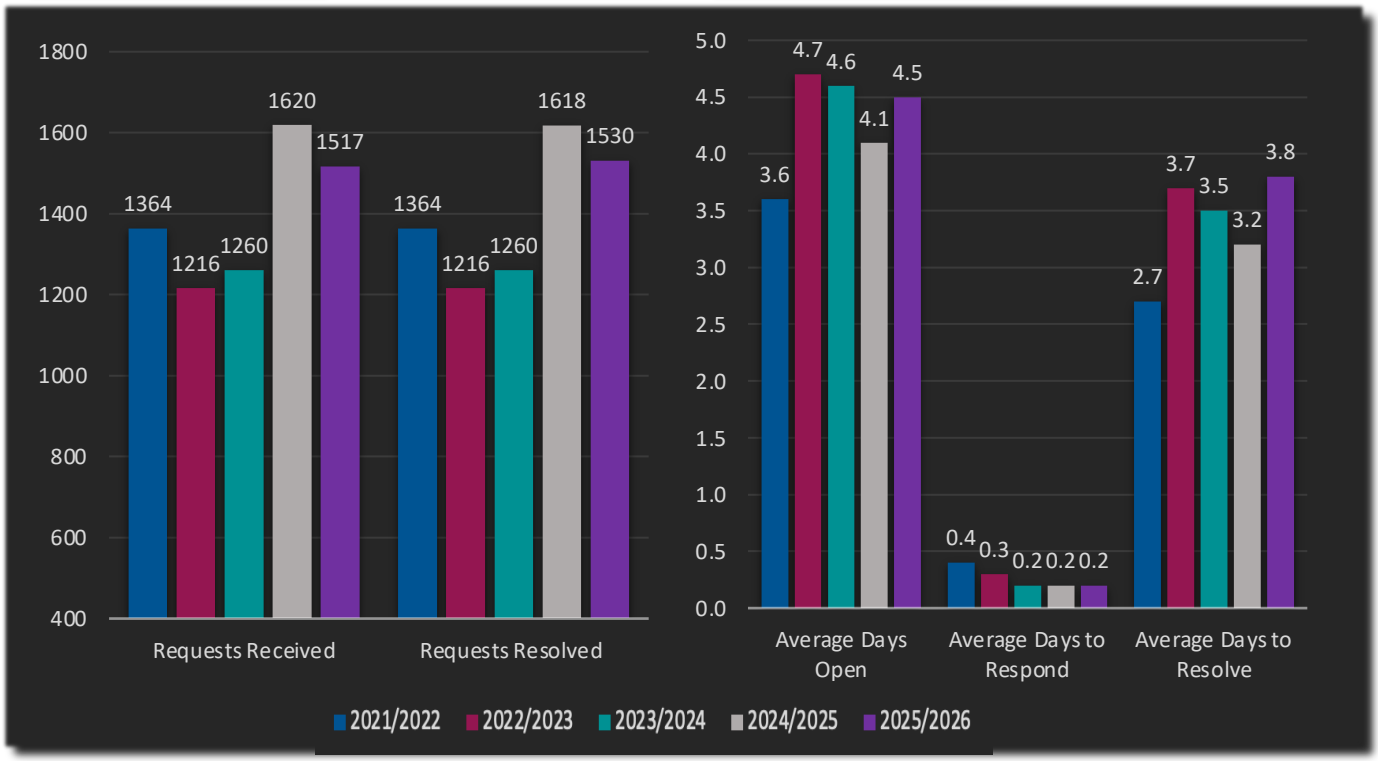
Quarter 4 of the 2025/26 University Academic Year has been another busy period for the Gardens & Museums IT Team. While request volumes were lower than Q4 of 2024/25, they remain significantly higher than the equivalent periods in 2022/23 and 2023/24. The quarter also saw an increase in Information Assurance and Cyber Security activity, including support for two Major Incidents, a potential data breach, and a rise in device vulnerabilities.

Requests Received
1517

Requests Resolved
1530

Avg. Days to Respond
0.2

Avg. Days to Resolve
3.8



Location	Requests	Percentage
Ashmolean Museum	491	32%
Museum of Natural History	155	10%
Pitt Rivers Museum	126	8%
History of Science Museum	50	3%
Botanic Gardens & Arboretum	64	4%
GLAM Divisional Office	82	6%
Bodleian Libraries	39	3%
GLAM Stores	14	1%
All sites - requests and activities which benefit or impact all locations	496	33%

Full Service Reports are available on the Gardens & Museums IT Website: https://it.museums.ox.ac.uk/article/service-reports

Annual Service & Support Statistics – 1st August 2025 to 31st July 2026

The 2025/26 University year continued much as 2024/25 ended. While the previous year was expected to be exceptionally busy due to the implementation of the Single Point of Contact, Cyber Security improvements, and the CONNECT Aged Computer Replacement Project it was anticipated that 2025/26 would be a more stable year. Despite this, support demand remained at the same level as the previous year. What was initially considered an exceptional increase has now become the new baseline, reflecting the sustained demand placed on the team.

Support Requests Received
5409

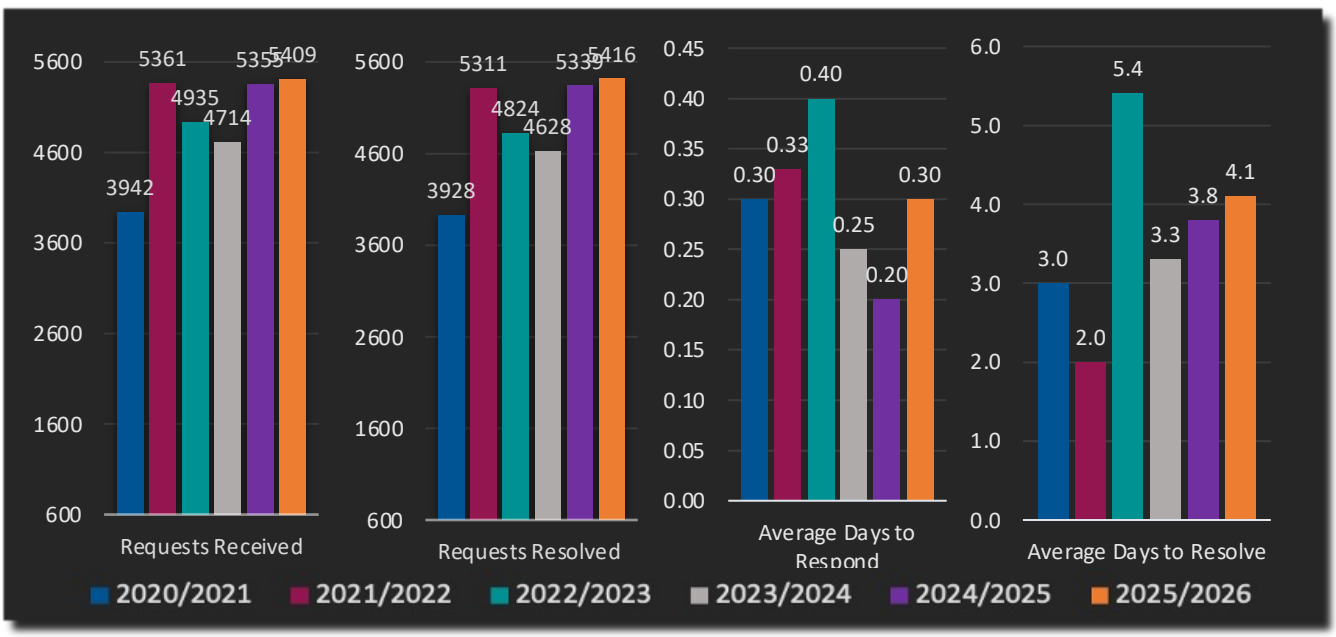
Support Requests Resolved
5416

% Increase compared to 2022/23
1%

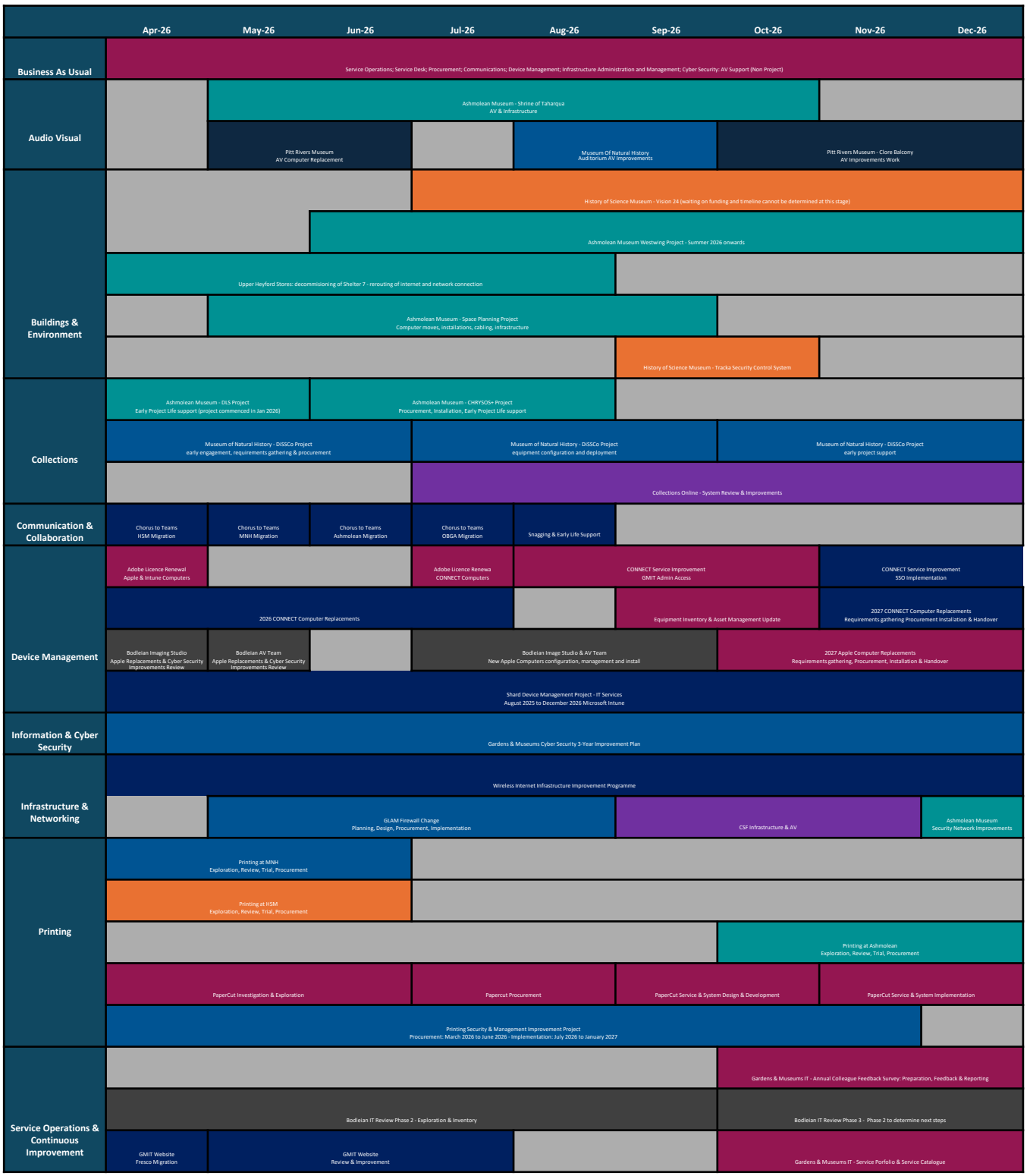
Average Days to Respond
0.3

Average Days to Resolve
4.1

% First Call Resolution
55%



Location	2025/26
Ashmolean Museum	1993
Museum of Natural History	574
Pitt Rivers Museum	553
History of Science Museum	281
Botanic Garden & Arboretum	312
GLAM Divisional Office	328
Bodleian Libraries	121
GLAM Stores	52
All Sites (items which impact all such as Monitoring, GMIT & GMIT Project)	1195

Full Service Reports are available on the Gardens & Museums IT Website: https://it.museums.ox.ac.uk/article/service-reports

2026 Gardens & Museums IT Roadmap