



# Association of Independent Museums

Helping Heritage Organisations Prosper

[www.aim-museums.co.uk](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk) OCTOBER 2020

## Coming back stronger? Museums start to reopen



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## Comment

### Restrictions open up digital solutions.

The National Mining Museum Scotland closed its doors on Friday 13th March just before the national lockdown. Following five months of intense work, we opened to the public on Thursday 20th August. Our reopening plan outlined the measures in place to ensure the safety of our staff, visitors and the museum estate. The plan also highlighted the need to adapt the museum's main visitor offer and adopt an online booking system to reduce the risk of prolonged contact between staff and customers. Historically, one of the features of the museum's visitor offer was the guided tours led by retired miners. Unfortunately, the sector reopening guidance signalled that this offer should be adapted and an alternative provision put in place. Additionally, in terms of managing our admissions, we were keen to utilise an online booking system that would be attractive to our visitors and sympathetic to our needs.

From an organisational point of view, the reopening requirements were pushing the museum to become more digitally literate. Not a complete leap of faith as we were assured that these changes would allow us to improve our overall visitor engagement and operate within the ongoing restrictions.

Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we developed a new digital tour that would be self-led and could be picked up on our visitor's phones through a QR code. The content of the tour was lifted from old audio handsets, previously used in the museum, and updated with a new narrative and visitor route. The digital tour also included a link to our visitor survey requesting feedback on their experience.

We are pleased to say that the feedback we have received has been positive which has given us confidence to do more. Within our existing agreement, we have the capacity to add another digital tour and are now developing proposals for tours that explore aspects of the museum's estate that are currently not open to the public. We hope this will widen the visitor offer, which will in turn, attract more visits to the museum. In the meantime, our tour guides are using socially distanced stations on site, to allow for public interaction to and answer visitors' questions.

Our online booking system has also worked well for us. We decided to opt for the ArtFund system, which permitted us to have a clear plan for visitor capacity on a daily basis, have access to customer details for track and trace purposes and create a robust visitor record. We will continue to use this system and are currently exploring ways to use this technology more efficiently to help us understand and present visitor data.

Overall, we recognise that we are on a new digital journey that we hope will augment and expand our visitor offer, develop our audiences, and give us better understanding of our visitor profile.

Mhairi Cross  
Chief Executive  
National Mining Museum Scotland



***With thanks to support from Art Fund, AIM is now planning the next phase of Hallmarks at Home from October 2020 – March 2021.***

## Hallmarks at Home – the next phase of events

**T**he Hallmarks at Home webinar series was launched in response to the challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic and UK lockdown. The series, built on our well-established AIM Hallmarks programme, provides you with the opportunity to explore the areas of museum practice you've told us are most critical to you at the moment.

Through regular online workshops developed and lead by AIM's experienced consultants, and kept small to encourage discussion, Hallmarks at Home offers you a great chance to network, learn and be inspired.

### Focus group

We'd really appreciate your input into the Hallmarks at Home programme, whether

you've participated in a webinar previously or not. We want to ensure the programme meets the needs of our members so will be hosting an online focus group on 12 October. If you'd be interested in taking part in this focus group, please let us know on [info@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:info@aim-museums.co.uk) and we'll share further details.

### Forthcoming events

- 21 and 28 October – The Reluctant Entrepreneur
- 4 November – Understanding your Audiences

To find out more and to book visit [www.aim-museums.co.uk/dates-for-your-diary](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/dates-for-your-diary)

## Front cover

The Cromwell Museum tells the story of 17th century soldier and statesman Oliver Cromwell and the tumultuous times through which he lived. Located in the heart of the Cambridgeshire market town of Huntingdon, it is housed in a 12th century building which was the town's grammar school, attended both by Cromwell (who was born just a few doors up the street) and Samuel Pepys. Read the profile on page 19.

Photo by Simon Hill of JANVS VIDAR, the team commissioned to work on a recent design and fit project at the museum and an AIM Supplier member.



## Business rates

# 2020: A year of constant change for Business Rates, explains Colin Hunter of Lambert Smith Hampton

In January, the long-awaited decision of the Upper Tribunal in respect of Royal Albert Memorial Museum (Stephen G Hughes (VO) v Exeter City Council) was given (the Exeter decision). A victory for the ratepayers, and some would say for common sense, the decision confirmed a Rateable Value of £1 for Royal Albert Memorial Museum and fully upheld the 2017 decision for appeals in respect of properties occupied by York Museums and Gallery Trust.

In February, the Valuation Officer sought permission to appeal against the Upper Tribunal's decision and a Bill to confirm the 2021 Revaluation was set before Parliament (again). That Bill has been allowed to fall away, with an announcement that the next Revaluation has been put back to 2023.

In March, the Budget included a 50% rates relief for 2020/21 for Retail and expanded the scheme to include museums and other leisure and hospitality properties with a Rateable Value of less than £51,000. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, that allowance was soon increased to 100% with no upper limit on the size of Rateable Value. Grants were announced for properties within the rates relief scheme (capped at Rateable Value of £51,000). The scheme was later extended to include discretionary grants, benefiting some museums not previously covered.

In June, the Court of Appeal dismissed the Valuation Officer's attempt to appeal the Exeter decision.

In July, the Valuation Office issued revised guidance to its staff for the valuation of

museums. This new guidance takes on board some of the findings of the Upper Tribunal decisions but still leaves open the question of how to value modern purpose-built museums and galleries. As they were not consulted on this guidance, AIM and other sector bodies have approached the Valuation Office and continue to seek the opportunity to discuss the best way forward.

The backlog of over 230 appeals for the 2010 List in England and Wales should be cleared by the end of this financial year and appeals in process for the 2017 Rating List should start to be discussed, if not agreed. Based on the decision published in January, there should be some significant reductions in Rateable Values resulting in refunds from the 2010 appeals going back at least five years.

So, as we slowly come out of lockdown and start to return to some semblance of normality, it is time to start looking forward again. The 2017 Rating List expected to end on 1 April next year will now run for another two years. The Valuation Office will not be reactively reducing Rateable Values for museums, so now is the time to think again about whether or not the assessment for your museum is right and whether there are savings to be made in this fixed and unavoidable cost, and perhaps even get some refunds back-dated to 1 April 2017.

Colin has updated AIM's Success Guide on business rates to reflect the changes from the last few months.

Read the latest Success Guide at [www.aim-museums.co.uk/resources](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/resources)

## Free Consultation

As ever, it is advisable to take professional advice before embarking on any appeals not least as the Rateable Value can be increased if it has been under-assessed. If you are interested in finding out more, Colin Hunter of Lambert Smith Hampton has agreed to provide AIM members with a minimum of 15 minutes free consultation. You can contact Colin on 0113 245 9393 or [chunter@lsh.co.uk](mailto:chunter@lsh.co.uk).

## In brief

### International Institute for Conservation's Edinburgh Congress

The International Institute for Conservation's 28th biennial IIC Edinburgh Congress – Online, takes place between 2-6 November 2020. The topic 'Practices and Challenges in Built Heritage Conservation' bridges the gap between collections and the heritage buildings where they are often housed. A variety of grants and bursaries are available to help conservators attend at no cost, whatever their circumstances: the Anna Plowden Trust Grants and Tru Vue Grants are especially relevant to conservators and heritage scientists based in the UK.

[www.iiconservation.org/congress/Edinburgh/Grants%20and%20Bursaries](http://www.iiconservation.org/congress/Edinburgh/Grants%20and%20Bursaries)

### The Welsh Museums Festival will return this year!

Running from 25 October – 1 November 2020, this year the Welsh Museums Festival will include both on-site and online activities so all museums in Wales, whether they are open to the public or not, will be able to take part. The Federation will have grants available for events and activities. For more information visit [www.welshmuseumsfederation.org](http://www.welshmuseumsfederation.org)

### Downloadable posters available to support NHS Test and Trace

Do you need to explain to visitors why you are collecting their details? Museums can download a range of posters to inform visitors about the NHS Test and Trace scheme. These might be useful to display at the point that contact information is collected, or on websites or social media alongside information about what visitors can expect when visiting your museum.

Download the posters from the AIM reopening guidance pages at [www.aim-museums.co.uk/museum-reopening-guidance-checklist](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/museum-reopening-guidance-checklist)





# AIM Biffa Award History Makers

**T**he AIM Biffa Award History Makers Scheme gives grants to museums, galleries and cultural facilities so that they can tell the stories of some of our lesser known historical figures.

Here we take a look at the exhibitions that have opened this year; the latest round of museums to receive funding, plus news on how you can make an application to AIM Biffa Award to tell the story of your own History Maker.

## Round 5 now open for expressions of interest

AIM Biffa Award have launched the latest round of History Makers grants and are inviting expressions of interest from projects that use the life and achievements of extraordinary historical figures to inspire and educate your visitors and users today.

Your History Maker may not be a well-known public figure, but most importantly their life and/or work will have helped shape the world we live in today.

People are making history all the time, so we are also happy to receive expressions of interest for history makers from any period, including more recent history.

We are particularly keen to hear from projects based on women who made history and history makers from diverse backgrounds.

We're also delighted to thank Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers for their third party contribution to this round.

You can find more details about the History Makers grant, the application process and eligibility criteria on the AIM website [www.aim-museums.co.uk/for-aim-members/grants](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/for-aim-members/grants)

If you have a possible History Maker in mind but are not sure if they fit the bill, please contact Justeen Stone, AIM Programme and Finance Officer for advice on [justeen@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:justeen@aim-museums.co.uk) or complete an Expression of Interest form and we will get back to you.

Expressions of interest are being received now with full applications to open in November. The closing date for applications is 28 February 2021 with the successful projects notified in June 2021.



## The latest exhibition openings

### Cromwell Uncovered

The Cromwell Museum in Huntington opened in March after a major refurbishment, just a few weeks before lockdown. The History Makers project funded this refurbishment of the small museum's main gallery space to tell the story of the controversial 17th century soldier and statesman Oliver Cromwell 'Warts and All', engaging more and a wider range of visitors whilst showcasing our internationally important collection more effectively.

Says Stuart Orme, Curator at The Cromwell Museum; "This project has been a major piece of work for a small museum like ourselves, but has been hugely enjoyable, rewarding and transformative experience for us. It has brought the Cromwell Museum into the 21st century to more effectively bring the story of Oliver Cromwell and the 17th century to life for our visitors. We're hugely grateful to the 'History Makers' scheme for enabling that to happen."



The Cromwell Museum.

### History Makers on Strike

People's History Museum in Manchester has introduced two new immersive experiences in the main galleries to tell the stories of The Match Girls Strike of 1888 and Grunwick Strike 1976. Both tell of workers uniting and standing up for their rights, and both were led by women; Annie Besant and Jayaben Desai.

Visitors learn about the conditions in the Bryant and May match factory through an arcade style game where players' progress is hampered by unfair fines and sickness. The events of the Grunwick Strike, which unlike previous disputes involving black and Asian workers received trade union support and that of thousands of workers from around the country, are the focus of a new app. Visitors can explore 3D digital scans of objects from PHM's collection using augmented reality and meet those involved, including Jayaben Desai.



Annie Besant and Jayaben Desai, History Makers at People's History Museum.

Katy Ashton, Director of People's History Museum, says, "Our 10th birthday gives us the opportunity to reflect upon the important role that we play as the national museum of democracy. No other museum tells the stories that we do in the way that we do. We are incredibly proud to have been able to raise the profile of Annie Besant and Jayaben Desai, with support from AIM Biffa Award History Makers. We are driven to keep pushing boundaries and a desire to inspire more people with our work and to work with partners and communities to share ideas worth fighting for."

### National Coal Mining Museum comes out of lockdown with a new permanent exhibition 'A Light in the Darkness'

Visitors to the newly re-opened National Coal Mining Museum have been illuminated by a brand-new permanent exhibition called 'A Light in the Darkness' which reveals the history of the Miners' Lamp. The lamp has been credited with saving countless lives, so much so that it has become an icon of the mining industry. The museum has spent a year exploring and interpreting the life of Sir Humphry Davy, widely credited with the invention of a safe lamp for miners to use underground.

Stephanie Thompson, Collections Manager said "It's really exciting to see this exhibition completed, it looks fantastic and tells the story of Sir Humphry Davy and his safe lamp in a really accessible way. The Museum's collection of flame-safety lamps looks stunning in their new setting."

Read more about the Round 3 History Makers exhibitions on the AIM website <https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/case-studies/> and look out for news of the History Makers exhibitions from Port Sunlight and Chatsworth coming soon.

## Meet the latest AIM Biffa Award History Makers

AIM is pleased to announce the latest round of grants awarded by the AIM Biffa Award History Makers programme. Work is already underway on these exciting new exhibitions, telling the stories of remarkable people from all walks of life spanning more than 350 years of history.

Round 4 applications were made in Autumn 2019 with the successful projects notified in Spring 2020. As the museum sector begins to reopen post-Covid-19, it is expected that the new History Makers exhibitions will open in early 2021.

### Football's first female superstar

Opening in Spring 2021, the National Football Museum in Manchester will tell the story of Lily Parr, football's first female superstar. Starting



Lily Parr statue at National Football Museum.

her career at hometown team St Helens Ladies, Parr moved on to Dick, Kerr Ladies FC and later Preston Ladies. Operating as an outside left winger, it's believed she scored more than 980 goals in a 32-year career.

Read more about this project here: <https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/lily-parr-trailblazing-history-maker/>

### When Arkwright met Strutt, a cotton spinning legacy

The Arkwright Society at Cromford Mills will explore the story of Jedediah Strutt and Sir Richard Arkwright, who between them built the first cotton mill at Cromford, creating the modern factory system and marking the start of the Industrial Revolution.

### John Milton – History Maker

From August 2021, visitors to Milton's Cottage will be able to take an augmented reality (AR) journey through John Milton's only surviving residence. Imagine being surrounded by a world of demons, talking snakes and other characters from *Paradise Lost*, which he completed at Milton's Cottage. Or seeing the ghost of the blind poet himself describing his perilous journey to escape the Great Plague and completing his greatest poem. AR interaction will enable a new generation to discover the impact of Milton's writing on our politics, society, literature and even the language we speak.

### Revealing Gilbert White

The team at Gilbert White's House in Hampshire will work with young people to re-design the Gilbert White displays that promote and explain Gilbert's significant contribution to our understanding of the environment and climate change. Involving young people in the decision-making process will inspire them to make their own journeys of discovery in the natural world, observing, recording or campaigning for nature, just like Gilbert himself.

### At Home with the Pankhurst Family

The exhibition will open at the Pankhurst Centre in Manchester in 2021, with more details set to be revealed later this year.

## The National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) and the Mary Rose (MR) collaborate to deliver a new offer for Portsmouth Historic Dockyard visitors

Both organisations chose to close their attractions in March 2020, responding to the escalating Coronavirus crisis. Since then, both have been clear about the devastating impact the loss of admissions has had on their financial position, with NMRN recently confirming emergency funding from the Treasury to help fill its £6 million funding gap and MR fronting a high profile fundraising appeal for Independent Museums, in an attempt to recover its £2.2 million losses.

When the dockyard reopens it will be with both organisations working together. A range of new tickets will be available, a new look brand will be launched and both organisations will work in unison to offer a simplified and safe day out for the residents, and visitors of Portsmouth.

Director General of the National Museum of the Royal Navy, Dominic Tweddle says

"Portsmouth Historic Dockyard has changed its offer a number of times over the years, and indeed the Mary Rose Museum has been part of a joint ticket in the past. What is important is that we want to leave our visitors with extraordinary experiences and lasting memories and that means that we are always reviewing what we have to offer and seeing if we can improve it".

Chief Executive of the Mary Rose, Helen Bonser-Wilton

"For both organisations this is about more than joint ticketing, this is a shared collaborative approach which spans both businesses and enables us to work together to operate, market and improve the dockyard. Our aim is to encourage more people to visit the Dockyard, to visit Portsmouth and to enjoy the incredible naval and maritime history we share".

Visitors can purchase the new 'Ultimate Experience' ticket meaning that they are able to include a visit to the Mary Rose alongside all of the other attractions, including HMS Victory and HMS Warrior, as many times

as they want for a year. Tickets are on sale via the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard website.

Entrance to the Dockyard has been simplified with one entry point to the site, providing a more streamlined experience for the visitor and helping to manage the social distancing requirements that will need to be in place for the site to reopen. Both organisations have worked closely together to ensure that all the recommended safety measures are in place and have gained accreditation with Visit Britain's 'Good to Go' COVID-19 scheme.



Helen Bonser-Wilton, Chief Executive of The Mary Rose, and Dominic Tweddle, Director General of the National Museum of the Royal Navy.

**AIM is taking a new, proactive approach to address its responsibilities in tackling the inequalities that persist within its own organisation and across the wider independent museum sector.**

# Tackling racism, tackling inequalities – AIM launches Inequalities Response and Action Plan

## Black Lives Matter

Prompted by the Black Lives Matter protests that followed the killing of George Floyd and the sector statement of intent it and others within the sector signed on tackling racism, AIM is launching a range of initiatives to strengthen its approach to being anti-racist and to further support members in addressing the inequalities outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

### We commit to proactively support:

- representing our members across the heritage sector, acknowledging that our nation's history and heritage is an invaluable tool in the fight against racism and discrimination
- anti-discrimination debate and discussion in the care of and access to heritage collections
- seeking, and taking care of the needs of a diverse heritage workforce
- members to develop diverse collections
- asking questions and challenging practices that support racism in all of its forms
- that now is the time to be anti-racist
- doing the work involved to end discrimination here and now

Read the full sector statement at [www.aim-museums.co.uk/heritage-sector-organisations-issue-joint-statement-intent](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/heritage-sector-organisations-issue-joint-statement-intent)

AIM Director, Emma Chaplin

"AIM has looked to deliver projects to address issues of racism and wider inequalities found in the museum sector for some time but, to be truthful, that work has had little impact. We led a sector wide initiative to develop the 'Open Up: museums for everyone' resources in 2017 aimed at diversifying museum visitors but, to date, this approach has not led to widespread organisational change in museums.

This new work will lead us to challenge ourselves to understand why change has not happened and support our members to do the same. As an Arts Council England funded Sector Support Organisation we are mindful of our role to promote inclusion and equity in our own work and within our member organisations.

We also recognise that inequalities can be complex; overlapping disadvantage or discrimination calls for an inclusive, intersectional approach to make and meaningful impact. So as

we look to turn words into action we have a phased approach underpinned by a number of guiding principles.

Alongside the valuable input we have had from a number of sector organisations we welcome opening this important discussion with our members."

## Guiding Principles

- AIM's work must be informed by a wider range of voices and perspectives from diverse backgrounds at Board level, in the staff team, and through the grant panels and contractors we work with. New voices will provide us with strategic challenge, informed advice, and a change in how we work and how we view the world that we work in.
- We must challenge and support AIM members to be inclusive, understand where inequalities occur and proactively address them in all aspects of their work – from Boards and staff and volunteers to the collections they care for; the stories they tell, the partners they work with and the visitors they attract.
- AIM will seek to understand and provide the support and advocacy required by museum and heritage organisations that care for the collections and represent the narratives of those that have historically been excluded or marginalised in existing museums or their collections.

## Action Plan

**Phase 1 – We need to make internal change to ensure that further change will be effective.**

1. **Board recruitment.** At its meeting on 22nd July 2020 the AIM Board committed to proactively seeking new Board members who can bring diverse perspectives to inform strategic decision making. We commit to ensuring that at least three of our new Board members will widen the range of protected characteristics represented on the AIM Board. Recruitment will start in September 2020 and be completed by early 2021.
2. **New AIM Hallmark: Tackling Inequality.** The AIM Hallmarks of Prospering Museums [www.aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/aim-hallmarks/](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/aim-hallmarks/) will be expanded to include a Tackling Inequality Hallmark to emphasise that museums have a responsibility to review their own practices and be proactive in their engagement with collections and visitors. This will be launched at the beginning of October 2020.

3. **AIM Hallmark Grants 2020.** The 2020 grant round for this £60k fund will invite applications that support the aims of the new Tackling Inequality Hallmark. Projects could include, for example, work to review internal cultures (e.g. work with the Board, recruitment, creating a supportive environment for BAME staff and volunteers); addressing the need to decolonise collections or displays; developing new education resources. Applications will open in mid-October 2020, closing 31st January 2021. Awards will be made in March 2021.

**Phase 2 – To start once new Board members have been recruited and have had the opportunity to contribute to and develop the next phase of work.**

4. **Commission an internal diversity audit** of AIM's ways of working, policies, plans and programmes.
5. **Grant panels and contractors.** We will review and put out open calls for panel membership and recruitment of contractors to ensure a wider range of voices and perspectives are supporting AIM's work programmes by January 2021.
6. Trustees, staff, and new and renewing members of AIM will be asked to sign up to a new **AIM Values Statement**, which will include a commitment to tackling inequality.
7. We will expect recipients of **AIM grants** to demonstrate alignment with AIM's Values Statement and a commitment to tackling inequality.

**Phase 3 – To be informed by work at Phase 2 and following discussion by the AIM Board. Current plans include:**

8. We are currently working through the Development Phase of our National Lottery Heritage Fund **'New stories new audiences'** grant programme. If the Delivery Phase application is successful, from mid 2021 this new grant programme will further challenge and support smaller museums in AIM's membership to use and develop their heritage and collections to tell new stories, work with new groups to attract new visitors and develop new partnerships to address historic inequalities.

AIM extends its warm thanks to the sector organisations that have contributed to the development of this plan and are committed to its success. For more information on this work contact us on [info@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:info@aim-museums.co.uk)



**In Reni Eddo Lodge's bestseller *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* Bridport is referred to as a minor slave port, prompting the Bridport Museum team to find out more. Director Emily Hicks tells us more.**

## Black Lives Matter and Bridport Museum

**W**e were contacted by several people on social media during the BLM protests: does Bridport really have links to slavery? They had read Reni Eddo Lodge's bestseller *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* which refers to Bridport as a minor slave port – and wanted to know more. We are very lucky to have a historian as our Chair of Trustees. As there has been very little research on Dorset's involvement with the slave trade and that history's effect on continuing racism within local towns and villages, Professor Karen Hunt set about unearthing evidence to support Lodge's claim.

She produced a fascinating piece of research in the process which you can read in full at <https://www.bridportmuseum.co.uk/news/view/?v=bridport-and-slavery>.

Although she could find no evidence for the town being a slave port, that did not mean that Bridport people were not implicated in the triangular trade. Local people directly and indirectly benefited from slavery, while others took a stand against the trade in human beings. Professor Hunt discovered that Frederick Douglass, former slave and one of the most famous abolitionists, spoke to a large audience in Bridport in 1886. At the same time, one of the most popular forms of entertainment was 'black-face' minstrelsy. The town even had its own troupe. Karen concluded:

*Whether or not Bridport was a slave port, what is clear is how little we know about the history of this particular town's relationship to slavery, to black (and indeed other BAME) people or to racism. Our town's story contains both slavery and anti-slavery with evidence of both racist and anti-racist behaviours as part of everyday life. This may not be unusual, but the particular names, events and stories will necessarily be peculiar to this place. It is up to us to carefully explore the historical evidence, too often hidden in plain sight. Understanding our past might even help us in our efforts to become a Rights Respecting Town.*

The article was written to show why BLM was relevant to a small industrial town in West Dorset, with a largely white population. It generated a lot of interest on social media, and Karen has since been assisting other researchers looking into different angles across Dorset.

Like many museums, we put out a statement in support of #BLM.

The statement refers to our project, 'The Right Stuff'. We are now one year into this three-year Esmée Fairbairn/Museums Association funded project: a community engaged collections review.

A fundamental part of our overall strategy involves working with diverse members of



Bridport Museum – to date there has been very little research on Dorset's involvement with the slave trade.

our community to establish what to 'chuck', and what to 'cherish' in our collections. It also goes beyond that to unearth the gaps in our collections: what is missing? What stories and what voices have not yet been heard? So, for us, #BLM sits within this wider remit. It also has great synergy with Bridport's ambition to be a Rights Respecting Town. Our collections review directly supports this ambition, as it seeks to give everyone in the town a voice and promote equality.

### What next?

Karen's research has highlighted some challenges for us. The first is a well-known problem. How do we tease out the hidden histories in our collections? So many histories – whether women's, BAME or other under-represented groups – are marked by absence: where is that evidence? And then how do we access it?

One important aspect of the Bridport and Slavery article was that Karen showed how she had conducted her research, as well as providing links so that people could follow up their interest through online resources.

The question for us all is, how can we as museums support and enable more people to be able to undertake their own research and contribute to the wider national story in thorough and meaningful ways?

## Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust is pleased to announce the appointment of Richard Morsley as its new Chief Executive.

Richard succeeds Bill Ferris OBE DL, who has held the position since 2000 and was also previously AIM Chair.

The result of a comprehensive interview process, Richard has worked for the Trust since September 2019 most recently holding the position of Special Projects Manager and Assistant Chief Executive. Prior to this he was Director at Betteshanger Parks. He also held the positions of Deputy Director at Turner Contemporary and is a Trustee of Open School East, Margate.

Richard said: "I am delighted and feel incredibly privileged to have been selected to take forward the ambitions of the Trust. Navigating the last four months of the unplanned COVID-19 crisis has been difficult and managing the long-term future of the Trust and The Historic Dockyard into a somewhat uncharted future will certainly be demanding. I look forward to working with the Board of Trustees, our highly committed, professional team and our dedicated volunteers as we approach the future with confidence."



Admiral Sir Trevor Soar, Chairman, Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, said:

"We very much look forward to working with Richard. We believe that he has exactly the right set of skills to see the Trust and The Historic Dockyard through the next stage of its journey as an exemplar of well managed heritage which lies at the heart of the place and the community as well as a significant economic powerhouse for the recovery phase ahead. Richard will bring energy, new thinking and experience to lead the team through the challenges and potential opportunities ahead."

Sir Trevor continued: "I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Bill for his long service to the Trust. Bill has achieved much during his career and helped build the multi-award winning Trust we are so proud of today. We wish him well in his retirement."

After nineteen years at the helm, Bill Ferris retired on 31 August and Richard Morsley took up the position on 1 September.

# Reopening success for independent museums

**C**ovid-19 has been a challenge like no other for museums and for many recovery remains uncertain, with significant financial challenges, higher costs and reduced visitor numbers and income meaning some may not be able to reopen until 2021.

Yet independent museums pride themselves on their resilience, their entrepreneurial skills, their ability to both grasp opportunities and flex to meet challenges. And this has been clearly demonstrated as the sector slowly reopens and welcomes back visitors, with some museums already seeing a glimmer of success post-lockdown.

It seems that as well as adding significant additional safety measures for staff, volunteers and visitors, the ability to quickly adapt, identify

shifting audiences and respond to their needs is key to beginning to recover and plan for the future. We spoke to several AIM members to hear about their experiences.

The London Museum of Water and Steam repurposed their outside space, including the car park, with lots of family friendly activities, which has been popular with local residents. Doing something they've never done before has proved successful in welcoming a completely new audience and the current team of two have embraced the opportunity to be creative.

Kiplin Hall and Gardens in North Yorkshire saw it's busiest July on record, with local families already visiting six or seven times over the summer. Kiplin Hall took the opportunity to restructure ticket prices on reopening with a new annual ticket model, this has been well received by budget-conscious visitors but has also boosted Gift Aid income.

For the National Waterways Museum in Ellesmere Port the attention to detail has paid off, with carefully placed good quality signage and messages of reassurance giving the regular audience the confidence to return. The one-way system has worked to the museum's advantage; as well as being safe it also helps tell the museum's story and enhances the visitor experience.

For the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre the major challenge was how to make a very

interactive, hands on experience Covid secure. But the team have come up with the solution – guided tours for family groups or bubbles, all pre-booked and giving visitors a unique and tailored experience. This change in operating model is not without its own challenges, but the team have a positive outlook for revising the museum, embracing new fundraising approaches and exploring a new online schools programme.

As one of the smallest museums in the country, the Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon looked to small shops as the starting point for their reopening plans. They've maintained a common-sense approach, implementing simple and practical solutions to make the task of reopening manageable for volunteers and enjoyable for visitors.

Ilkley Manor House in West Yorkshire has been making the most of their outside space, but also reopened the house in early September. The museum has been distilled into one floor to accommodate a one-way system and the Trust admit reopening has been really challenging, but they also recognise that now is a time to try new things. Their advice to all small museums is to just give reopening a go; visitors are likely to be forgiving making now an ideal time for experimentation.

Whilst challenges undoubtedly remain, the creative and resilient approach of our independent museum sector is helping ensure memorable and inspiring experiences are still on offer, as we emerge from lockdown.

Watch the case studies and hear the advice that these members would share with others still working on their reopening plans at <https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/reopening-case-study-videos/>



Happy visitors are welcomed back to Kiplin Hall and Gardens with new and popular pizza picnics

## Key phases of the customer journey

**Y**ou have re-opened, but how can you make the most of your customer experience, marketing and income generation activities? In this article AIM Associate Supplier Bryn Jones Associates looks at the challenges and opportunities of reviewing your reopening plans and focuses on the key phases of the customer journey, from online to the front desk.

### It all starts online

ALVA's benchmarking survey (Summer 2019, Spring 2019 and Autumn 2018) indicates 39% of visits to museums and galleries and 38% of visits to heritage sites were prompted online. According to the *Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport: Taking Part Survey: England Adult Report, 2018/19*, the most common reasons for visiting or using a heritage website were to 'check the opening hours of a historic site (76.4%)', plan how to get to a historic site (60%) and learn about history or the historic environment (44.4%). Approximately 25% were to buy tickets to visit.'

### Finding the venue

Road and pedestrian signage and parking needs to be carefully considered so visitors and passing trade can follow signs easily to the venue and parking. Walk and drive the main routes to your attraction to make sure signage is in all the right locations and is legible. This includes from key landmarks such as town centres and railway stations.

At key times of the year it might be worth investing in paying someone

to be outside key transport hubs like tube or rail stations, providing leaflets, especially if your attraction is not on the main pedestrian flow. Thought needs to be given as to ways of monitoring effectiveness.

### Exterior venue signage

Are you effectively communicating your offer on the exterior of your building, including who you are, temporary exhibitions, the café and shop? It is important to remember your key audiences – both existing customers and passing trade, whether on foot or by car. If you are free admission and have an active donations and gift aid strategy, this could be communicated effectively at this point, to help inform customers so they know the museum is recommending a donation. If you are a charging venue, then how well are you promoting the benefits of your season ticket or membership?

Do not try to communicate too much, keep it simple and do it well. One key message and visual per banner or promotion. Make sure the signage is fixed, well presented, and try to avoid tie or clip on PVC banners onto fencing. These tend to be a one-off fixed cost, though banners in fixed positions or posts may need periodically changed and updated.

### Inside the main entrance

The presentation of the front entrance is incredibly important. It is the point every customer comes into and out of the attraction. It provides an opportunity for a potential welcome and interaction with every customer; and maybe the only point in the visit where the customer engages with



# What will your future strategy be?

**S**ix months ago, everything changed fast. Coming back is proving to be slow and unsure. Each museum is having a unique experience depending on your size, location, physical space, digital capacity, governance, stability and strength prior to this situation, and your culture.

Most of the parameters you use to plan are unstable at best. But like every change/crisis there are upsides as well as downsides. There are opportunities, but perhaps flexibility rather than resilience is what is needed to capitalise on them. Now is the time to think about the changes needed to create your future; admittedly a hard thing to do when you are managing the new issues of the present with fewer staff, dwindling funds and a foggy outlook.

One surety is that no-one knows when Covid 19 will stop affecting your organisational and your business model has been rocked. So how will you develop your strategy for the future. Here are some pointers although this is unlikely to be a linear process.

## 1. Make time and Space

For many of you the problems of today and tomorrow will be front of mind as well as keeping abreast of changes to your landscape. Its imperative that you **clear some space** for this.

Change takes time. So, push tactical decisions to the right level, do not do anything that someone else could do and make space to think strategically. Clear space in a diary (head) is something every leader needs just now.

## 2. Gather multiple perspectives

In order to create your future, you need to listen to and hear from different voices. The people who are good at managing in regular times may not be suited to this landscape. You need to hear from those who think differently, who are from different levels, who are flexible, are prepared to bring up uncomfortable thoughts/ideas in the best interest of the organisation. Who knows what is going on in your region/community? Who knows what is happening outside of the sector? What new needs are arising?

Don't just pick the usual suspects. Talk to stakeholders in the widest sense. New perspectives open up possibilities and they often come from unexpected sources.

**Be ready to listen**

## 3. Ask different questions

Often, we narrow a problem to tackle; a good approach in any instances. But at the moment its time to open up possibilities, expand thinking and create a wider set of options to explore. *What if you shifted one of your core assumptions on an issue? What might you be explaining away too quickly?*

## 4. Discover your assets

Outdoor space has stormed to the top of your asset list. And suddenly the shop has dropped down the chart. **Looking at your assets** as part of a bigger system and from more perspectives will suggest new possibilities. Are there new opportunities for your spaces? Weddings are small intimate affairs now – is that an opportunity for small

interesting spaces? Community connectivity has been a real strength in the past 6 months; what opportunities does that offer in terms of social cohesion, well-being, collaboration. What connections have you not explored? Is it time to relook at how you tell your stories to increase relevance, broaden the context? Are there new stories or angles? What about staff skills? Are there assets that you could create or are now more valuable than they were?

## 5. Define your opportunities

This is a standard exercise of evaluating the potential of your ideas. The inputs and outlays. Perhaps you have one half of the solution and a partner can make it whole. At this stage you are working out what is viable, in what time scale, and what is the potential upside whether economic, social, or psychological (e.g. staff benefits). You will be testing assumptions and probably entering new territory as you start to prioritise and select the opportunities that will make your future and fit with who and what you are as an organisation.

And from this your new strategy begins to emerge.

It's April 2021 – ask yourself what you wish you had done 6 months ago?

Louise Emerson is a business consultant and accredited Executive Coach and Mentor. In the December issue she will look at income generation.  
[www.takeethecurrent.co.uk](http://www.takeethecurrent.co.uk)

a member of the team. The aim should be not to try and communicate too many things, otherwise the key message will be lost. Consider:

- Signage welcoming visitors as they enter and thanking them for visiting as they leave. If you have many overseas visitors then do this in different languages.
- If there is the space can a wow factor be created?
- If there is a key secondary offer e.g. temporary exhibitions, café and shop.
- If you are a charity promote this, and where all the income goes.
- Promote your service standards and customer feedback system clearly and prominently.
- If you are free admission museum, promote donations, including the recommended donation and how the income will be used. If you are eligible, promote the benefits of gift aiding the donation too.
- If you are a charging museum promote the benefits of your season ticket and or membership.

## The ticketing and the welcome desk

The location of the ticketing and welcome desk is critical. Whether free or charging, the desk should be positioned to provide the team with the opportunity to welcome all customers. If your museum has a guidebook this should be displayed to enable customers to pick up, browse and purchase. Keep the top of the welcome desk clutter free, tills should be built into the desk with only the PDU visible. It needs to look smart. FOH staff should be proactive, welcoming customers and establishing

their needs. This is also a prime opportunity to 'up-sell' and promote your offer in a clear and focused way.

## Six key points to remember:

- 1 The customer experience, marketing and income generation significance of front of house.
- 2 Keep things simple, visual (promoting the benefits, appealing to your core audiences), well presented, clear; not text heavy; focus on getting the basics right and making the most of these opportunities consistently.
- 3 Never stop monitoring, evaluating and improving. Constructive feedback and analysis (internal and external) are important to continue to improve. Involve your team.
- 4 Especially in these Covid times, learn from others, both from inside and outside the sector; from cafés, bars and restaurants to health clubs, service stations and supermarkets.
- 5 Be safe but try not to make Covid restrictions more complicated than they need to be, it's a good opportunity to be creative and provide long term small but important service enhancements. This will also provide more opportunities for improved use of technology to enhance the visit, convenience, experience, income generation and data capture e.g. online ticketing and at the welcome desk.
- 6 Have clear organisation wide SMART Service Standards and make sure all the information is well presented, branded appropriately, accurate, not out of date, visual and clear.

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**Author of AIM's latest Success Guide, Peter Holloway, shares top tips for successful retailing for smaller museums.**

# Updated Retail Success Guide now available

**T**hese days almost all museums have a shop of some kind. Indeed the shop is often a key attraction for museum visitors and, like a good café, a good shop has increasingly become an expectation for visitors and an integral part of their visit. If managed well, and with an attractive and interesting selection of merchandise, a shop can enhance the visit and reflect the museum's core mission and its collection. It can also, and absolutely should, be profitable and not simply run as a service.

Whatever the size of your museum it is important for your shop to be profitable and managed in a professional way. The new AIM guide is designed to help with this, whether reviewing and improving an existing shop or establishing a new shop at a small museum.

## Top tips for museum shops

- 1 Make sure your aims are clear. The fundamental aim should be for the shop to generate a profit!
- 2 Have a retail plan and review it regularly.
- 3 Choose the right person to manage the shop and do the buying. Support and train them.
- 4 Give the shop the best location you can and fit it out to provide an effective platform for retail display.
- 5 Buy stock well: plan the buying and decide what will fit the visitor profile and reflect the museum and its collection.
- 6 Set selling prices to achieve target gross margin.
- 7 Take action to clear slow selling lines. If an item isn't earning its keep after 6 months it's doubtful it ever will.
- 8 Display and ticket the merchandise to the highest standard.
- 9 Measure performance and review it regularly. Control operating costs.
- 10 Be obsessive about best sellers! Know what they are and ensure they are always in stock.
- 11 Give a warm welcome and superb service to every customer. Buying in your shop should be a memorable experience ... for all the right reasons!
- 12 Always see the shop as an integral part of the museum and the visitor experience.

## Plus!

Remember the retail mantra "Retail is Detail"! This will be more important than ever in the months and years following the Covid 19 epidemic lockdown and its impact on the sector.

Read the Success Guide here [www.aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/resources/](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/resources/)



From top, the shop at Compton Verney, the shop at Florence Nightingale Museum, and the shop at Shire Hall.

## About the author

Peter Holloway has worked with a broad range of clients in the museums and heritage sectors and advised on many retail issues. Peter trained in the John Lewis Partnership and was a Buyer and Assistant to the General Manager in an independent department store before joining National Trust Enterprises. He was responsible for the management and profitability of the National Trust's shops in Wales before establishing the Retail Thinking consultancy in 2002.

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# Make your museum website 'sticky' by harnessing marketing psychology

**W**hen we think of driving traffic to websites, we often focus solely on new visitors. But if you think about it, returning visitors are more familiar with your museum and your brand, and are much more likely to engage with you, for example by signing up to your newsletter, making donations, buying tickets or visiting your museum. Given that, it makes sense to invest some time into developing a strategy in order to make your website 'sticky' so that people keep coming back and marketing psychology has a whole host of tools you can use to do just that.

Whilst there may be ethical implications to consider when leveraging psychological techniques in order to drive user behaviour, I would argue that this has been a staple of all marketing, both digital and offline for centuries. Add to this, psychology in marketing can be used for good rather than nefarious purposes – think 'encouragement' rather than 'manipulation'. A seminal marketing campaign comes to mind that illustrates this point especially well. It wasn't until the 1870s that tooth powder, and later toothpaste, started to be mass produced. Before then, people would sporadically buy the product but repeat purchases were uncommon and tooth decay was rife. Things changed almost overnight when Colgate & Co. added mint flavouring which caused the user to form a psychological association with the act of brushing. Users became used to the taste of mint and it acted as a reward mechanism. Sales took off and the daily brushing of teeth became commonplace.



The addition of a mint taste to toothpaste acted as a reward mechanism.

One might say that we have become addicted to the habit of brushing our teeth and most of us feel terrible if we do not do this at least twice a day.

Think about the websites you visit regularly. What is it about your favourite sites that keeps you going back for more? Often FOMO (Fear of missing out) can be a driver behind visits to news sites and social media. As social animals, we want to know the latest news and what is going on with our peers and leaders, and the fear of missing out and general nosiness is a strong driver of online behaviour.

One specific example whereby psychological marketing is used online is the "pull down refresh" gesture on most touch screens when you reload the page. Adam Alter, an addictive technologies expert says "You pull the lever to win a prize, which is an intermittent action linked to a variable reward. Variable meaning you might win, or you might not... The delay, and the expectation, is part of the psychological experience – 'What am I going to get this time?'"

This ties in with a key reason people revisit a website – they are looking for something surprising, something different. There's always a chance that you will visit a site and find something unique and interesting, a reward.

One final psychological tool I'd like to mention is reciprocity, that is the practice of exchanging things with others for mutual benefit. It has been proven time and time again that people feel a sense of indebtedness when they are given something for free, often resulting in a reciprocal act. Charities do this when they send you a letter asking for donations along with a free pen, a tactic proven to increase donation amounts. The need to return a good deed is hardwired into our brains and marketers know this.

## So how can we utilise these psychological techniques in a positive way that is beneficial to museum visitors as well as the museums themselves?

To start with, it is a good idea to make your content unique, interesting, and occasionally surprising. This will create a psychological expectation of reward, encouraging repeat visitors. Ensure that a significant amount of your content is people-focused in order to

## About Heritage Creative

Heritage Creative is a specialist web design agency focused solely on the heritage sector. We are deeply passionate about preserving our heritage through the power of the internet. We pride ourselves on designing outstanding, high return, strategy-led websites that look beautiful whilst being highly accessible and easy to use. As well as the many wonderful organisations, charities and private companies we have worked with, we also have a wealth of experience working with funding organisations which are the mainstay of much of our heritage work. We have a track record of successfully delivering English Heritage, Lottery Funded and Arts Council supported projects as well as those led by local county councils. We offer a totally free, no obligation discussion about your website – you can come to our design studio or we are just as happy to come to you!

[www.heritagecreative.co.uk](http://www.heritagecreative.co.uk)

tap into people's need to know what others are doing. You can then deploy reciprocity by offering something completely free to your visitors, such as a downloadable educational pack or other resources. When doing so, it is often best to try to productise digital assets by giving them physical presence through branding – make the item you are offering appear as a real, offline product. For example, on an ebook you could use a 3D graphic template to make it look like a physical book.

Ultimately you want to drive more repeat visitors by getting your users to sign up to your mailing list as this is a fantastic way of retaining interest long term. This should be a relatively easy task since you have already provided your users with interesting and free content and a social platform whereby they can find out about their peers and leaders. That said, don't assume your visitors know where and how to sign up, so make sure you have a clear Call To Action.

## Who is doing this well?

One example of a sticky site is the social media and news aggregator website Reddit. The site consists of niche channels called 'subreddits' and a homepage that is relevant to the country and interests of the user visiting. News articles are submitted and voted upon by contributors which keeps content fresh, engaging and often surprising. Comments encourage conversations and this forms the social aspect of the site. There are also giveaways and celebrity and leader interviews in the form of AMAs (Ask Me Anything) as well as other features that encourage communities to form. Reddit is one of those sites that once you become a member you find yourself spending far too much time on!



# National Videogame Museum

**T**he National Videogame Museum is new as museums go, having opened in Sheffield in 2018. In our first year, we welcomed 40,000 visitors, school groups and families, drawn to the museum by enthusiastic young people (and even more enthusiastic grown-ups).

We are highly interactive, our galleries are full of controllers, joysticks and buttons, and we encourage our visitors to 'play the museum'. For the safety of our visitors and staff, we closed prior to the national lockdown in the middle of March. Whilst we couldn't anticipate the duration of the lockdown, we knew temporary closure would cause huge financial difficulties. We became one of the first museums to launch a crowdfunding campaign, which thankfully gained huge support from our audiences and games industry.

To support the campaign, it was important to somehow continue our learning and engagement offers. A large section of our audience are families, and early in the lockdown there was confusion and concern about how parents could both educate and keep their kids entertained. Our first response to this was quite simple – we shared a list of (good) educational games. Slightly unexpectedly, this content was hugely well received – audiences in our local communities engaged with it, added to it and soon the list had been shared worldwide.

After recognising the desire for similar content, we launched the NVM At Home project. We didn't want to add to the flood of printable materials (knowing many families do not have a printer). Instead, we worked to develop and run a series of weekly livestreams on YouTube, which would support the digital resources we released. This was a huge challenge, we're a small team which became even smaller as furlough began. It was doable in part due to luck, our Learning Officer already had access to the streaming-capable PC she needed at home.

Our guiding principle for these resources was to bring a feeling of community to those that might have felt isolated. We understood from responses on social media that many young people were missing time with their teachers, so we wanted to create a safe social space with a familiar face each week to learn something new, ask questions and bring those engaging with the resources together. It was a highlight

of the last few months to be shortlisted for a Kids in Museums award for this content and to see young people (and their grown-ups) make videogames at home.

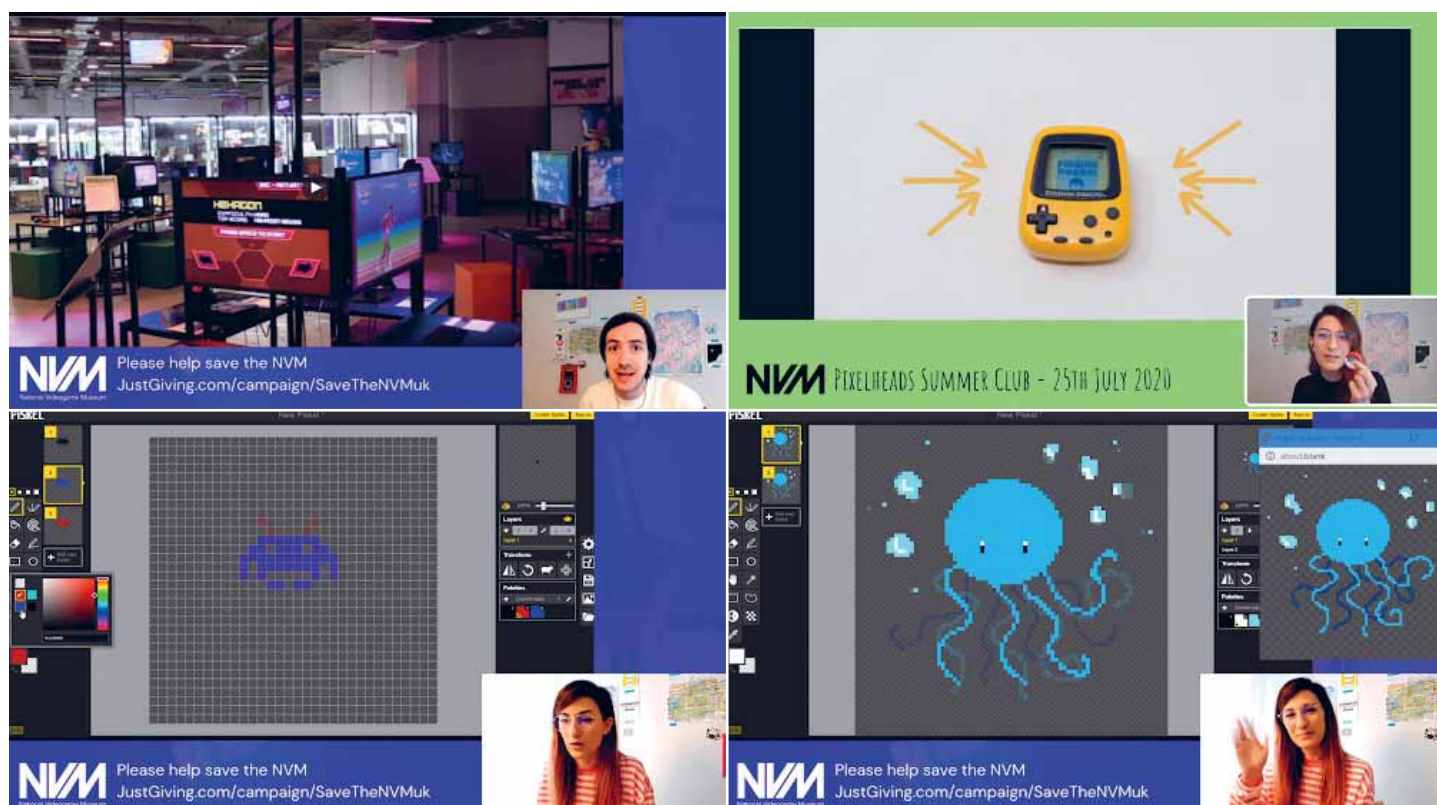
During this time the museum continued to engage with creative communities in Sheffield that were adapting in brilliant and constructive ways. One example included creating activities for the *Bags of Creativity* initiative run in the city by IVE and Create Sheffield, supported by Sheffield City Council. This provided 2,000+ young people with activities designed by Sheffield organisations and freelancers, and all the materials they would need to take part.

While working on reopening plans, we wanted to continue the digital learning and engagement started at the beginning of lockdown with NVM at Home. To do so, we started a virtual Saturday club, called Pixelheads, running throughout the summer, with livestreamed sessions on YouTube. Pixelheads is the museum's community for young people who want to learn about, talk about and create videogames. It's taken various forms over time, but through these sessions we wanted to engage young people's enthusiasm for games; exploring this subject in new and creative ways. Our Pixelheads livestreams shared the aims of the NVM at Home content but with an increased focus on building a regular, safe online community. Our audiences explored common interests and shared ideas, at a time when many people have missed their classmates and community groups. As one family stated, they took part so their 'children could learn and engage with other young people during lockdown'.

Videogames have been an important part of life for many during lockdown, providing a fun escape, valuable social time with friends and family, and engaging learning opportunities for all ages. While we have always championed the inspirational and educational value of videogames at the museum, it has still been incredible to see the positive impact and responses during this strange time.

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Conor Clarke, Marketing & Communications  
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The National Videogame Museum started a virtual Saturday club – Pixelheads – with livestreamed sessions on YouTube running throughout the summer.

# AIM GRANTS CASE STUDIES

To help AIM members with a variety of needs, including training, conservation, development and exhibitions, AIM administers a range of grants. These include AIM Hallmarks Awards, supported by Arts Council England and the Welsh government (AIM Hallmarks in Wales); AIM's Sustainability Scheme, supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation; and AIM's Conservation and Collections Care and Collection Audit Schemes, supported by the Pilgrim Trust. AIM Bulletin regularly publishes case studies of some of the successful applications.

## AIM HALLMARKS IN WALES

### Cynon Valley Museum Trust £5,986.57

#### *Securing our Trajectory*

"Securing Our Trajectory" funded by AIM Hallmarks in Wales brought immediate impact and has outlined the medium- and long-term trajectory of the Trust's internal income streams. Immediate impacts have seen dramatic increases in donations and diversification of shop stock sales, whilst the upgrading to an EPOS till system has for the first time allowed the museum to accurately record sales, increased insight into sales data and reduced the time processing sales from one week to one day. The medium- and long-term trajectory has been identified through the provision of training and creation of a report recommending the future development of the museum shop.

#### **Upgrading the till system**

The museum began the project in July 2019 combining investment in shop infrastructure, training and research. The initial changes saw the introduction of an EPOS till system into the museum replacing the previous analogue till system. This resulted in staff time being saved, in total the processing of



Above and below, new shop fixtures at Cynon Valley Museum.

payments was reduced from 5 days every 3 months to 1 day every 3 months. In the introduction of the till system has increased sales accuracy and allowed greater insight into what is selling well and what is not. The museum is now better placed to make informed decisions on what to stock in the museum.

#### **Training for all**

With the new till system installed the museum provided training for all volunteers to learn how to use the new EPOS till. The museum also brought in a shop specialist to provide training to staff and volunteers on the art of selling. This was followed up by a sector specific event which brought museum workers together to discuss income generation, building connections and insights from across the sector.

#### **Research for now and later**

The final portion of the project was provision to carry out specific targeted research into income generation and specifically the continued development of the museum shop. This saw the completion of report split into short-, medium- and long-term actions. Short-term actions included the increase of donations thanks to changes in

location of donation boxes, introduction of a recommended donation and language around asking for donations. This saw an increased in donations by 291% in comparison to the previous financial year.

Research highlighted the importance of a change in the shop appearance identifying short-term changes introducing temporary island displays and investing in new shop furniture to diversify shop units moving away from the glass display cabinets which the Trust inherited when reopening the museum.

Medium- and long-term changes have been outlined and presented to the board, building on the work of this funded project and creating a future trajectory. The museum seeks to become sustainable; identifying how the shop needs to be redeveloped to create this sustainable vision.

Securing our trajectory has enhanced the museum's ability to manage the museum shop, insight into sales and provided the needed training. Thanks to the research, the museum has a clear vision for the future, building on the success of Securing the Trajectory.

**William Tregaskes, Museum Coordinator  
Cynon Valley Museum**





# AIM HALLMARKS AWARDS

## Heckington Windmill Trust

£5,000

### Shop and retail review

Heckington Windmill Trust in Sleaford, Lincolnshire received £5,000 as an AIM Hallmarks Small Grant Scheme to undertake a shop and retail review.

Heckington Windmill is the only 8 sailed windmill in the country and is a Grade I listed building. In 2017 a £1.6m project to purchase the buildings and land adjacent to the windmill, providing a visitor centre, shop, museum, tearoom, and bakehouse was completed. Funding within the project for fittings was limited and we were not able to purchase new shop fittings, instead we made use of salvaged and recycled shelving.

The shop and ticketing area is in the main Granary building which is directly attached to the windmill. The location and impact of the retail area is very important as it is in the same space as the high-quality interpretation displays in the museum visitor centre.

In 2019 a MDEM (Museums Development East Midlands) grant enabled us to employ retail consultant Peter Holloway, who carried out a review of our retail offer. Discussions with the volunteer teams allowed us to build an action plan, with the key recommendations being the provision of new retail display units and the sourcing and purchase of new stock ranges.

The AIM grant has enabled us to purchase and install new shop fittings allowing us to display the products to their best. As a small museum, we rely heavily on additional sales from our visitors to ensure the long-term sustainability of the organisation and the new fittings provide the perfect backdrop for a new range of high-quality merchandise. With better storage we can ensure that perishable goods are stock rotated according to their BBE reducing wastage.

The quotes from the consultant's suggested shop fitters came in way over budget, but local research meant we were lucky to be able to secure the services of a young, local craftsman, Ashley Fox who built the new display units. Working with him we were able to design the units to our own specification to include glass shelving, additional storage, LED lighting and removeable screens. He has also been able to repurpose some existing oak shelves into a display unit for the sale of books. The quality of the build is exceptional, and we are extremely pleased with the finished units.

Trustee Paul Reid, who has responsibility for the Visitor Centre says "The new shelving has made a tremendous difference to the shop area of the windmill. They are lighter and in keeping with the rest of this area of the mill and therefore bring a cohesiveness to the building. In practical terms they offer far greater flexibility in the way products can be displayed and give a more professional feel for visitors to the shop".

Due to the Covid19 outbreak and subsequent closure, we are now beginning to open up the site again and the ability to utilise the remaining funds towards the inevitable expenditure needed to provide safe spaces for our visitors and volunteers has been extremely beneficial. We are extremely grateful to AIM for the grant and would like to thank the team at AIM for their support during this difficult time.

Jo Lewin, Trustee, Heckington Windmill Trust  
[www.heckingtonwindmill.org.uk](http://www.heckingtonwindmill.org.uk)  
[enquiries@heckingtonwindmill.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@heckingtonwindmill.org.uk)



From top, Heckington before existing shop fittings, after new flour unit, and after new shop units matching visitor centre.

For more information on successful retailing for small museums, see AIM's Retail Success Guide.

# AIM Collections Care Audit, Collections Care and Conservation Grants Scheme 2020-23

## Goal

AIM has just over 1000 member museums across the UK who care for a huge and significant range of historic objects and collections. Over 70% of our members are small (fewer than 20k visitors pa) and struggle to find the resources and expertise to meet their collections care and conservation needs.

The grants schemes, developed in partnership with the Pilgrim Trust and Icon, deliver funding support to organisations that may lack the confidence or expertise to apply to a major funder directly, whilst also underlining the importance of using professional conservation expertise.

The AIM Pilgrim conservation grant scheme has been running since 2007. In 2019 AIM successfully applied to the Pilgrim Trust to continue to run the scheme for a further three years to 2022. This offered a valuable opportunity to renew the partnership with Icon.

## Process

**Collections Care Audit** grants enable small museums to undertake a basic professional collections care audit. Working in partnership with Icon we maintain a roster of 40 approved conservators. Audits are undertaken to help museums identify key collection care issues and priorities. The grant covers a standard three-day audit and are a starting point for museums that have not previously had professional conservation advice.

**Collections Care** grants help museums with under 50,000 visitors or a turnover of less than £300,000 pa to develop a more sustainable approach to the conservation and management of collections. Grants of up to £10,000 are available to enable museums to make a step-change in the quality of care they can provide.

**Remedial Conservation** grants have the same requirements as collections care grants but help with the conservation of objects in their collections. Grants of up to £10,000 are available to conserve

(with an accredited conservator) objects that are part of a museum's permanent collection.

Demand for these grant schemes is consistently very high. In 2017 and 2018 the Remedial Conservation grants received £158,282.34 of applications for £100,000 of available funding and the Collections Care grants received £230,438.05 of applications for £100,000 of funding.

Museums can apply for up to £10,000 in both the Collections Care and Conservation grants schemes but on average grants awarded are around £5,000. In 2017-2018 there were 58 applications to the Collections Care scheme with 28 awards and 35 applications to the Conservation scheme with 28 awards.

In the same period 34 applications for Collections Care Audits were received and 28 awards were made.

## Outcomes and learning overview

The three grant schemes have been proven to work as not only a source of scarce conservation funding but a robust and effective route to having a positive impact on collections care, access and learning across small museums.

The grants help smaller museums achieve the collections care standards required for the Arts Council England Museum Accreditation scheme. All three grant schemes deliver conservation funding to parts of the sector that would not get similar support elsewhere.

Callendar House (Falkirk) – conservation of the Baird television (£2,155) explained:

"The funding has allowed us to continue to protect and conserve items in the collection in a time of financial cutbacks." This has allowed them to continue displaying their unique section of history.

## Collections Care Audits

Audits provide an essential 'stepping-stone' into meeting museum standards for collections care

and conservation for many volunteers who are new to the sector. They are also a useful aid to the panel when applicants for Collections Care grants would benefit from professional input and are consequently referred for an audit as a first step. 18 audits have now resulted in Collections Care grant applications. 15 audits per year are expected between 2020-2022.

## Collections Care and Conservation grants

No other collections care grant schemes in the sector are so wide ranging and although awards are modest (average grant £2,915) they can be transformational for a museum, for example:

The creation of a new accessible (for volunteers and public visits) storage facility for the Isle of Lismore Museum (co-funded with Museums Galleries Scotland).

The Herne Bay Museum Trust have been able to safely display their prototype Barnes Wallis bouncing bomb with a Collections Care grant for dehumidification for a display case:

Kingsbridge Cookworthy Museum – conservation of two important enamelled signs (award £2,000) "The grant was so helpful to us as we don't have conservation expertise in house, and there aren't many grants that fund object conservation. We now also have more confidence as an organisation in applying for conservation grants." And "He (the conservator) was able to not only conserve the signs but to advise volunteers how best to look after the signs and our other metalwork at the same time."

The St Andrews Preservation Trust Museum – conservation of two artworks by a local artist (£1,850) said "This one project has paved the way for developing a conservation list."



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## Antique "Kitchenalia" from Kent brings funds and employment opportunity to Kiplin Hall & Gardens in North Yorkshire

*Known for its grand rooms, opulent décor and bountiful walled garden, Kiplin Hall & Gardens has become home to a vast collection of Victorian kitchen and dairy antiques.*

Originally owned by renowned antiques dealer Annie Marchant, who lived in Kent, the collection includes machines, pots, pans, and utensils that were used in the kitchen and dairy during the Victorian era. Items from her collection were sometimes hired out and used on television. Comedian Victoria Wood used them on the set of her soap opera parody Acorn Antiques during the mid-80s.

Sadly, Annie Marchant died, aged just 68, this spring. In her Will she left instructions for her collection to be donated to a museum. Kiplin Hall & Gardens, an accredited museum in North Yorkshire, applied for the collection and

has been successful in acquiring it, along with a generous financial sum to ensure its safe keeping for the future.



Kiplin Hall's grand interior.

James Etherington, Director of Kiplin Hall and Gardens comments

"We are very grateful to become the new home for Annie Marchant's impressive collection. Much of our current collection includes art, fine furniture, and the possessions of the families who lived here at Kiplin over the last 400 years. Annie's collection will help us to explore the stories and lives of the sorts of people who worked and lived at Kiplin outside of the family ownership."

Utilizing the funding which accompanies the collection, Kiplin Hall and Gardens is also recruiting a member of staff to see to the project through to completion. The successful candidate will work to create a temporary exhibition due to open in February 2021.



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## AIM RESOURCES



Find helpful advice on a range of  
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[www.aim-museums.co.uk](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk)  
including –

how you can join the Charity

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- AIM Hallmarks programmes
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# Museums Galleries Scotland to coordinate consultation on Scotland's colonial and slavery history

**M**useums Galleries Scotland (MGS) welcomes the announcement in the Programme for Government that the Scottish Government will sponsor an independent expert group to recommend how Scotland's existing and future museum collections can better recognise and represent a more accurate portrayal of Scotland's colonial and slavery history.

The history of slavery and the social, economic, and cultural impact of colonialism are entrenched in museum collections and heritage sites around Scotland and the sector is increasingly vocal in their commitment to working to show the full history of their collections.

Through exploring the need and opportunity to tell the story of Scotland's involvement in the slave trade and colonialism, MGS recognises the work already under way in the museum sector; expanding how they tell the stories in their collections to communicate Scotland's involvement and profit from the slave trade, colonialism, and the continuing racial injustice in Scotland and across the world.

Lucy Casot, CEO of Museums Galleries Scotland said:

"The Black Lives Matter movement has highlighted the critical need to understand and act on the racial injustice and colonialism that is still prevalent today. Museums are integral parts of communities as spaces to reflect and ask questions. Through revisiting and expanding the stories and histories they tell museums can play a key role in helping us all to have a better understanding of our past.

"We welcome the partnership with the Scottish Government on the consultation around how Scotland's existing and future museum collections can better recognise and represent a more accurate portrayal of Scotland's colonial and slavery history. This is both a necessary moment of reflection and an exciting opportunity for museums to reach new audiences.

"We look forward to working with the Scottish Government and a range of race equality and museum sector stakeholders to explore all options."

## Icon release statement on the value of care of collections professions

**Icon recently released a statement making a strong plea for maintaining and supporting conservation services in the face of the many technical and financial challenges presented by lockdown.**

Whilst recognising the real impact of loss of income on organisations, the statement highlights investment in collection care as more than simply safeguarding the past but a means to support people and the places they care about as we face a challenging and uncertain post-Covid future.

Read the statement at

<https://icon.org.uk/news/icon-statement-on-the-value-of-care-of-collections-professions>



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## Museum profile

# The Cromwell Museum, Huntingdon

**T**he Cromwell Museum is a contradiction; it's one of the smallest museums in the UK (our gallery space is currently a single room just 70 metres square) but has internationally important collections, including iconic paintings by some of the greatest artists of the mid-17th century and unique personal items. It tells the story of a single figure – the 17th century soldier and statesman Oliver Cromwell – but against the tumultuous times through which he lived.

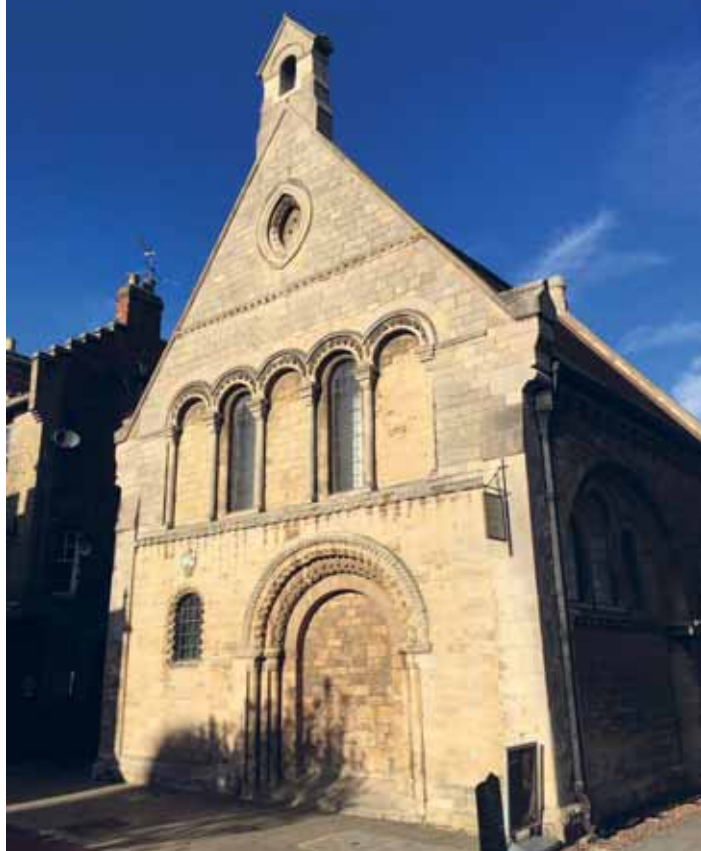
It is also a collection that raises challenges: how do we tell such a complex story in such a small space? How do we deal with a figure who is deeply controversial? Whilst there are many myths about him (not least that he cancelled Christmas ...) Cromwell is admired by some but reviled by others for his actions, such as his campaigns in Ireland. Our solution is simple: to tell his story, honestly, fairly, but 'warts and all'. We actively collect in all areas relating to his life and times, especially these controversial areas and it is a key part of our interpretation.

The Museum is located in the heart of the Cambridgeshire market town of Huntingdon, housed in a 12th century building which was the town's grammar school, attended both by Cromwell (who was born just a few doors up the street) and Samuel Pepys. Normally we attract c.10,000 visitors annually.

The Museum was founded in 1962 and run by the County Council until 2015 when it became an independent charity, the Cromwell Museum Trust, although we are very grateful to Huntingdon Town Council for an annual grant towards our running costs. We have a collection of c.1,000 objects, 70% of which are owned by the Trust, 10% loans from other museums, and 20% a long-term loan of items from Cromwell's immediate descendants, including his swords, medical chest, family portraits and even his hat.

Like most independent museums, we operate on a tight budget and employ only a single full-time member of staff, myself as curator (since February 2018). We are therefore extremely grateful to our amazing team of c.40 volunteers, who perform front of house, education and many other behind the scenes duties.

The last 18 months have been a rollercoaster for us. Thanks to an £85,000 grant in May 2019 from the AIM/Biffa Award 'History Makers' programme we were able to contemplate a refurbishment of our very tired exhibition space (last redone in 1989). This provided a catalyst for



grants from the Wolfson Foundation and Huntingdon Freeman's Trust, as well as public donations, a total budget of £170,000. We commissioned JANVS/MIDAR to work for the design and fit of the project, a relationship which proved to be a real partnership, delivering a final product that we are all very proud of.

We closed at the end of September 2019, moved the collection out, stripped the interior and had it completely refitted, with all moved back in by the end of February. We were formally reopened by our Patron, Sir John Major, on Sunday 1 March with a grand parade by the Sealed Knot ... only to have to close 2 weeks later with the Covid-19 lockdown ...

Some hasty (and indeed ongoing) fundraising followed, both with public donations and several grants including the Arts Council's Emergency Fund, which has stabilised us for the time being. We moved a lot of activity online, not only through our already vibrant social media presence, but creating new video content. An ongoing weekly dialogue between myself, trustees and volunteers put together a framework for how we might reopen safely; coupled with sector guidance this enabled us to reopen at the beginning of July.

So far it has gone very well; visitor numbers and income are building back up again steadily. We hope this will continue but are planning for all eventualities. We hope to be able to expand beyond our current building during the next decade, giving our remarkable collections and stories the space that they deserve.

Stuart Orme, Curator  
[www.cromwellmuseum.org](http://www.cromwellmuseum.org)

Watch Stuart Orme talk about how they dealt with the challenges of reopening such a small museum at <https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/reopening-case-study-videos/>



Thanks to an £85,000 grant in 2019 from AIM Biffa Award History Makers programme we were able to refurbish our exhibition space.

All images by JANVS VIDAR the team commissioned to work on the design and fit of the project and an AIM Supplier member.

# AIM and Museums Association working together to support Kickstart scheme

**A**IM and Museums Association are working together to support the sector in accessing the Kickstart Scheme, a new UK-wide initiative created by the UK government that offers fully-funded 6-month job placements to young people.

The fully-funded placement scheme seeks to help young people currently on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment develop the skills and experience they need to find work. Funding is available for 100% of the relevant National Minimum Wage for 25 hours a week. In addition, there are initial set up costs for per placement, for training and development.

The scheme stipulates that applications must be for a minimum of 30 job placements, anticipated to start from November 2020. Placements must be new jobs and not replace existing or planned vacancies or impact existing employees or contractors employment. Once one 6-month placement has finished another participant can start the job placement.

As applications must be for a minimum of 30 job placements, AIM and MA are working together to help museums interested in the scheme, but unable, on their own, to offer that number of placements to find a partner or even form a group of museums that might wish to work together.

AIM Director, Emma Chaplin said

"It's a tough time for everyone at the moment, but young people in particular have been hit hard by COVID related challenges to the economy and the jobs market.

This new scheme offers young people the chance to explore opportunities in the cultural sector whilst strengthening their employability and we are delighted to be working together with our colleagues at the Museums Association to support members getting involved.

We understand that providing 30 placements is a challenge for most organisations, so we are keen to help interested museums collaborate to offer their support to the scheme."

Tamsin Russell, MA's Workforce Development Officer said

"We were approached by a number of small museums in relation to the Kickstart scheme, and anticipated there may be more interest to come. With the MA's and AIM's UK-wide remit working together enables museums across the UK to come together and look at next steps."

Read more on how the scheme and funding works on the Kickstart webpages at [www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/kickstart-scheme)

Email [info@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:info@aim-museums.co.uk) to register your organisation's interest in collaborating.



Photo by Brooke Cagle on Unsplash

## Charity Finance Group special interest groups

**M**ake the most of AIM's partnership with Charity Finance Group, giving you free access to CFG member benefits for free. These include access to events and training discounts, exclusive publications, online resources and a unique community of charity finance professionals and leaders to share your experiences with.

CFG has launched new, free special interest groups for AIM members, helping you to get to grips with the finance landscape and

regulatory and policy developments. The AIMSIG is a forum for AIM members to connect on finance and governance issues where you'll have the space to chat to other AIM-CFG members and discuss key areas.

ARTSIG is a new group for arts sector organisations supporting you with your unique challenges. Find out more details about the groups and register to join with the CFG membership team at [www.cfg.org.uk/special\\_interest\\_groups](http://www.cfg.org.uk/special_interest_groups)



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