



Association of
Independent
Museums

AIM Bulletin

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Welcome to the new look AIM Bulletin!

We've taken on board feedback to give our Bulletin a Spring clean – we hope you like it! Why not let us know your thoughts or ideas for content, just get in touch editor@aim-museums.co.uk

The first shoots of Spring?

As the daffodils start to make an appearance we can see the first shoots of spring, a hugely welcome prospect. It's been a long, hard year and yet maybe we can see the beginnings of a move towards something resembling normality.

The Government's announcement on 22 February certainly gives museums something to work towards. While some museums without outdoor space are frustrated by delaying reopening till mid-May, it does mean there is something to aim for. It's not realistic to think everything can open at once in the middle of a pandemic. Museums at least may be able to start welcoming visitors and earning income during the May half-term and bank holiday week. It also hopefully heralds the end of the stop/start opening and closing of recent months and we can begin to plan realistically.

It has been impressive to see how many museums have embraced digital technology to reach audiences during lockdown, and in doing so attracted new audiences. Whether that's been through creating new online content like talks, tours and interpretation, reaching out to schools with online resources or developing conversations and connections through social media, what's clear is there's no going back. New ways of working will undoubtedly continue and that's a good thing as we've fast-tracked our development in this area, proved there's an appetite and demonstrated an ability to do things more efficiently.

One example is holding trustee and volunteer meetings via Zoom as well as accessing training and networking opportunities remotely. While everyone would like to physically meet again in future, a blend of online meetings and face to face will surely become the norm. This period of enforced online activity has enabled a wider range of people to access meetings online, and as a result increased everyone's capacity and reduced time, cost and the environmental impact of travel. I appreciate that technology has been a blocker for some, but this appears to be the minority.

How much more attractive recruitment of museum trustees might be if this meeting format continues. Where once it appeared an unattractive prospect to have to meet for long periods at specific locations and at unsuitable times, a flexible approach to meeting more frequently but for shorter periods online could be a more winning proposition, not least for those that have skills to offer, but have complicated lives, limited time or are not local.

By embracing change, rather than operating in the way it's always been done or ways that suit those that already occupy governance positions, the results can only be positive, potentially increasing opportunities for new voices and leading to a stronger, more relevant and sustainable organisation – something everyone is looking for!

Claire Browne

**Chair, Museum Development UK and
Manager of Museum Development East Midlands**



Front cover

Our cover image is of the beautiful Bowes Museum. Purpose built in the style of a French château in the historic market town of Barnard Castle it opened to the public in 1892. Read more on page 19. (Image copyright Bowes Museum.)

Following an extensive recruitment process late in 2020, the AIM Board recently co-opted several colleagues who will be offered for election at the next Annual General Meeting.

Meet proposed new AIM Board members



Sajida Carr



Sarah Duthie



Nathaniel Hepburn



Emily Hope



Gurminder Kenth

Sajida Carr

Sajida is Director of Operations and Development at Creative Black Country and part of the Creative People and Places Programme. Her role is about making the most of the Black Country through Arts and Culture with a specific focus on operations and development and includes financial management, evaluation and governance as well as championing unique cross sector partnerships. She has been part of Creative Black Country since 2014.

Sarah Duthie

Sarah has over 20 years of leadership experience in charities, 16 of which have been in the museums and heritage sector. Sarah's current role is as Director of Priory and International Affairs at St John Ambulance, which includes looking after historic buildings that date back to the 12th century, and the St John Museum, which charts the charity's global history and connections.

Nathaniel Hepburn

Nathaniel has been Chief Executive of Charleston since autumn 2017 and is directing the organisation as it pivots from a seasonal heritage site to an interdisciplinary cultural centre and museum inspired by the modernist home of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. Nathaniel started his career as founding curator of Mascalls Gallery and has curated over 50 exhibitions which have been shown at some of the leading museums and galleries across the country.

Emily Hope

Emily currently leads the visitor welcome experience at Beamish Museum and has worked there in various roles over the last six years. She is passionate about delivering a world class visitor experience and in 2019 was crowned Visit England's National Tourism Superstar. Of the AIM opportunity she

said "I am absolutely thrilled and cannot wait to make a valuable contribution to the board and for our members."

Gurminder Kenth

Gurminder is an experienced museum professional who has worked in the heritage sector for 21 years, much of it across Birmingham's cultural organisations from the Ikon Gallery to Aston Hall and more recently as Museum Manager at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. She has worked in roles from front of house to exhibitions, project management to people management with operations being at the forefront. Gurminder also has national expertise to draw on having attended the Clore Short Course. Now Head of Operations at the Vegan Society, managing IT, HR, finance and property management she has a long-term interest in profiling heritage and is an advocate for visitors and staff.



News in brief

Additional £300m boost to Culture Recovery Fund

The Chancellor announced a £300m boost to the Culture Recovery Fund (CRF) as part of almost £410m additional support for Britain's arts, culture and heritage industries outlined in the Budget on Wednesday 3 March.

The extra £300m will further expand the £1.57bn Culture Recovery Fund and includes:

- £1.15bn of grants and loans (£880m grants and £270m loans).
- £100m for National Museums and cultural bodies.
- £120m Capital Kickstart Fund to restart and accelerate capital projects.
- £188m Barnett consequential for the devolved administrations – £97m for the Scottish Government, £59m for the Welsh Government and £33m for the NI Executive.
- £15m administrative support.

Launched in July, the CRF has to date awarded over £800m in grants to over 3,000 organisations in England. A second round of funding will have been awarded by the end of March 2021, with a third funding round supported by this extra £300m of investment.

AIM, alongside other sector organisations such as National Museums Directors' Council, have been closely involved in the discussions around the development of the Culture Recovery Fund, offering insight from across the sector since the onset of the pandemic.

Welcoming the additional funds, AIM Chair Andrew Lovett said

"In the face of the cataclysmic financial shock caused to the UK by COVID-19 and the competing demands this creates it is tremendously heartening to see that the Government is continuing to back culture. I welcome this latest investment

through the Culture Recovery Fund because investment it is – providing a future for such a valued part of our lives. The returns will be great and long-lasting."

Details on how to apply for the additional funding will be published by DCMS in due course.

aim-museums.co.uk/coronavirus-resources

Business training and support awarded to 40 heritage organisations across Scotland

Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS), Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS), and greenspace scotland have welcomed 40 organisations to participate in an 18-month NLHF funded Business Support Programme, 'Surviving to Thriving' (StT), focused on upskilling the heritage workforce across Scotland.

The programme seeks to build confidence and knowledge in business practice, with core training across leadership, governance, business planning and local community engagement.

Alexander Goodger, Museum Manager, Dundee Museum of Transport:

"The programme appealed to us because our income streams come from our events and ticket sales, income of which was down by 48% last year due to the pandemic. The training on business planning, and community engagement, alongside a community grant will help us to diversify our income streams, trial new ventures and re-connect with audiences locally and nationally for a brighter future."

Participants on the programme come from across the heritage sector and the country, yet all are facing similar challenges caused by the pandemic, with many citing the programme as vital for increasing their resilience.

www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/projects/business-support-programme

Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom: COVID-19 Update

Due to the pandemic, UK Accreditation partners – Arts Council England; Museums Galleries Scotland, Northern Ireland Museums Council and the Welsh Government (Museums Archives Libraries Division) – are pausing the Accreditation Scheme with effect from 1 April 2020. All Accredited museums in the UK had their current award status extended for an additional 12 months to 1 April 2022.

Eligibility has remained open throughout the UK for museums, galleries and heritage organisations considering a new applications to the scheme.

Due to the ongoing nature of the pandemic a full reopening date for the Scheme has not been confirmed. However, whether your museum holds a Full or Provisional award, it's still Accredited, and you're able to apply for funding which has Accreditation status as an eligibility criterion.

The UK wide Accreditation Partnership has agreed that plans for reopening and rollout will respond to the devolved approaches to lockdown and recovery for museums in each of the four nations. In England, a phased reopening of the Scheme sees it partially reopen by end of April 2021. Museums Working Towards Accreditation or hoping to put in a new application will be able to apply from April 2021. Those who have already applied and are awaiting an award outcome will have the opportunity to update their information and review their application again, and will have longer to prepare if required. Those with a provisional review in progress will be able to review, make any updates, and resubmit from April 2021 onwards.

For more information please see the detailed FAQs at www.artscouncil.org.uk/uk-museum-accreditation-scheme/accreditation-scheme-museums-and-galleries-united-kingdom-covid-19

The Very Reverend Nicholas Papadopoulos, Dean of Salisbury explains how AIM member Salisbury Cathedral got involved with the vaccination effort.



When the news about the availability of vaccines first broke, I contacted the NHS and said that if we were able to assist with the programme's implementation then we would do so. I am delighted that they responded positively. The events of the past year will go down in national and world history, and to have made a small contribution to the war against the virus has been a privilege.

The lockdown required us to close to visitors, and, to support the Government's 'Stay Home' public health message, our worship has been livestreamed only since early January. That has allowed us to dedicate parts of the Cathedral to the vaccination programme. The South Transept has become the place where the jabs are administered, fridges for vaccine storage were installed in one of the adjoining chapels and the Cathedral's nave is used as the recovery area, where patients wait after they have been injected.

The Cathedral team have responded magnificently. Many of the staff were surprised by how moving it is to be part of it all, particularly in the early days when hope was scarce, and it was the first time many of the very elderly and vulnerable had been outside their homes for almost a year. Our own staff welcome patients as they arrive, guiding them into the building and handing them on to the NHS team. Our colleagues have been pleased to help with this massive historical effort.

In addition, our two organists have been putting in ten-hour days (five hours apiece) to cover vaccination sessions, which has required some stamina. Between them they have developed a sympathetic repertoire, which has involved branching out into showtunes and popular melodies. The music has been hugely appreciated by those attending the sessions and has done much to create a tranquil, non-anxious atmosphere.

We will continue to serve as a vaccination hub, but it will be wonderful to open to worship and visitors again and we hope that some of our vaccination recipients will be among them. They have visited the Cathedral, perhaps for the first time or for the first time in many years and have found that it welcomes them and is here for them. We move ahead with caution though. Being part of the NHS fight against the virus has brought home the scale of the problem we face, and our responsibility to help manage it.

www.salisburycathedral.org.uk

AIM's Annual Conference **returns as a digital event across 16, 17, 18 June 2021.**

Supporting, sharing, strengthening: AIM National Conference 2021

2020 was an incredibly challenging year and 2021 is shaping up to be equally tough. But what hard lessons did we learn in the face of last year's relentless adversity? And what skills or new ways of working have we developed that will continue once the shadow of the pandemic has passed? Have our reflections resulted in changes for good? And might they help us prepare for an uncertain future?

AIM's Annual Conference faces these questions head on, helping delegates build on their organisational and personal strengths to meet the challenges of the future with confidence and creativity. We'll be looking at the **importance of leadership and good governance** during hard times, sharing the **new ways of working** we adopted and **forecasting what next** for the sector.

From practical sessions to personal reflections, expert plenaries to virtual

volunteer succession and front of house activities, to name a few.

And through inspiring and honest personal reflections together we'll explore how to build resilience and ensure wellbeing in our working lives.

Contributions will offer knowhow from across other sectors, together with the latest developments from policy makers and key sector bodies. AIM Conference 2021 will provide you with the knowledge, tools and inspiration to meet the future with confidence.

“... together we'll explore how to build resilience and ensure wellbeing in our working lives.”

networking, the conference will bring together delegates from across the UK for engaging sessions led by practitioners, professionals, experts, and policymakers. We'll cover the latest insights and advice and encourage you to make new contacts, catch-up and share best practice, too.

What can you expect?

We'll hear practical advice from colleagues who have strengthened their organisations through innovation – for example in their approach to collections, in reaching out to new audiences through digital, in re-thinking their approach to

AIM Conference Training Grants

In line with these tough times, we have kept prices as low as we can and will be offering a small number of grants for those considering attending the conference for the first time, with a particular focus on freelancer members.

Booking Information

For more information and to book your place visit

www.aim-museums.co.uk/aim-national-conference-2021

Early Bird members discount now available, so don't delay – book today!



Survive and thrive

Flexible, proactive and practical, AIM's work has changed continuously in response to the impact of the pandemic. Below are just some of our highlights from a challenging year.

Ongoing representation and advocacy

- AIM initiated sustained advocacy with DCMS, Arts Council England, Heritage Fund and others in March and has continuously made the case for support, helping ensure the Culture Recovery Fund was relevant to the needs of independent museums
- AIM played a key part in the DCMS working group that informed sector guidance on reopening museums in Summer 2020, producing a bespoke checklist for members in partnership with the Museum Development Network
- AIM continues to drive sector advocacy for a fair and consistent approach to how business rates are applied to museums
- AIM continues to promote take up of Exhibitions Tax Relief, launching a free ETR helpline and a related Special Interest Group for Finance Directors. We remain focused on ensuring the sunset clause on the relief is removed

Grant distribution and support

- In 2020 AIM allocated £509k in 64 grants to member organisations
- £59k of AIM Hallmarks Grants were awarded to nine museums
- AIM coordinated professional support for emergency grant applications including those to the Culture Recovery Fund

- From 2020-2022 AIM is distributing £125k a year across three conservation grant schemes – including additional funding secured from the Pilgrim Trust
- Seven Training Grants went to AIM members across the UK, totalling £1456

Governance

- At the start of the pandemic AIM launched online surgery support enabling museums to discuss their immediate challenges with our Prospering Boards programme consultants
- AIM launched a regular series of 'Hallmarks at Home' online workshops, offering support to members from sector experts on topics such as governance, fundraising, marketing and more. 47 sessions have been held to date attended by 330 people. With support from ArtFund the programme is now running through to Spring 2021
- AIM published a governance Success Guide with a related webinar
- Support for Trustee members has been reviewed and refreshed

Community Building and sharing best practice

- AIM's annual conference switched to virtual in June 2020 – 'Roads to Recovery' was free to all and attracted over 1100 participants

- Free HR support for AIM members was introduced to assist with accessing the Job Retention Scheme and other pandemic related HR issues
- AIM launched its 'Tackling racism, tackling inequality' Response and Action Plan, challenging ourselves and our members to use our organisations and our heritage to tackle the inequalities that persist in society
- Members continue to sign up for free Charity Finance Group membership with a further 87 museums joining in 2020
- AIM membership stands at 1252 including 1050 museum members
- AIM published a range of new or updated Success Guides on
 - Understanding Your Audience
 - Marketing
 - Successful Governance
 - Catering
 - Data protection

Workforce development

- AIM continues to be an active participant in the UK museum workforce steering group
- AIM has developed an effective, collaborative working relationship with Museum Development providers

Heritage Creative have launched a series of white papers **Heritage Briefings** aimed at digital marketers in the culture and heritage sector. Each takes a deep dive into an aspect of Digital with the first about Social Media. Below are some edited highlights but to read the full briefing and get future editions in your in-tray – why not sign up now?

How are you using Social Media?

With COVID-19 meaning most cultural organisations having to keep their doors closed, chances are you're dashing to put more resource into Social Media. But before you do, maybe now is a good time to review your approach?

Do you know who you want to be?

Should you use emojis? How about acronyms like LOL? Navigating the more informal world of social platforms as a respected (and respectful) heritage brand isn't always easy. You don't want to come across as a bit dull and fusty, but you probably shouldn't be chasing the latest memes about cats either. How do you find the right balance?

It's important to put time into **working through what makes your organisation what it is**. What's its heart and soul? What's its mission? And, how will the unique things about your organisation and its people play out on social

platforms? A great idea is to have a simple set of **social media brand statements** to provide guidance. This is particularly crucial if you have more than one person working on social media.

Often people tend to 'find their voice' once they've been using a platform a while. It's an organic process and without question there's a need for **the real person** to come across. But have the foundation of some basic principles in place. The web abounds with stories of ill conceived things said in haste on social channels. Once said, they can't be taken back.

The buzzword tends to be **authenticity**. It's the key to bringing those brand

Supreme Court Judgement: The end of the saga?

It seems remarkable that it has taken a High Court ruling and subsequent Supreme Court judgment to interpret whether there may be cover with some insurer products for COVID-19 financial losses. Here AIM Associate Suppliers Hayes Parsons review the judgement and ask – is this the end of the saga?

The judgment ran to 112 pages, and it is worth noting that insurers themselves were not being assessed, but various business interruption policy constructs. Although the judgment found in favour of policyholders, the Financial Conduct Authority believes this would impact about 370,000 policyholders, or some 6% of business policies in force. This is different to the tone of some media reporting at the time.

Essentially, if your insurer had previously declined to meet your claim, it is unlikely they will change their position, as in all likelihood the wording they provided was not assessed by the Supreme Court, and the insurer has legitimately declined to meet the claim. If they were awaiting the result, and it appears they may provide cover,

statements to life. The way to achieve it is to really **get to know your organisation**. It's then your job to translate all that understanding and context into real conversations and relevant content on social media.

Do you know who you are talking to?

Social media lets you speak to almost everyone. This can be a huge opportunity. But it can also be distracting. You're far better off **focussing on the right types of audience** if you're looking for measurable success. It will also make the content that you create far stronger.

It really helps to have a person in mind when you're creating any type of content. That applies to social media too. The more time you spend on this, the better it will be. This is often called **persona development**.

Personas are fictional representations of your ideal visitors or followers. They're informed by data – typically demographics, income level, interests, likes and dislikes. Personas paint a picture of the individuals you're trying to connect with – and for content creators they are invaluable.

How to find this data when you're getting started? There are lots of ways, but your social media platforms are particularly handy. The level of analytics available in Facebook these days is exceptional. Your website is another

obvious source – Google analytics provides demographic data for example.

And of course, you could also ask them. A well designed survey will reap lots of useful insights to help you shape your approach to social media.

Do you know why you're doing it?

Nearly half of businesses in a recent Buffer survey didn't have a **written social media strategy**. Is yours one of them? There's no point putting resource into anything unless you know what success looks like. And if you're planning to increase your use of social media, it's an ideal time to review and adjust if need be. The more you can tie these metrics down the better. The trick is to step back and think about **the wider objectives of your organisation** and then see how they can be applied to social media.

Vanity metrics like numbers of followers and likes are easy enough to track, but are they really worth anything? It's usually better to focus on metrics like engagement, click-throughs to your website and conversion rates like sign-ups for your newsletter. More sophisticated analysis attempts to **map these customer journeys** and follow customers as they proceed along it.

It's supposed to be social, right?

At its best, **social media is about community**. Your followers can be a great source of content ideas and new followers. Creating a sense of being part



of something is exceptionally important for success. Invest time in responding to comments, asking questions, being present. To a degree you need to think of that Twitter feed or Facebook page as the users' channel – not yours.

There's huge opportunity for the sector to work together – particularly now. Reach out to your counterparts – agree to repost and reshare each other's content. This is a great way to keep your channel busy with new content and expose what you do to a wider audience. How about linking up with similar organisations to create social media campaigns that you all participate in?

Heritage Creative's new series of Heritage Briefings is free, sign up today at

www.heritagecreative.co.uk

Read the full social media white paper at www.heritagecreative.co.uk/insights/heritage-briefing-1

you should have received a communication from your insurer and they should be proactively getting your claim validated and settled where cover applies. Where there is cover, it depends on the actual policy wording in force, as the extent of coverage will invariably be found within the actual policy wording against a particular extension, perhaps with a capped sum insured and cover period.

When assessing the claim value, again it depends on the wording in force, and for some wordings operational savings made during closure would be considered (for example, furlough payments). Any grants received during the insured period should not be deducted from the claim as, although not binding, there is an expectation following discussions between the insurance industry and the government, that these will not be taken into account. If you find they are, this should be challenged. If you are still unsure whether cover applies to your policy, speak to your insurance broker.

The judgment provides the legal steer of policy wordings, it does not say there is or is not cover, as that depends on the actual situation for your museum and the wording of your policy. Should you remain unhappy with the insurer declining your claim, there is the option to investigate civil action, although we would recommend serious consideration be given to this.

The test case has brought into sharp focus the plethora of different style policy wordings in the market, even when provided by the same insurer. Where wordings were found to provide cover, it was unintentional and going forward there will be exclusions relating to communicable diseases, reduction in sums insured for various extensions, or the removal of disease cover in its entirety. The insurance industry is going through a period of change, and coupled with the reduction in covers, premiums are increasing. We would recommend early engagement with your insurance broker at your next renewal and it may be worth a second opinion.

www.hayesparsons.co.uk

Black Country Living Museum's approach to Tik Tok has been a roaring success, garnering over a half a million followers and attracting headlines and attention across the world. But how do you get started? And how do you best sustain interest in your digital innovation? We spoke to Abby Bird, BCLM's Audiences and Communications Manager to find out more.

Staying on top with Tik Tok

Like many museums during the pandemic, Black Country Living Museum has been exploring how to keep their audiences engaged whilst the doors were closed. But it was their work on Tik Tok – for the uninitiated, a social media platform used to make, watch, and share short, often music based, videos – that really caught the attention. With limited resources but a lot of creativity, the BCLM Tik Tok account grew from nothing to 570,000 followers in six months, and, crucially, engaged a new and younger audience with the work of the museum.

Social media is having profound implications for the way that museums are consumed, and often the only interaction someone will have will be online, explains Abby Bird, BCLM's Audiences and Communications Manager.

"Like many, in the past we have been a bit guilty of treating social media as an add on. Digital touchpoints like social media are becoming really important ways in which we define the brand, and whilst it is a powerful educational tool, it is also always a powerful marketing tool, and the two are not mutually exclusive."

Whilst social media has always been a focus for the small BCLM team, around a third of the communications effort, once the doors closed it grew significantly, and with significant results.

"According to a recent poll, 80% of the people that we are talking with (on Tik Tok) are under 30; 50% of our followers haven't visited before, and 80% of our followers said interacting with us was

the first time they had interacted with museums on social media at all. So we are talking about a young, less culturally engaged audience – that's like museum gold dust!"

Given the success of their work, Tik Tok approached BCLM to becoming a learning partner, providing them with a budget to support the production of a couple of videos a week prior to the current lockdown. It's a collaborative effort across the organisation that helps drive the creativity required to sustain content demanding social channels.

"We recently signed a contract with Tik Tok as part of their 'learn on Tik Tok' initiative, so we produce four videos a week for them. But in the first few months we were on our own. We look at what's trending and see how we can apply the stories and histories that we tell to that trend. If we just have an idea that we just want to experiment with, we base it around characters that are interested in being in front of the camera, because not everyone is comfortable. A lot of content has come out of discussions with researchers and curators and a piece of content frequently serves the purposes of multiple teams."

What's more you don't need Spielberg's skills to make the films, which can be done with minimal kit, as long as the creative ideas are there, explains Abby.

"Sometimes it's easier to shoot on your phone, but we always have a continuous lighting rig, some form of stabilisation. If time and the content warrants it, I will



BCLM's Tik Tok channel has over half a million followers.

shoot on a DSLR and all the editing we do in Premiere Pro."

And in terms of other accounts there's a range of approaches on Tik Tok Abby rates.

"English Heritage does a great job, as well a couple of good examples in America – Old Salem, Sacramento History Museum. And Ministry of History. They're really good, too, it's just a guy in front of a white sheet. It just goes to show you just don't need a lot, to get a lot of engagement."

Looking to give it a go? Check out this great Tik Tok how to Abby produced for Association for Cultural Enterprises

culturalenterprises.org.uk/blog/digital/getting-started-on-tiktok-a-quick-guide-for-museums

The Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology at the University of Oxford has harnessed passion amongst staff to put equality and diversity firmly on the Museum's agenda.

Empowering staff to set the agenda

We spoke to Rachel Davies, Director of Operations and Emily Jarrett, Digital Communications Officer, to find out more.

What was your starting point for the work you've been doing?

RD: Myself and the Director of Public Engagement had been aware and concerned about issues of equality and social responsibility for some time. We both attended a convening in Minneapolis in October 2018 called MASS Action. The event was challenging and eye-opening and we returned to the UK with a new appreciation of the issues.

EJ: Whilst there had been discussion about equality and diversity within the organisation prior to 2020, the plans had yet to unfold and find their way into the day-to-day lives of staff and visitors to the Museum. The killing of George Floyd and the subsequent Black Lives Matter movement compelled museum staff to speak up.

Tell us about the work you've been doing.

RD: Our survey on "Ashmolean for All," our strategy to encourage diverse audiences and a diverse workforce, received very encouraging feedback. Staff wanted to know more and to get involved. We set up a steering group, who drafted a Statement of Intent and

this was agreed at an all-staff forum, approved by the senior management team and the Board. Staff came forward offering to be EDI Champions.

EJ: A few months into lockdown, members of staff began to meet informally to share their experiences and discuss ways to raise issues of equality and diversity within the organisation. After speaking to senior management, we partnered with Rachel to pick up where the EDI initiatives had left off prior to closure, and to reinvigorate the movement within the Ashmolean.

So the initiative is both top-down and bottom-up, originating from management but also from staff within the museum, which we think will help to bolster its effectiveness and uptake. With a solid plan in place, we look forward to opening up participation and bringing more members of staff on board this EDI programme. And with our staff's highly varied skill set, we think we will be able to create lasting changes.

Can you share any examples of what you've done so far?

RD: We have a Decolonisation Group who have already started programming with the multiple voices and perspectives of our audiences in mind. For example, two of our recent free exhibitions – *Nice Cup of Tea* and *Owning the Past* – were put together with the input of local communities.

Our Division of the University (GLAM) includes the Pitt Rivers Museum, who are doing ground-breaking work in this area, both internally with staff but also externally with its programming and its audiences.

EJ: We're also working on pulling together an extensive list of EDI and anti-racism resources to share on our staff intranet. So far, the list includes several books, articles, podcasts and social media accounts that people can engage with to start their own anti-racism learning and to spark conversation.

Do you have any advice you can share for AIM members facing a similar challenge?

RD: Discuss with the staff. Talk to your visitors. Empower staff to set the agenda and targets. It's very positive for staff morale, for the visitor experience and our continued relevance to the society we serve.

Knowledge is power. Reach out to your network and find out what they are doing. Invite speakers in to talk to you and your team to increase awareness. We've found that decolonisation work focussing on our collections and programming and equality and diversity work with our colleagues are two sides of the same coin, so it's important to work as a team across the Museum.

EJ: It's crucial to have staff be a part of your EDI process and to educate yourself on these issues. We don't think you can ever be 'finished' learning about equality and diversity – it's a deeply complex issue and one that we can only make progress on by having tough conversations.

Read more about the Tackling Inequalities Hallmark: www.aim-museums.co.uk/tackling-inequality

More case studies from AIM members aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/case-studies



The installation of *Nice Cup of Tea*.

We spoke to AIM members, the Coffin Works, Birmingham and The Foundling Museum London about their experience of using Art Tickets, Art Fund's free to use ticketing service.

Reach wider audiences with Art Tickets

Developed in close consultation with museum partners, Art Tickets is purpose built to enable organisations to reach wider audiences through selling tickets online. There are no set-up or running costs and it is designed to be as straightforward to use as possible, offering a comprehensive range of features that help manage tickets for multiple venues and spaces.

Sarah Hayes, Museum Manager at Coffin Works explains that they introduced Art Tickets after a survey where 70% of their audience indicated a preference to book tickets online. The fact Art Tickets has a supportive approach to developing the product and is free to use as a museum or a visitor was a real bonus too.

"We had actually held ourselves back by not having an online booking system, we had used Eventbrite for events, not day-to-day bookings but they took a percentage fee per booking. Having that extra 10% per booking at the end of the year, it can make the difference between a surplus or not, as a small charity.

What I love about it is that they (Art Fund) develop it in line with your needs as well. Their team constantly tries to respond to what people like, to user needs. For us, it was a no brainer!"

London's Foundling Museum has been using the platform since Summer 2018, as Marketing and Communications Manager Hannah Thomas explains

"We came on board quite early on as an Art Tickets partner, so we already had an online account where we upload our events. So all we have to do is click on an option to add that event into the ticketing system. It's easy to use and intuitive.

We also use it for our general admission which we introduced because of COVID, social distancing, and limiting ticket sales. Options for people to join mailing lists has meant that we've grown our subscriber base during these periods of closure, gathered more data and know more about our audience. It's a useful, easy to use tool that has served us well so far."

www.coffinworks.org

foundlingmuseum.org.uk

To find out more about Art Tickets contact museums@artfund.org or visit artfund.org/arttickets



Image courtesy of The Coffin Works

Art Tickets_


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For galleries without their own online ticket-booking system, Art Tickets has made managing visitors in the post-lockdown period a possibility. 'We doubt that we could open without this amazing free resource'.

Gordon Cummings, Chairman, Fry Art Gallery Society

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AIM administers grants including AIM Hallmarks Awards, supported by Arts Council England and the Welsh government; 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 grants case studies

AIM Conservation and Collections Care

The Egypt Centre,
University of Swansea

AIM grant: £4,750

Provisions for the dead in Ancient Egypt

The Egypt Centre is a small museum of Egyptian antiquities, which is located at Swansea University.

In 2019 it was determined that several objects in the *Provisions for the Dead* case were in urgent need of conservation in order to ensure their preservation and to better display them to the public. The case is one of the museum's most popular exhibits, with the "food and provisions" activity featuring heavily in its educational programme. Additionally, objects from other cases or storage were chosen to supplement the project, such as the large Amarna pot.

Twenty-seven objects from the museum collection were stabilised and or analysed as part of this project. In many instances, the objects had previously missing sections reintegrated. This work has increased the robustness of these exceptional objects for the enjoyment and education of both present and future generations.

As a small museum, the AIM Pilgrim Trust conservation grant has had a major impact on the preservation of a selection of objects in the collection. Several of our most popular objects, such as the two wooden stelae, wooden tomb figures, and two painted plaster reliefs have been beautifully cleaned and consolidated. In the case of the wooden tomb figures, many have had limbs reattached, thus making them more visually appealing. Additionally, the large Amarna pot, which had suffered from significant surface flaking, has now been stabilised and can be displayed to visitors for the first time in over twenty years.



Items from The Egypt Centre before and after conservation.

We are extremely grateful to the AIM and the Pilgrim Trust for awarding us the conservation grant. The *Provisions for the Dead* display is one of our most popular exhibits, with our "food and provisions" and "survival in the afterlife" activities featuring heavily in our educational programme. Our volunteers are already looking forward to seeing the fantastic results of this work once the museum reopens again.

This work was a collaborative project involving Dr Ken Griffin (Collections Access Manager at the Egypt Centre), Mr Phil Parkes (Reader in Conservation at Cardiff University), and Dr Ashley Lingle (Lecturer in Conservation at Cardiff University).

Dr Kenneth Griffin
Collections Access Manager

Ely Museum

AIM grant: £3,073

Conserving the Ely Sedan chair

Ely Museum is an independent museum in the small city of Ely. Its collections cover local stories from Fossils to the present day. The museum closed for redevelopment in September 2019 which has allowed vital conservation to take place.

The Ely Sedan Chair has been on public display for many years and has suffered some wear and tear. It was identified as part of a conservation audit as in urgent need of treatment. This project aimed to conserve the sedan chair to ensure its future stability and to allow the museum to display it once again when the museum re-opens.

Tristram Bainbridge of Bainbridge Conservation (London) was contracted to carry out the work. The surfaces and

the wool interior were cleaned. The areas of stable leather were cleaned, and structural repairs were carried out to the sliding window and frame. The joints were repaired and, where there were losses, new pine timber was carved to fit. Carbon fibre rods were used through the tenon and rail to add further support where needed. New timber was pieced in around the break on the door jamb around the catch and on the back PR hinge. The areas of loose textile were reattached, and the areas of degrading leather were consolidated. Tears in the leather were repaired and the stiffer sections on the top were first humidified and then the leather was attached.

The work was completed to a very high standard and the chair is now on display in the new galleries, ready to welcome visitors when circumstances allow. Without funding, this work would not have been possible and the Sedan Chair would have had to be removed from public display.



Ely Sedan chair before and after treatment.

The museum's Chair of Trustees Lis Every said "The AIM Pilgrim Trust funding has allowed Ely Museum to employ a specialist conservator to care for and preserve this important item from Ely's past. This work will ensure the future preservation of the Sedan Chair, as well as providing enjoyment and learning to many future visitors to the museum."

Elie Hughes
Curator

AIM Hallmarks

St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery, Lymington Museum Trust

AIM grant: £11,450

Reach Further

St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery started in 1999 as 'a museum in a room', in an old school building. The 'Future of St Barbe', a NLHF project, opened in 2017 and transformed St Barbe to an accessible space with an Accredited museum, a GIS standard gallery, Gift shop and Café.

Our project 'Reach Further' had three components:

1. Audience research – to help us engage with local teenagers; disability, dementia and mental health groups; socially excluded people and the rural community. We looked at:
 - Who are our users?
 - Who visits the building but do not pay to go into the Museum?
 - Who visits to Lymington, but do not come into the Museum?
 - How do people in the local rural communities want to use our services?
2. Messaging – the café and shop are busy, but we do not convert general visitors to paying customers. The project funded a

New signage at St Barbe café welcome desk.



marketing consultant to get the messaging right, provide information to build on our strong branding and convert our regular visitors to paying customers.

3. Pricing and outreach – we need to charge for entry as this is our main source of income, and the charge encourages visitors to become Friends and Patrons. We also want to build a more community focused audience. The project helped us analyse our pricing to ensure that we were able to cover our running costs as well as develop programmes for those unable to pay and establish messaging to encourage paying visitors to support our charitable ambitions.

As a small team everyone was involved in the project, from trustees to volunteers. We worked closely with disability organisations and the Access Panel. The outreach was undertaken in partnership Bournemouth University; students curated a WWII exhibition with six villages. Due to COVID-19, this exhibition is now on the website.

The main outcomes have been:

- We know and understand our audience.
- We are clear about our messaging, in print, on-line and inside the Museum.
- We have a clear pricing structure with free events to attract our harder to reach audience.

The impact on our organisation is huge. It made us re-examination our Aims, Objectives and Values; we interrogated our outreach and community ambitions and established a new fundraising strategy. The information in the reports has provided us with essential information and practical solutions.

The AIM Hallmarks Grant has helped us really understand how to work towards making the Museum a cultural hub, relevant and useful to the whole community.

Maria Ragan, Director

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Museum Director
during lockdown



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Some useful top tips from our Associate Suppliers
JG Creative and Rare Earth Digital about how to give
 online visitors the right experience.

Springing into action!

So where do you start?

Analysis

Start by finding out where you are right now. Ask yourself . . .

- Who is visiting our site?
- Which parts of the site are getting the most visitors?
- How long are people visiting for and how many pages are they viewing?

If you've got Google analytics installed on your site, or it is a Wix site then you can see this quite easily. Look for your audience and behaviour data for the last six months for answers.

Then imagine you're an (online) visitor. What are you are looking for? At the moment it could be parents looking for educational content or children doing a school project. For each potential audience visit the site through their eyes. How easy it is to find what you're looking for?

Content

Review and update the information you've got on your site. These questions can help:

- is it true? Content can get out of date quickly, especially at the moment.
- is it relevant? Both for your audience and on that particular page.
- is it useful? Do you need this content on your site at all or is it just adding clutter? Think about older news articles and blog posts especially.

Structure

If you can now see that some of your content is in the wrong place, then move it. Focus on your navigation and ensure it's as simple as possible.

Look

How does your website look? Is it a good representation of the experience people get when they visit you? Can you update any imagery to reflect current collections or restrictions?

Humans are visual creatures, we assume a lot from what we see, not just what we read. If your site looks good quality and works well then people will assume the information can be trusted and will be reassured. Make sure your site looks good on mobiles and tablets too.

The technical bit

You might be wondering, but how do I update my site? Ideally you'll have a login to get to the 'back-end' of your site where you can make changes.

If you have an agency that does this, send the amends to them and ask for your own login so you can make changes, without incurring costs.

ALWAYS ensure you own your website address (URL). This is called the 'domain' and you want to control it. If you don't, then make it a priority to get control asap. It is a significant organisational asset.



Search

Use an incognito website browser window to search for your museum. Where are you on the results? Try something broader than using your name, for example 'Museum in Cheshire'. If people can't remember what you're called what might they search for? Write these phrases down and ensure they're used in the text on your website. This means that search engines will know that you're an appropriate result.

These are the most simple and effective things you can do, which form the basis of everything else that is possible online. Get the basics right and you will see a difference.

If you need support JG Creative and Rare Earth Digital are here to help. They are happy to give free advice if it will help you get started! Call Jo on 01270 626624 or email jo@jg-creative.co.uk and claire@rareearthdigital.com

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Purpose built in the style of a French château, The Bowes Museum is in the historic market town of Barnard Castle.

The Bowes Museum

Opened to the public in 1892, the Museum bears the name of its founders: the businessman, and son of the 10th Earl of Strathmore, John Bowes and his French actress wife, Joséphine.

The couple were devoted to each other and created the Museum to share their passion for art and to enrich the lives of people in the area they loved, John's family home in Teesdale, County Durham.

The grade 1 listed building was designed under John's instruction by French architects to make Joséphine feel at home in England. Sadly neither of them lived to see it completed.

The magnificent Museum houses their extensive and diverse collection, over 30,000 items in total, ranging from silver and metals to furniture, old masters, sculpture and ceramics, as well as fashion and textiles; and curators today continue to add items carefully chosen to complement their vision. It holds Designated status in recognition of the outstanding collection.

The Museum sits in 20 acres of grade 2 listed parkland, surrounded by woodlands, a formal parterre garden and nature walks aplenty. The grounds, which are open throughout the year, are also home to the town's tennis and bowling clubs.

With the North of England's most important collection of European fine and decorative arts and the UK's largest collection of Spanish paintings outside London or Edinburgh, as well as an internationally acclaimed exhibition programme and over 100 events a year, more than 100,000 people annually visited the Museum pre-pandemic.



A popular Café with views over Teesdale and a fabulous shop with gifts that reference the collections add to the visitor offer. In the summer months a take-away kiosk operates from a gatehouse with drinks and snacks for people using the grounds.

When COVID hit, the Museum, which is a charitable trust, furloughed 80% of staff and quickly took its collection, exhibitions, events and outreach programmes online, allowing it to continue to reach out and support its community, giving them a means to continue to enjoy its activities.

It created art in the park events, using the grounds to show community youth art exhibitions and installing guidance signage and sanitization stations so members of the public could continue to use them safely for their daily exercise during lockdowns.

The Museum put in place a reopening team, who focused on the Museum meeting all the criteria to make it COVID secure, ensuring a safe, welcoming and relaxing return for visitors. Feedback shows they got it right with the majority of visitors saying they felt safe, secure and thankful to be back, many choosing the Museum for their first foray out from their home.

Sadly though, the Museum's life size silver swan automaton (pictured left) has become a casualty of the pandemic. Not able to

play before the crowds it drew daily pre-pandemic because of social distancing measures, it has seized due to lack of use. The Museum is now working on securing a funding package to conserve, preserve and redisplay this iconic object.

The specialist skills of the Museum's conservation department are also in demand, and include working on commissions for other institutions and individuals, and offering advice, guidance and practical support for the conservation and preservation of paper and textile based objects.

Most recently the team completed a project for Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery; conserving, repairing, preparing and helping mount around 40 costumes and accessories on acrylic mannequins, and continuing to advise on environmental controls and on-going care of the items.

The Museum is looking to the future with guarded optimism, it has recently put in place a five-year business plan and is currently creating a transformation project to strengthen it for the future. It is applying to the relevant funding bodies to bolster its resilience and is also in the process of appointing new trustees to help reshape it, to ensure its continued success and that it remains relevant for future generations.

www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk

Updates from the Charity Finance Group

What does the new Brexit trade and cooperation agreement mean for your organisation?

CFG has drawn out key areas of interest to help you navigate what the EU Trade and Cooperation agreement might mean for your organisation. It covers several areas where CFG is seeking to amend current rules to benefit our sector, including reducing irrecoverable VAT, reforming State Aid and the United Kingdom Shared Prosperity Fund.

To read more about this and CFG's other work on Brexit visit www.cfg.org.uk/brexit

Putting finance first with CFG. Free to join for AIM members

The outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted charities and non-profit organisations in unprecedented ways, and it's more important than ever to strengthen our financial best practice and sustainability so we can continue to serve our communities and supporters.

Charity Finance Group (CFG) helps finance managers, trustees and non-profit leaders to understand what's happening in the world of charity finance. Membership helps you to grow skills and expertise, be connected to peers so you can share learning, and access the resources and support you need.

As an AIM member you can join CFG for free.

- You'll receive help and support through our membership community;
- Have your say on vital policy issues and our campaigning work as we fight for a better operating environment for the sector;

- Have access to free members' meetings and special interest groups, including a dedicated group for arts and heritage organisations, which takes a deep dive into sector and finance function issues;
- Access our resources and member publications including one of our most popular member benefits *Finance Focus* monthly magazine and recently published *Guide to Gift Aid*;
- Get free advice through expert helplines on key topics ran by our corporate members;
- Save money with member discounts and build your CPD through CFG's comprehensive events and training programme which helps you to network and stay up-to-date on developments in the sector.

Today's challenges and changes are like no other, so it's good to know you can reach out and navigate the future with others.

Find out more and register for free at www.cfg.org.uk/aim membership is open to everyone in your organisation.

"To belong to an organisation which understands your concerns and helps you resolve them means a great deal to an isolated small independent museum which is totally dependent on volunteers."

David Burkitt, Trustee, King Edward Mine CIO

"CFG provides insight into diverse topics which is very helpful to small organisations which would struggle to find such resources in-house." Chris Smyth, Trustee, Vintage Carriages Trust

"I have long experience in charity finance but am relatively new to the museum sector. The CFG events have been invaluable in introducing me to the sector's particular characteristics and funding environment." Martin Isaacs, Treasurer, Bridport Museum Trust

"I've found access to expert advice and support through the CFG-AIM partnership hugely useful." Stephanie Fuller, Director CEO, Ditchling Museum of Art and Craft



AIM Bulletin

Editor MATT SMITH

Email: editor@aim-museums.co.uk

Contact AIM

Online: www.aim-museums.co.uk

By phone: 0333 305 8060

By post: AIM Postal, PO Box 181, Ludlow, Shropshire SY8 9DR



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