



Association of  
Independent  
Museums

# AIM Bulletin

June 2021

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**Looking to the  
future with  
confidence**

# Welcome to AIM Bulletin!

Thanks very much for your comments on the new-look Bulletin – we're glad you like it! And if you have any ideas for content or would like to be featured in a future issue, do get in touch via [editor@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:editor@aim-museums.co.uk)

## Light at the end of the tunnel?

Well, we are now half-way through 2021 and what a half-year it has been, never mind 2020. We have gone from the depths of January, when we were all closed, to now, the early summer, when we are either already open or planning for our imminent opening, although I mustn't forget those for whom the closure has been more severe and who don't have immediate plans for opening. I hope that you can see light at the end of the tunnel and that your opening plans will soon start to show progress.

In reflecting on the last 18 months, I have wondered whether, when we last reviewed our risk register, pre-Covid-19, any of us had a pandemic on the list. I suspect that apart from at a museum of epidemiology (and please, if there is one, let me know) it is unlikely that a pandemic was there. Should we chide ourselves for this? Most people would, I think, say no; it's not the type of issue that you would have at the front of your mind, regardless of your particular discipline or speciality. However, the scientists and those charged with thinking about them tell us that we should all consider these types of low-probability, high-impact issues, exactly because they could have a particularly severe effect on our museum.

That consideration will, in the main but not inevitably, be particular to our institution. The extent of the pandemic was such that it was out of our individual control, but when we review our risk registers the questions should be: what more could we have done and how can we better respond in the future? Risk registers are not tick boxes to be dutifully completed and reported upon. They should be thought about, argued over and changed as circumstances change. They are living things, which alter over time and require constant attention.

Be they our staff or our visitors, we are a people industry and at a time when, with lockdown, we have been missing social interaction and the day-to-day beat of life, we must make the most of our people, both our staff and our visitors. We must work to assist the staff to work well and produce a great experience to be enjoyed by our visitors, and we can do this by ensuring that we spend more focussed time on our risk registers. They have a purpose and if they are run and used properly, they can save us time and money, and they can protect our people.

**Charles Brien**  
Trustee, National Mining Museum Scotland Trust  
and AIM Board member



## Front cover

This issue's cover star is the scientist Edward Jenner, who pioneered the concept of vaccines. The Jenner Trust preserves the Chantry, his home in Berkeley, Gloucestershire, celebrates his legacy and encourages others to follow in his footsteps. Read more on page 19. (Image © Edward Jenner's House, Museum and Garden.)

# AIM appoints Lisa Ollerhead as Director

**Lisa Ollerhead has been appointed as the new Director (and Chief Executive) of AIM following a comprehensive recruitment process, joining the AIM team on 1 June 2021.**

Lisa comes to AIM from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). As Head of Museums Policy, she played a leading role in the response for museums during Covid-19 and was closely involved in the design and delivery of the Culture Recovery Fund, supporting the independent Culture Recovery Board and the £100m Museum Estates and Development Fund. Previously she led implementation of the Mendoza Review of museums and the DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund.

AIM Chair Andrew Lovett said, “We are delighted to make this appointment. Lisa joins AIM at a pivotal moment for

our members and our sector. Her considerable expertise, achievements and networks will further strengthen AIM in a period when the support we offer our members has perhaps never been more important.

“Through Lisa’s leadership we will continue to ensure that the voice of independent museums, galleries and heritage organisations is heard. And, as always, improving the impact, sustainability and relevance of our members will be at the heart of our work. I’d also like to thank Emma Chaplin for her work too; she leaves AIM extremely well placed to manage future challenges and opportunities.”

Lisa said, “I am thrilled to take up this role and lead AIM’s work in championing and supporting independent museums, galleries and heritage organisations right across the UK. These are challenging times, but



Lisa Ollerhead joins AIM from DCMS.

AIM’s relentless focus on possibility and the resilience of the sector gives me great hope for the future. I am really looking forward to working with the team and meeting our members too.”

## Are ‘vaccine passports’ the answer?

**A new initiative – the Covid status certificate or ‘vaccine passport’ – has been proposed as the latest tool aimed at enabling greater access to venues and events. Could they work in the museum setting?**

At his 5 April press conference Boris Johnson indicated growing government focus on the development of Covid status certificates as an enabler to access a range of settings. Though detailed information on how the scheme would work is yet to be made available, press reports suggest that a certificate might be issued either on proof of vaccination, a recent negative test or one showing antibodies within the last six months.

It has also been suggested that the use of such certificates could eventually lead to existing social distancing restrictions

being reduced or even lifted entirely. To date, the proposals have, however, been met with scepticism and with building opposition from hospitality groups as well as from MPs across the House.

While the reality of the pandemic, and the grief and damage it has caused, cannot be overstated, for many in the museum sector, including AIM, there are concerns that the proposals could have a range of negative impacts. At best they could narrow access, acting as a barrier at a time when museums are looking to sustain, rebuild and broaden their audience. It also seems inequitable to implement such a system ahead of everyone having had the chance to receive a vaccination.

And from a practical perspective, consideration would need to be given as to how the passport could work alongside other measures, such as test and trace, so that organisations – and in particular stretched FOH teams already focused on maintaining existing social distancing measures – are not overwhelmed, and that visitors feel measures are there to keep them safe, not inhibit them from visiting.

**AIM will be closely following the findings of the recent event piloting activity, which should offer a more detailed overview of the potential impact of the proposals. Do share your thoughts through [info@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:info@aim-museums.co.uk)**



**AIM is very pleased to announce a new grant fund for members. Funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, AIM's New Stories New Audiences scheme offers grants of up to £15,000 to AIM's smaller members to deliver projects which tell a new story that will attract a new audience.**



# Funding opportunity: New Stories New Audiences

We know that all museums need to increase and widen their audiences to enhance their sustainability, and to widen participation to groups that are currently under-represented. We want New Stories New Audiences to inspire museums to stay relevant to their audiences and to increase their impact.

The programme is open to all AIM members in the small museum category (up to 20,000 visitors). We will fund projects that result in a wider range of people being involved in heritage at your organisation. We expect you to have identified a new story that you wish to tell and undertaken some initial research to identify who the new audience will be. We also expect you to work with a new partner, to work differently and to try something new.

Projects could include:

- Developing new interpretation
- Creating a small display or exhibition
- Developing new educational resources
- Creating art works
- Undertaking new collecting
- Developing a website or other digital resource
- Organising an event
- Creating new volunteering opportunities
- Developing a new tour

Examples of partners could include a school, local history group, university, local charity, community, social or



Young people could be the new audience your new story aims to attract.

volunteer groups or individuals such as artists. Examples of new audiences could include members of BAME communities, people with a disability, young people or local people from particular socio-economic groups.

Your new story could be related to your local area, mission, groups, individuals from the past or present that you do not currently explore. Museums specifically have a unique opportunity to use and develop their collections to highlight discrimination, identify and address missing perspectives, and encourage debate and discussion. You'll need to find what may spark non-visitors' interest from among the collections, sites or stories of which you are the custodians. It is a good idea to consult people from those groups to identify what may encourage them to visit and explore further.

Successful projects will be allocated an experienced project mentor and will take part in the New Stories New Audiences network with other successful applicants. At the end of your project, you will be brought together to share learning, contribute to the evaluation of the experience and inform the creation of new resources.

Please do talk to us while you are developing your project and we will tell you whether your project is eligible and help you make your application as strong as possible. You'll also be able to sign up for one of our online Hallmarks at Home workshops on developing a New Stories New Audiences application.

For more information on New Stories, New Audiences contact Margaret Harrison, AIM Programme Manager on [margaret@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:margaret@aim-museums.co.uk)

# News in brief

## AIM members benefit from Culture Recovery Fund

In April Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden announced details of over 2,700 organisations that have been offered nearly £400 million in grants and loans to help the culture and heritage sector reopen and recover.

AIM members benefiting from these latest support funds include Chatham Historic Dockyard Trust, the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford-upon-Avon, Coldharbour Mill Museum in Uffculme, Bucks County Museum Trust in Aylesbury London's Cartoon Museum, Didcot Railway Centre and London Transport Museum.



The Cartoon Museum received support from the Culture Recovery Fund.

Responding to these latest announcements, AIM Chair Andrew Lovett said, "Another £25 million to support museums is really significant and oh so welcome. Viable, thriving futures for these organisations are a reality, and in time they will grow and once again increase job opportunities lost in the last 12 months."



BCLM's new chair, Dr Paul Belford.

## BCLM trustees elect new chair and two deputies

Dr Paul Belford has been elected chair of Black Country Living Museum Board, following the retirement of Lowell Williams. A trustee since 2014 and latterly deputy chair, Dr Belford is only the sixth chair in the museum's 43-year history and takes on the role during a period of significant and exciting change, with the start of major capital works for Forging Ahead and as the organisation continues to adapt to a post-pandemic world. Jonathan Badyal and Vikki Jessop have also been appointed as deputy chairs.

## Marilyn Scott to leave the Lightbox

After 20 years, Marilyn Scott is to step down as director of the Lightbox in Woking to move into full-time consultancy in the arts and heritage sector.

Marilyn joined what was then a small charity called Woking Museum and Arts and Crafts Centre in 2001. Within a short time, the idea of a new-build gallery was introduced. That idea eventually culminated in the award-winning Lightbox building, which opened in 2007 and now draws 100,000 visitors a year from across the UK.

In recognition of her contribution to the arts and heritage sector, Marilyn

was awarded the MBE in the 2020 Queen's New Year's Honours list. She is currently a trustee of Brooklands Museum and the Weald and Downland Museum, and, of course, Vice-Chair of AIM – all roles which she will continue.



Marilyn Scott will step down as Lightbox director, but remain AIM Vice-Chair.

## Emma leaves laden with gifts!

Emma Chaplin's departure from the role of AIM Director at the end of March was marked by a farewell Teams meeting with staff and the Board. Tweeting afterwards, Emma said, "It has been a privilege and joy to be AIM Director. Thanks to the Board, staff, members and sector colleagues who have supported me. I have a fabulous array of leaving presents and, yes, that is a magnum of gin and, yes, a reopening checklist jigsaw – a true memento of these times!"



Emma and her goodies.



AIM National Conference  
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**This year's AIM conference takes place online over 16, 17 and 18 June, and tickets are available now from [www.aim-museums.co.uk/conference](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/conference)**

# AIM Conference

As well as the latest developments from policy-makers and key bodies, AIM Conference always provides practical advice and innovative ideas from colleagues across the sector, and this year is no different. The overarching theme is supporting, strengthening and sharing, and 2021's AIM Conference has been carefully designed to provide you with the knowledge, tools and inspiration to meet the challenges ahead with confidence. The sessions are spread across three days and cover a wide range of topics, including – in no particular order:

- Developing new audiences
- Going digital
- Leadership challenges in small museums
- Managing change in museums
- Member showcases
- Networking opportunities
- New models for leadership
- Preparing for the future
- Succession planning for boards
- Supplier expo
- Tackling inequalities
- The future of volunteering

The conference opens with an opportunity to hear the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Oliver Dowden, in a special pre-recorded conversation with AIM Chair, Andrew Lovett. Other speakers from the museum sector and beyond include:

- Becky Benson, Volunteering Officer, Shropshire Museums
- Piotr Bienkowski, consultant



M-Accelerator on Unsplash

- Sara Blair-Manning, Chief Executive Officer, Nottingham Castle Trust
- Dr Karen Buchanan, Gairloch Museum
- Carrie Canham, Ceredigion Museum
- Sajida Carr, Director of Operations and Development, Creative Black Country
- Jessica Figueras, Chair, National Childbirth Trust
- Lizzie Glithero-West, Chief Executive, Heritage Alliance
- Matthew Hick, Chair, Heritage Volunteering Group
- Heather Lomas, Prospering Boards consultant
- Hilary McGowan, consultant
- Zak Mensah, Joint CEO, Birmingham Museums Trust
- Eleanor Moore, Sustainable Volunteering Officer, Museum Development South West
- Dr Jon Murden, Director, Dorset County Museum
- Tim Parker, Chair of the National Trust
- Sarah Philp, Director of Programme and Policy, ArtFund
- Owen Roberts, Curator, Eyam Museum
- Amy Shakespeare, Innovation Manager, Cornwall Museums Partnership
- Sara Wajid, Joint CEO, Birmingham Museums Trust

The full programme, along with biographies of all the speakers, can be viewed on the AIM website, which is also where you can purchase your ticket. We also have a small number of grants available to cover ticket costs, particularly for freelancers and those attending conference for the first time. To apply, email [info@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:info@aim-museums.co.uk) enclosing your AIM membership number.

AIM extends its thanks to our headline sponsor Art Fund, and day sponsors Artelia, Development Partners and Hayes Parsons.

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

It's often described as a 'gift' relationship, because volunteers give their labour freely and willingly. However, for museums this gift comes with responsibilities, because running a successful volunteer programme takes time and resources.

# Make the most of the gift of volunteering

**In this article, we'll look at four practical steps that can help to create engaging and rewarding volunteer opportunities which bring benefits for both volunteers and your museum.**

## 1. Create a clear volunteer role

The Museum Accreditation Standard (1.3) requires accredited museums to have agreements in place with employees and volunteers, setting out their roles and responsibilities. Do this by scoping volunteer role descriptions, setting out the work to be done, the timescales and any particular skills or experience needed.

From a legal perspective, it is also important to create a clear distinction between employee and volunteer roles. Failure to do so could mean that a volunteer could claim worker or employee status and be eligible to receive the National Minimum Wage in return for their work. To avoid the risk of creating a contractual relationship:

- Ensure the volunteer role is substantively different to work undertaken by employees.
- Use non-contractual language, for example by talking about

'expectations' rather than 'obligations' or 'requirements'.

- Avoid making payments to volunteers, other than reimbursing any out-of-pocket expenses.

## 2. Review your duty of care

All organisations have a common law and legislative duty to avoid causing harm and to protect volunteers and employees from harm, which is outlined in the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. To ensure you fulfil your duty of care to volunteers:

- Check your insurance to ensure that you are covered either under your Employer's Liability Insurance and/or your Public Liability for the type of volunteer opportunity you will be offering.
- Check your health and safety, safeguarding and data protection policies to ensure it is clear how these apply to volunteers.
- Ensure you have in place any policies and procedures that apply specifically to how the volunteer's role will be structured. For example, a lone working policy if a volunteer could be working alone on site, or a workstation assessment for remote volunteers to ensure they have a suitable physical space and equipment to undertake their role.

- Do a risk assessment for the volunteer role to help identify any risks related to the role and put in place mitigating actions. You should also ensure that volunteer roles are included in your security risk assessment and emergency plans (accreditation standards 3.2 and 3.3).

## 3. Put in place robust training and supervision

One of the key factors that drives volunteer engagement is the quality of training and supervision that is provided. There's a balance to be struck between an informal, friendly culture and taking enough of a structured approach to ensure volunteers are clear about what's expected of them and can successfully fulfil their roles. Key tools to help with this include:

- A volunteer agreement which outlines your expectations of the volunteer and what they can expect from your museum, as well as a problem-solving policy to explain how you will deal with any problems arising during the volunteering relationship.
- An induction checklist for helping to introduce a volunteer to their role, the organisation and the people they will be working with.
- A trial period when someone starts volunteering. This will give you and





Unplash

the volunteer the chance to find out whether they are suitable for the role. You can meet with the volunteer at the end of the trial period to review how it has gone, identify any issues and decide whether to continue with the arrangement.

- Clear processes for communication so that volunteers feel informed about what's happening in the wider museum. For example, daily briefings can be valuable for roles where volunteers need to know about what's happening on site each day. Likewise, wider meetings or newsletters are good tools for updating volunteers on larger developments and plans.
- Ways to recognise volunteers' contributions can range from a simple thank you, through to social events or volunteer awards, depending on the scope and scale of your volunteer programme.
- Opportunities to give volunteers a voice in your museum, by consulting or seeking feedback, can be done in a range of ways, such as a suggestion scheme, volunteer forum or volunteer engagement survey. The most important thing here is to respond to feedback, either by making changes in response to feedback or explaining why you can't do that!

#### 4. Make the opportunity accessible and inclusive

To attract the widest range of volunteers, ensure you consider how accessible and inclusive the volunteer role and your museum's working practices are. This list of considerations is by no means exhaustive, but it's a good place to start:

- Have a recruitment policy that sets out your commitment to diversity and inclusion, including your approach to the recruitment of ex-offenders.
- Exclude any skills or experience that aren't absolutely necessary from the role description.

### “Give volunteers a voice by asking for their feedback – but make sure you act on it.”

- Consider whether you can reimburse out-of-pocket expenses to ensure volunteers are not financially disadvantaged as a result of their volunteering.
- Use simple language to ensure documents are accessible to those whose first language isn't English or those with disabilities or cognitive processing conditions. Microsoft Word has an accessibility check tool and a tool that checks the document's

reading level, which can help with this.

- Ask prospective volunteers if they need any particular support to access the opportunity, either for the recruitment process or the role itself.
- Review your working practices and identify any potential barriers that might impact on someone's ability to volunteer. For example, while most volunteer roles might take place during the standard working day, for remote opportunities some people may prefer to volunteer at different times of day or night to fit with other responsibilities.

Unless there's a good reason not to, be as flexible as you can with your working practices. You can always build in safeguards (for example, a regular supervision time) to ensure the arrangements continue to work for you and the volunteer.

There are links to some of the resources and information mentioned in this article on the AIM website.

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

**How do you go about delivering transformational change during a pandemic? AIM spoke to **Nikki Kirby**, General Manager of Sudbury Hall in Derbyshire, about their project to develop the Children's Country House.**

# Developing the Children's Country House

Sudbury Hall – originally the country home of the Vernon family during the 17th century – was passed to the National Trust's care in 1967 and includes a mansion, formal garden and the Museum of Childhood. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the team at Sudbury is currently working on an ambitious project where the whole property offers an experience in which children are put first.

As Nikki Kirby, General Manager, explains, "Even before COVID we were starting to explore Sudbury's central proposition. As we have a high, and growing, percentage of family visitors we decided to make more of the museum collection, aiming to unify the three components of Sudbury – mansion, museum and gardens – to become the first Children's Country House, with children at the forefront of everything we do. So, by March 2020 we had a quite an elaborate project structure set up. And then within a matter of weeks, Covid arrived."

Like many organisations, staff were placed on furlough and project work ceased, but a core staffing enabled the project to continue, albeit in a different way than was initially planned. "The majority of my team were furloughed, but I was able to keep my creative programme manager, who was leading the Children's Country House development. During the first lockdown, when the property was unable to open, we used the time to go back to the drawing board and re-evaluate what the Children's Country House could be," says Nikki.

She adds, "We reviewed our expert counsel and research, rewrote all our strategies, moved our engagement online and recruited a team of child ambassadors who've been working with us on the development. We were lucky enough to have some remaining funds from a National Lottery Heritage Fund project, Exploring Childhoods, which enabled us to do some key collecting and put some foundations in place from which to build the Children's Country House."

Given the vision of the project – ensuring the Children's Country House is a place where children feel empowered, important, engaged and that they matter – their involvement in every stage of the development has been central. "The key question has been: how do you take a very traditional mansion house experience and make heritage and history accessible to children.

"A lot of our inspiration comes from other parts of the sector, so the mansion experience will be zoned in the same way that you might get in a science centre, for example. We are trying to engage the child audience with our collections, with stories and with heritage, so we are taking a lot of inspiration from the museum sector, looking at best practice. Our approach is about serving the needs of children with families, not families with children!"

Bringing children into the project was clearly hampered by Covid closures, but the team thought creatively to draw out their feedback during lockdown. "We sent out 'Museum of You' packs so children

Seven-year-old Mo is one of the child ambassadors who've been helping Sudbury develop the Children's Country House.

fed in their thoughts about what they would have in a museum if the museum was about them," explains Nikki.

"We managed to get a group of seven or eight children as ambassadors, who we could involve on a more ongoing, structured basis. They've been absolutely amazing and the ambassador programme has now grown to the point where we have over 80 children signed up to take part. We hope they will all be able to come in and do some testing and trialling, and support our development, if restrictions have lifted in summer, and we're also working with community groups and schools. Then the plan is to do a reveal of phase one in February 2022, all being well."

And while a challenge, according to Nikki lockdown has provided useful insights to take forward into future projects. She says, "There is something about how less is more when it comes to delivering change. While it's not been easy, and we are extremely pleased to have more support now members of the wider team have returned from furlough, we had to be extremely focused when there was just seven of us during the first lockdown and we got a lot done. That time of intense activity has also helped accelerate our confidence in the proposition and given us the appetite to be more innovative."

[www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sudbury-hall-and-the-national-trust-museum-of-childhood](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/sudbury-hall-and-the-national-trust-museum-of-childhood)



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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 Hallmarks

### Markfield Beam Engine and Museum, London

**AIM grant: £5,000**

#### *Organisational consolidation and development*

The Markfield Beam Engine and Museum is managed by a volunteer-led charitable trust company and is located in Markfield Park, South Tottenham, on the site of one of the UK's earliest Victorian sewage treatment works. The museum features a unique steam-powered pumping beam engine in a Grade II listed engine hall and tells the story of the site and engine. It opens on designated days throughout the year, including 'steam days'.

Our project aimed to achieve sustainable potential for planned future museum development. The trust benefited from the guidance of consultant Debbie Read, who supported the efforts of our enthusiastic volunteer museum trustee team, and who also had extended negotiations with our local authority and the Charity Commission.

The project had three strands:

1. Business planning and income generation;
2. A legal review of the existing charitable company constitution and lease; and

3. An organisational review of the AIM Hallmark areas.

Developing the wide range of organisational structures, policies and initiatives has been a collaborative exercise. Consultant-led workshops, advice and exemplars enabled the team to build on existing internal reviews and research, develop and review drafts, and adopt documents and systems. As a voluntary organisation, sufficient time is needed for internal development and deliberation, which is also true when working with external official bodies! However, remember, particularly with governance matters, others have gone before, so take advantage of all the consultant advice, examples and research available.

What have we achieved?

- An organisational structure for managing the trust;
- A business plan setting out our short, medium and long-term vision and strategies;
- A range of organisational policies and procedures;
- Online document management;
- An anticipated new lease for the museum premises; and
- A transition from our current charitable company to charitable incorporated organisation status.

All this work has been designed to provide sound organisational structures,



Interior and exterior of the Markfield Beam Engine and Museum.

policies and systems to support the trust's aspirations for future development.

The project's impact is only likely to be realised over time in relation to the objectives set out in our business plan. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated adjustments to the plan, but the overall direction remains intact. Anecdotally, the trust believes the project has provided the means, assurance and impetus to take forward sustainable plans for developing and managing the museum. This impetus is seen in the new life engendered by the recruitment of new volunteers, four of whom have now joined the Board of Trustees, to supplement the existing team's experience and help drive progress.

This has all been made possible with the financial backing and understanding of AIM, which has continued to support the project beyond the original period because of the external difficulties we encountered.

**David Cracknell**  
Chair of the Board of Trustees

[www.mbeam.org](http://www.mbeam.org)

Since March 2020, Jewish Museum London has been undertaking a skills and diversity audit of the Board. This work is already paying off, transforming the museum's strategy going forward. We spoke to Frances Jeens, museum director, to find out more.

## Changing the makeup of the board Jewish Museum London

Starting with a full governance review, Jewish Museum London then took a look at who was on their board. This was assisted by two surveys; a skills survey, and a diversity, inclusivity and equality survey. They are now moving on to new trustee recruitment, based on a brief to fill their skills gaps and deliver a more diverse board.

On why this work is so crucial to the museum, Frances says, "You can only ever see your own perspective. And if you can't see what needs to be changed, you can't change it. And because you only have your own perspective on life, you need a diverse range of people in order to see different things."

Tackling inequalities is AIM's newest Hallmark. Watch the interview with Frances on the AIM website to hear about the approach the museum has taken in tackling this challenge and the lessons they can already pass onto other AIM members.

[www.aim-museums.co.uk/case-studies/tackling-inequalities-london-jewish-museum/](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/case-studies/tackling-inequalities-london-jewish-museum/)



Examining an artefact at the Jewish Museum London.

# Watch our latest case studies

**We've been catching up with members who have received support from AIM's Prospering Boards programme to hear what they've been doing and the impact it's having on their museums. Each of these museums have faced different challenges, but the experiences they share could well be relevant to your own museum – and you can watch their video case studies on the AIM website.**

### Ilfracombe Museum

Val Gates joined the Board at Ilfracombe Museum a year ago, and since then has been working with other trustees and the museum manager to introduce a dynamic model to manage the museum's cashflow. It's a simple change that uses the financial data the museum already has to better understand the impact of known and potential events, putting the museum firmly in control of their finances. In this video, Val explains her process and tells us about the massive impact this has had already.

### London Museum of Water and Steam

London Museum of Water and Steam took part in AIM's Prospering Boards in 2019. Liz Power, the museum's director, tells us about their experience of the process, which has created a stronger and more effective Board. This has been particularly beneficial over the last 12 months as Liz has a clear strategy, objectives and values to guide her decision-making.

### Amberley Museum

Amberley Museum in Sussex undertook a strategic review with museum staff and volunteers. They went back to the museum's vision to ultimately set an action plan, a document that has become crucial in fulfilling the overarching objectives. Valerie Mills tells us more, including how their Culture Recovery Fund grant is helping to continue the work they got underway with Prospering Boards.

### Old Bell Museum

The Old Bell Museum in Montgomery, Powys, started their governance review as part of the museum accreditation process. This small, volunteer-run museum found outside support beneficial in reviewing their charitable documentation, as well as establishing the roadmap for a change to a CIO and looking at succession planning. David Thomas, Secretary of Montgomery Civic Society, shares the lessons they've learnt along the way.

[www.aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/case-studies/](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/case-studies/)

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The **AIM membership survey** was open during February – thank you to everyone who took the time to tell us what you think. Your feedback is already proving invaluable in planning AIM's future activity.

# The results are in!

## What you told us

We had over 200 responses, with the makeup of respondents broadly matching the AIM membership in terms of visitor numbers and geographical location. Your responses were overwhelmingly positive, with 89% of you convinced that your AIM membership is excellent or good value for money, and 90% agreeing that AIM is excellent or good at delivering its core purpose of helping heritage organisations prosper. In terms of what you value most about your membership, the top three rated AIM services are:

1. Advocacy and representation to policy makers and funders,
2. Being part of a like-minded community, and
3. Grant giving programmes.

When asked where you would most value support from AIM in the future, you told us your top three areas of focus are:

1. Being visitor-focused, understanding your audience – who visits and who doesn't – and attracting a wide and diverse range of visitors.
2. Ensuring that your organisation remains engaged with its communities and has a relevant and compelling purpose.

3. Planning the future of your organisation in uncertain times, including scenario planning and horizon scanning.

This was echoed by responses to the biggest challenges you think you'll face coming out of the pandemic. The most common replies here related to visitors, including visitor numbers and income, convincing people it's safe to visit and the challenges of educational visits. There were concerns around funding availability and eligibility, and volunteers – whether they will think it's safe to return and the recruitment of new volunteers.

## What happens next?

We held two focus groups in April, one with small museums (less than 20,00 visitors a year) and one with larger museums, to further explore the points raised from the survey. At the time of going to press, the full report wasn't available so the results are still to be evaluated, but this insight will be very well used by the whole AIM team.

## Our response to date

Our Hallmarks at Home webinars, which are free for AIM members to attend, cover a broad variety of topics, including the areas identified by the survey as being important to you. For example, we've had sessions on marketing and communications as we reopen, core business reviews to

maximise income, business planning, volunteering and many more. You can see the forthcoming event schedule here: [www.aim-museums.co.uk/dates-for-your-diary](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/dates-for-your-diary)

The programme for the AIM 2021 Conference was planned with these survey results in mind, with the objective of ensuring you are best placed to face the challenges of the future. We've also added virtual networking to the conference this year, giving you the chance to catch up with one another and share best practice with colleagues across the country. You can see the full programme and get your tickets at [aim-museums.co.uk/conference](http://aim-museums.co.uk/conference)

Earlier this year, we introduced a bi-monthly membership email to help you keep up to date on all the latest member benefits and news. We're still sending our regular eNews, but this membership email highlights the benefits that are exclusive to members, such as the latest events and AIM grant schemes. And of course, you'll still find information on our grants, resources, case studies and sector news on our website whenever you need it.

If you have any questions about this survey or comments on AIM's plans, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us on [info@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:info@aim-museums.co.uk)

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Chair,

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## AIM Resources



Find helpful advice on a range of  
subjects on the AIM website –

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

including –

how you can join the Charity Finance Group for free +

- AIM Hallmarks programmes
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**Art UK has been helping collections tell their stories and generate revenue throughout the pandemic. Camilla Stewart, Head of Commercial Programmes and Collection Partnerships, highlights some of their current initiatives.**

# Supporting collections through the pandemic

We have been working with collections across the UK to digitise sculpture collections as part of our HLF-funded sculpture project and have continued to invest in Art Detective – a platform that gathers questions about artworks in public collections and crowdsources knowledge from experts and the public to help solve these questions. We launched our new learning portal, adding resources created by Art UK and partner collections. And we have also launched our new Curations tool, which allows collections to create digital exhibitions through Art UK, and share these with audiences.

You may be aware of our weekly Thursday twitter event, #OnlineArtExchange, where collections share their favourite artworks from other collections based around a particular theme. For Art UK partner collections (these are collections that pay Art UK a small annual fee, which supports Art UK's sustainability) there are additional ways to get involved. Perhaps you have already participated in the Guardian's Great British Art Quiz? We are currently mid-way through another project with the Guardian – the Great British Art Tour – where each day a curator writes about an

important object or artwork from their collection.

Partner collections can also get involved in the Art UK Shop to generate revenue from print on demand, image licensing and merchandise sales. Over 80 collections participate in the shop, including the National Portrait Gallery, Manchester Art Gallery and the Museum of English Rural Life, with more joining each month. The top performing collections in the shop this year are likely to earn around £11,000 in revenue from print and licence sales. Over 3 million unique users from across the globe each year visit Art UK and 66% of traffic is organic.

There is mutual benefit in multiple collections pointing to a single authoritative e-commerce platform in terms of traffic, Google rankings and the possibility of sharing marketing costs. So the more collections join the shop, the more everyone benefits from increased exposure and sales. Alongside art prints and image licences, we are now offering collections the opportunity to create print on demand products such as tote bags, make-up bags, mugs, coasters and tea towels.

For more information on Art UK contact Camilla Stewart, Head of Commercial Programmes and Collection Partnerships

[Camilla.Stewart@artuk.org](mailto:Camilla.Stewart@artuk.org)



The Museum of English Rural Life's 'Absolute Unit' range has sold very well in the Art UK Shop.



**Members spend more and visit more often than non-members, so membership is a vital part of a museum's offering. Smita Jalaf from Associate Supplier Vennersys shares data that shows just how valuable this group of visitors can be.**

# It's in the data – why membership is so important

Offering memberships allows museums to cultivate and develop a specific group of loyal customers who will spend more and visit more often than non-members. Data from market researcher Colleen Dilenschneider's Know Your Own Bone website confirms just how important it is for museums to go out of their way to satisfy this audience segment.

According to this data, members spend four times more than the average non-member visitor and are more likely to make additional donations. Analysis of 18 cultural institutions found that over 10 years the average value of a member is 4.5 times more than that of a non-member visitor. In addition, non-members typically visit just once every 29 months.

So members are valuable and a membership scheme can generate significant revenue for a museum, as well as being a route to keeping your most loyal audience engaged. However, the right ticketing and electronic point of sale (EPoS) system can ensure that you are running your membership scheme well, and taking advantage of this opportunity to generate more revenue and loyalty among your members.

VenposCloud, the integrated Visitor Management System from Vennersys, has a fully integrated membership module enabling you to:

- Sell memberships, annual passes or season passes online;



Avro Heritage Museum, near Stockport, is a Vennersys client and AIM member.

- Offer Direct Debits for membership payments to ensure a steady income throughout the year;
- Market direct to visitors and members with timed, key messages; and
- Incentivise members' secondary spending with the early release of event tickets and discounts.

In the various lockdowns, many museums have generated revenue from their Direct Debits and membership fees. This system gives you the tools to increase your members' spend and your revenue. At the click of a button, you can send a tailored campaign to members, offering meal deals, retail discounts and personalised event invitations.

Crucially, you will also acquire important data on membership behaviour and purchases, and the reporting feature allows you to analyse purchase patterns and trends. You can identify which events and exhibitions are the most popular, and which products and catering items are purchased the most. These data-driven insights can then support your museum to make strategic, informed decisions and create compelling, visitor-centric marketing campaigns tailored to your audience's behaviour.

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

Colleen Dilenschneider's Know Your Own Bone is at [www.colleendilen.com/welcome](http://www.colleendilen.com/welcome)

**General manager  
Owen Gower introduces  
the fascinating museum  
which preserves the  
birthplace of vaccination.**

# Dr Jenner's House

Tucked away on a quiet lane in the Gloucestershire market town of Berkeley, you might not expect this Queen Anne house to have been at the centre of a scientific revolution. And yet events which took place here over 200 years ago continue to shape our world today and have taken on particular relevance over the past year. This is Dr Jenner's House, the lifetime home of vaccine pioneer Edward Jenner.

Between 1796 and 1798, country doctor Edward Jenner carried out a series of carefully planned scientific experiments demonstrating that infection with the mild disease cowpox would provide protection against the feared smallpox. After publishing his findings, he devoted the rest of his life to telling others how to carry out this lifesaving technique, which soon became known as vaccination, after the Latin *vacca* for 'cow'.

In 1801 Jenner wrote that, "The annihilation of the smallpox . . . must be the result of this practice" and in 1980 the World Health Assembly announced that Jenner's hope had been realised: smallpox had been eradicated. But the story doesn't stop there. Other vaccines, building on the work of Jenner and those who came before him, now save between two and three million lives worldwide each and every year.

The first museum celebrating this extraordinary life and legacy was opened in the 1960s in the cottage given by Jenner to James Phipps, the subject of the first experiment, in recognition of his crucial role. In 1985 we moved to our current home, the Chantry, Jenner's residence from 1785 until his death in 1823, after

an international fundraising appeal succeeded in enabling the purchase of the house.

In 2019 our 7,600 visitors were able to see objects telling the story of vaccination from its early beginnings, a cow's horn polished by Edward Jenner himself and copies of the publications that shared his work with the world, to the final days of the global smallpox eradication campaign led by the World Health Organisation. Jenner's study, where he spent hours every day keeping up with his international correspondence, has been carefully recreated, and hidden away at the top of the garden is the Temple of Vaccinia, where Jenner vaccinated people from the local community free of charge.

In recent years there has been a period of change and renewal for the Jenner Trust, the independent charity which cares for Dr Jenner's House and its collection. In 2014 it was re-established as a charitable incorporated organisation and in 2019, with the

support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we undertook a strategic review culminating in an ambitious new Forward Plan.

As we now begin delivering this plan, we hope to achieve a more sustainable model for our work (currently over 70% of our income comes from visitor admissions) and, recognising the challenges of our location, broaden our public engagement, working in partnership with like-minded organisations to ensure that our story can be told outside the walls of the building.

This is an ambitious plan, and the Chantry will require significant and sustained investment to achieve it, but we truly believe that it will be worthwhile. If we can inspire and encourage people to acquire knowledge and make discoveries as Jenner did, then, like the pioneering country doctor himself, we can start the conversations that might just change the world.

[www.jennermuseum.com](http://www.jennermuseum.com)





**Art Fund has long campaigned to improve the export licence system that protects our national treasures from being sold overseas. Sarah Philp, Art Fund's director of programme and policy, reflects on the journey to get new measures in place and what this means for museums.**

# Art Fund ensures national treasures stay in the UK

For many, Art Fund is inextricably connected to 'saving' great works of art, leading fundraising campaigns to bring them into public ownership, and onto the walls of museums and galleries across the UK. But our efforts don't always play out so publicly, with celebrity endorsements and appeals to the generosity of Art Fund members and an art-loving public. For all the successes, there have also been the ones that got away. Sometimes this is because the value of the work is such that it makes for an insurmountable challenge – at the top end of the art market prices for works of 'museum quality' keep on rising. But sometimes it is because the mechanisms designed by Government to support, preserve and 'save' national treasures don't always work as well as they could – or in the public interest.

Some readers may remember Art Fund's campaign to secure Rembrandt's *Portrait of Catrina Hooghsaet* (1657) for National Museum Cardiff. This virtuosic, mesmerising character study that had a long and important connection to Wales had been sold. It was subsequently 'export-stopped', following consideration of its national significance by a panel of experts administered by Arts Council England known as the Reviewing Committee. The licence required by the vendor to

export the work overseas and complete the sale was deferred. This deferral, signed off by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, was intended to give a UK museum the chance to raise the money needed to match the sale price, so the painting could join a public collection.

The Export Review system is designed to balance the complexities of the art ecosystem: the rights of the owner, the commercial interests of the art market, the idea some works of art represent or reveal aspects of our national culture or character or moments in our history, and the public interest championed by our museums and galleries are all – rightly – part of the process. In practice, it was at risk of abuse. For a museum to acquire an export-stopped work, the vendor had to agree to accept its offer, superseding the original sale. And this agreement relied on that most charming, anachronistic and unenforceable of things: a gentleman's agreement.

For nearly 20 years Art Fund has been advocating to Government for changes to this system – intended to protect our national treasures – and principally to introduce a requirement for a legally 'binding offer'. This, we argued, would ensure museums had the confidence to embark on challenging, time-consuming fundraising campaigns, and that donors

would similarly have confidence that the only thing standing in the way of a successful acquisition was raising the money.

Over the years our advocacy has become a collective effort, bolstered by museums, including National Museum Wales and the National Gallery, as well as membership organisations, including AIM, the Museums Association and the National Museum Directors' Council. Finally, in 2018, with increasing evidence of the shortcomings of the system and increasing numbers of voices calling for review, the Government agreed to a consultation on how it could be strengthened – principally, the advantages of introducing a legally binding 'options agreement'.

On 1 January 2021, legally binding offers took effect as part of the process. This campaign may not have grabbed the headlines – and it may have taken 20 years – but the success is just as sweet. With these strengthened measures, Art Fund and the UK's museums will now be able to fundraise publicly in good faith to bring export-stopped works of national importance into museum collections for the benefit of everyone forever.

*A version of this article first appeared in the spring 2021 issue of Art Quarterly, the magazine of Art Fund.*

[www.artfund.org](http://www.artfund.org)

## AIM Bulletin

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