



Association of
Independent
Museums

AIM Bulletin

August 2021

Page 3

Ensuring your
voice is heard

Page 5

Help shape AIM
activities

Page 8

Mapping Museums
update



**A summer
welcome
for visitors**

Welcome to AIM Bulletin!

The symbolic power of sculpture

Images of Edward Colston's statue being toppled into Bristol harbour by protestors were hard to watch. As the director of the Royal Society of Sculptors, I felt ambivalent about seeing public art being overthrown with such violence but it was also a reminder, if any is needed, of the symbolic power of sculpture and how a work of art that enjoys a prominent position can divide – or unite – communities.

I was reminded of a talk at the society by the British-Guyanese sculptor Hew Locke, whose work has long focused on colonial-era statues, including Colston's. (The artist used to live in Bristol.) Locke has, in his own words, "creatively vandalised" statues, many erected in the 19th century, by adorning them in the trappings of their fame, or infamy. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery has recently acquired his bust of Queen Victoria. Hopefully, one day soon, he will be able to complete a long-planned temporary intervention of her statue in the city's main square.

The Royal Society of Sculptors, like too many arts and heritage organisations in the UK, has been slow to diversify. We welcomed our first black sculptor to full membership in 2017. Sometimes it takes an event, such as Colston's fall, to galvanise an organisation into action. Now is not the time to wave flags or tick boxes. We are committed to real, long-lasting change.

Thanks to AIM's help, we were able to work with a consultant (Alex Marshall of Spot the Gap) to audit ourselves, members, staff and Trustees. The results are in, and we are now using them to shape our Equality Action Plan.

The findings confirmed we have a lot of work to do. While our volunteers do reflect the diversity of London, where we are based, our artist members do not, and neither does our board, or our admittedly small staff (there are three of us). Among the positives, the audit underlined that we have a good gender balance: 50/50 in terms of membership and most of our Trustees are female. We have a remarkably neurodiverse membership as many artists are dyslexic.

The big challenge will be to diversify our membership so that it better reflects society in general, working sculptors, and those near the start of their careers. Applications for membership open twice a year and we will be proactive in attracting applications from under-represented groups. To do this, we will build links with organisations and groups working on diversity in the arts sector, use these contacts to circulate information via diverse networks, and encourage individuals we know from diverse communities to apply. Last month, our board met off-site in a member's studio to focus our energies on this urgent task. I am happy to say that the board is unanimous, and we have a new diversity champion, who is a British-Asian artist.

When the time is right for Bristol, I hope the city chooses a monument, or better still several monuments and works of public art to commemorate its history in a way that the larger-than-life statue of Edward Colston on his tall plinth in the city centre could never do. In Bristol and across the UK, we will need a diversity of sculptors who can rise to the challenge.

Caroline Worthington
Director, Royal Society of Sculptors



Front cover

Dorset Museum, based in the county town of Dorchester, has just reopened its doors to the public after a £16.4 million redevelopment. Read the latest on this ambitious project in our museum profile on page 19. You can also find out how fundamental relationship building was to the related fundraising project with Development Partners on page 17.

Director Lisa Ollerhead outlines her initial priorities as we start on the road to recovery from the pandemic.

Ensuring your voice is heard



Five and a bit weeks into being AIM's Director feels like a good time to write my first article for the Bulletin. As I've been telling people in meetings, I think I have a few days left in which to be 'the new one' and next week I have to know everything – or at least be able to do a good imitation.

It's been an exciting few weeks. The AIM conference, just our second major virtual event, went off very successfully, thanks to the brilliant AIM team Margaret, Matt, Catrin and Helen, and of course the gone-but-not-forgotten Emma and Justeen. We hope that everyone who was able to join us enjoyed it, and are already looking forward to seeing members next year, hopefully live and in person at Port Sunlight.

Of course one of the main topics at conference was reopening, and what comes next for the museums and heritage sectors after the pandemic. Recent weeks have seen multiple announcements in every nation of the UK about what can open, when, and how visits can happen. We know that museums and heritage sites can't wait

to welcome visitors back. But we also know that for many places it isn't an easy transition, especially for places that are opening this summer for the first time in over a year, and we've been supporting you to understand the rules, knowing that the priority for everyone is for staff, visitors and volunteers to feel safe and happy and enjoy themselves at your venues.

With reopening also comes AIM visits! The team are all excited to start getting out around members across the UK. My priority as the new Director is to meet and talk to as many members as possible in the coming months, to understand why you're part of AIM, what you want from us, and what we could do even better. I know that what AIM does really well is giving you the information and help you need to run your organisations and we will be staying that same reliable source for

And, running our grants programmes. One of the other most exciting parts of the last few weeks for me has been the launch of New Stories New Audiences, our new National Lottery Heritage Fund scheme which over the next three years will support dozens of small museums around the UK to explore their collections and display them to communities in new ways. As well as funding this scheme comes with mentorship and peer support for the museums and heritage organisations involved, helping you to share the rich and complex histories of your objects and sites in fresh ways. We're looking forward to getting those projects started later this year.

At the same time we're helping you to tell new stories to new audiences, helping you become more inclusive organisations welcoming diverse visitors, we're looking at our own

“ We want to make sure that your voices are heard in the decisions and changes that will be coming in the sector. ”

pragmatic and real-world guidance on governance and operations.

We'll also keep advocating for our members to funders and government. We want to make sure that your voices are heard in the decisions and changes that will be coming in the sector as part of the national recovery from the pandemic, and the needs of independent museums are understood, from the largest civic trusts to the smallest non-Accredited museums who don't always get a seat at the table in sector-wide discussions.

progress on the Tackling Inequalities plan we published last October. An update on this will be coming to members soon and we want you to hold us accountable for making sure we deliver on it, helped by the five new Board members who were appointed at the AGM held during the conference.

Please do get in touch. I want to hear from members and get your feedback on what we're doing: I'm lisa.ollerhead@aim-museums.co.uk and I look forward to meeting you!

Lisa Ollerhead, Director

News in brief

Fiona Talbott retires from role

Fiona Talbott has retired from her role as Head of Policy for Museums, Libraries and Archives after 13 years at the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Fiona has made an enormous contribution to the Fund's work and the wider sector. She led the National Heritage Memorial Fund between 2010 and 2019 overseeing acquisitions including Wentworth Woodhouse, HMS Caroline, the Galloway Hoard and the Cuthbert Gospel. Fiona directed the two successful rounds of the Collecting Cultures programme which supported museums and archives to strategically acquire collections across a number of years and has led the Fund's work in partnership with organisations across the sector.

Beyond the Fund, Fiona has forty years' experience of working in the museums sector, with experience of leading work in local authority and university museums as well as running the London office of the area museums council, South Eastern Museums Service, and leading its successor, the London Museums Agency.

Jacob Eliot, Head of Policy, said: "It's been a privilege to work with Fiona. I and my colleagues have benefited enormously from her expertise, thoughtfulness and dedication to the

sector. Fiona has had a big impact on the Fund's work and her generosity of spirit, her insight and influence has helped the Fund achieve more for museums, libraries and archives."

From July, Melissa Strauss will be covering the role of Head of Museums, Libraries and Archive Policy, to ensure the Fund's work and engagement continues.

Third round of Culture Recovery Fund announced

Further details of the third round of the Culture Recovery Fund were announced on 25 June.

The additional £300 million for the Culture Recovery Fund was originally announced by the Chancellor at the Spring Budget as part of a wider £408 million package for arts and culture. This takes the government's investment in the arts and cultural sectors to almost £2 billion since the start of the pandemic and provides further support as the cultural, heritage and creative sectors move towards reopening at full capacity.

Almost £220 million will be available for both new organisations who are at imminent risk of failure and existing recipients of CRF grants. Funding will be available to boost those who have received support already whilst ensuring more culturally significant organisations do not fail because of the pandemic.

AIM Director, Lisa Ollerhead

"We very much welcome this additional investment in the sector as our museums strive to reopen to full capacity. Further allocation to the Heritage Stimulus Fund is also very welcome to help protect heritage buildings in our communities and support the experienced and skilled craftspeople who keep them safe and whole.

CRF has been a lifeline to our members and the wider museum community, yet we are also aware that reopening – whilst critical – will not address the impact of the pandemic. Our members need time to rebuild, recover and deliver a return on the investment made by the taxpayer in our sector. That means additional, sustained support and we look forward to working with our partners across government on enabling that."

Funding is broken down as follows:

- CRF3 Resource Grants (including Emergency Resource Support and Continuity Support) – £218.5 million
- Heritage Stimulus Fund – £35 million
- Cultural Asset Fund – £20 million
- Contingency – £35 million
- Admin costs – £7.5 million



Sector workforce impacted by redundancy

In a report released in late June, the Museum Association highlighted the impact of the pandemic on museums and heritage organisations. Its *Redundancy Tracker* recorded 1,850 proposed and 2,250 confirmed redundancies across the sector by 28 April 2021, data compiled from information provided online, and by its representatives, members and partners. According to the report and based on 2019 ONS estimates of



Hydar Dawachi



We want to know what you think! Join our AIM membership insight group

Would you like to join a forum of AIM members to provide regular feedback on all aspects of your membership? Can you help us ensure your membership benefits are meeting your needs and those of all our members? Do you want to help shape AIM's policy and advocacy activity? If the answer is yes, then join our new insight group!

Building on our biennial member surveys this new initiative is to further strengthen our insight into the support members need in the fast-moving environment we are all operating in, as well as connect members across a range of regions and from a variety of organisational backgrounds.

Made up of AIM members of all sizes from all over the UK, you will be invited to take part in quarterly focus groups and ad hoc surveys on a variety of themes.

All focus groups will be hosted by an external facilitator, so your responses will remain anonymous and more than one person in your organisation can join the group.

To find out more and register your interest email info@aim-museums.co.uk today!

the size of the sector, the potential 4,100 job losses account for around 8% of UK museums employees.

Of the 70 organisations included in the tracker (36) independent and (12) national museums have been hardest hit. Given it is home to many museums, London was the most adversely affected UK region with 24 organisations, followed by the North at 11.

May to July 2020 saw the greatest number of reported redundancies, reflecting announcements from the National Trust, Tate Enterprises and Birmingham Museums Trust. Although losses have been seen across all job types, Learning and Engagement, Front of House and Retail and Catering roles are particularly affected.

Responding to the report, AIM Director Lisa Ollerhead said

“As we continue to operate under restrictions due to the pandemic, museums of all kinds, indeed organisations of all kinds across all sectors, are facing some stark economic decisions to ensure their survival and the safeguarding of their collections. All along, our priority has been for organisations to survive the crisis in order to thrive in the future. Despite welcome government support, independent museums which run wholly or mostly on the income they generate have suffered from the loss of visitors and some have had to make severe short- or long-term changes to prepare for the future.

AIM continues to work to ensure that the government understands reopening

alone is not recovery, and that sustained support will be required to enable a return on the investment of CRF.

Facing redundancy in any situation is extremely difficult; facing it in a pandemic must be doubly challenging for individuals and their families. We're looking at how our own programmes and membership options to ensure we can help those who have recently lost their job and support them in their return to work.”



Image by iSAW Company on Unsplash

Image by Headway on Unsplash

Online for the second year due to the ongoing pandemic, delegates and speakers alike made the most of three days of ‘sharing, supporting, and strengthening’ as **AIM’s 2021 National Conference** got underway.

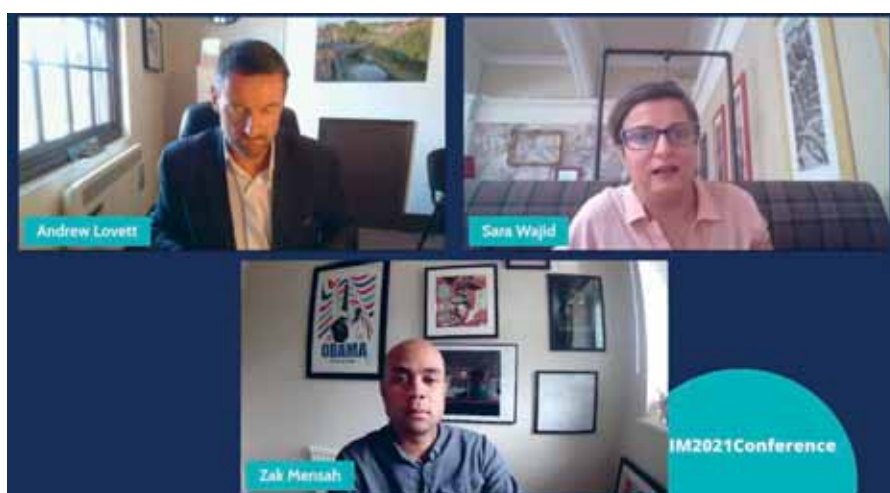
Online conference success

Almost 300 registered for three days of advice sessions, panel discussions and case studies from across the AIM community. Sessions on the first day focused on Governance and Leadership and opened with a recorded introduction and welcome by the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Oliver Dowden. His highlighting of the importance of independent museums as key to the regeneration and revival of towns and cities post-pandemic, to national ‘soft power’, social fabric, and a sense of place was echoed in sessions across the conference. And according to post-conference feedback, 95.5% said those sessions ‘met or exceeded expectations’, slightly up on last year’s event, AIM’s first venture into fully online delivery.

The move to a new event platform, Hopin, was also welcomed by attendees with 88% finding the registration process ‘very good or good’, and 92% holding the same opinion of the format. Whilst the networking and expo facilities took some time to adjust to, the event chat proved very popular with attendees and



Secretary of State Oliver Dowden addressed attendees in an opening plenary.



Sara Wajid and Zak Mensah, Joint CEOs, Birmingham Museums Trust with AIM Chair Andrew Lovett.

added at least a semblance of the buzz we’ve come to expect from conference.

Feedback highlighted the quality and breadth of speakers involved, with museums of all sizes represented, and a willingness for speakers to be ‘open and honest in how they have managed the challenges of the pandemic’ particularly welcome.

As well as a busy chat forum on Hopin, attendees took to social to share.

“Every year Conference reminds me that independent museums are where it’s at. Love their ‘yes we can’ ethos and proactive approach” said Annette French on Twitter.

Sajida Carr, a first timer at AIM Conference and a new AIM Trustee, also took to Twitter to highlight her experiences “It was programmed so well. Reflecting on how much transferable learning there is within this membership organisation.”

Other feedback highlighted the move to the new platform and the breadth of organisations represented by the panellists.

“(Hopin) worked so well as we were able to listen, learn and contribute. Really valued the range of speakers as we had large and small and medium museums, which really helped.”

“I had been worried that being a very small museum much of the content would be relevant only to bigger organisations. I have a ‘To Do’ list to take away.”

There were also many suggestions for building on AIM’s approach to conference, with several participants requesting a hybrid, or ‘digital option’ to run alongside any return to physical events.

“Assuming that the next conference will be in the real world rather than on-line, it would still be useful to have the facility for attending virtually.”



Art For Your World

The cultural sector has the power to influence, galvanise and make a real difference, can it come together on climate change asks Laura Culpan from Artwise.

The **Art for Your World** campaign seeks to support WWF, in their 60th anniversary year, in their work on the frontline of the climate emergency. As part of the campaign, a charitable auction will take place and limited-edition artist prints will be commissioned to raise funds for WWF, funds which will be used to help five specially targeted front-line WWF projects that are already helping the fight against climate change.

However, this is about much more than raising money; it is about the cultural sector standing in solidarity this November during the COP26 international conference, with a united voice saying that the future of our world is what matters above all else. We are inviting you as our

museums and galleries, as the cornerstone and foundation of our sector – to stand alongside us as partners.

Commercial galleries, artists, museums and institutions are asked to ‘go green’ in the month

It is also an opportunity to help raise awareness of the fantastic work that you are doing within the cultural sector to make our world more sustainable and by being leaders in the field through example.

“ . . . the future of our world is what matters above all else. ”

of November by supporting **#ArtForYourWorld** on social media, highlighting artworks, exhibitions and artists with relevance to environmental issues, communicating commitments to carbon footprint reduction, and carrying out other activities that help to draw attention to the climate crisis.

The campaign will launch in September, culminating in November 2021 to coincide with COP26. In particular we are designating 5th November as our museums and gallery day to go green.

For more information see www.artforyourworld.com or contact: laura@artwisecurators.com

Mapping Museums project lead Fiona Candlin finds that despite the predictions, permanent museum closures are tracking previous years.

Museum closures during the pandemic

When museums first closed to visitors in March 2020 because of the national lockdown, their prospects seemed poor. In fact, only ten museums in the UK have permanently closed over the past year, significantly fewer than in previous years (there were 26 permanent closures in 2017 and 16 in 2018), and only two of those closures can be linked to the COVID crisis.

In two cases the museum closed when the owner retired. In September 2020, Inger John, who had run the Pembrokeshire Candle Makers Centre in Wales, announced that she had used up her remaining wax, was stopping production, and that she would be

closing the associated museum.

A military museum at Fort Paull, a Napoleonic fortress in Yorkshire, announced that it was closing in early 2020. At the age of eighty, the owner and director had decided to sell the site and retire.

Four museums closed due to the loss of their premises, although why this happened varies. The Commando Museum opened in 1993 at the Spean Bridge Hotel near Fort William. The property later changed hands and with redevelopment pending the volunteers started looking for alternative accommodation. When that proved unsuccessful, they put the

exhibits into storage until a new venue could be found. Staff at the Maritime Museum in Walton-on-the-Naze in Essex found themselves in a similar situation. The museum was housed in a historic lifeboat house owned by Tendring council who in 2015 announced a rent hike. The volunteers were keen to relocate but two attempts fell through, and the museum had to close. The collections are in storage.

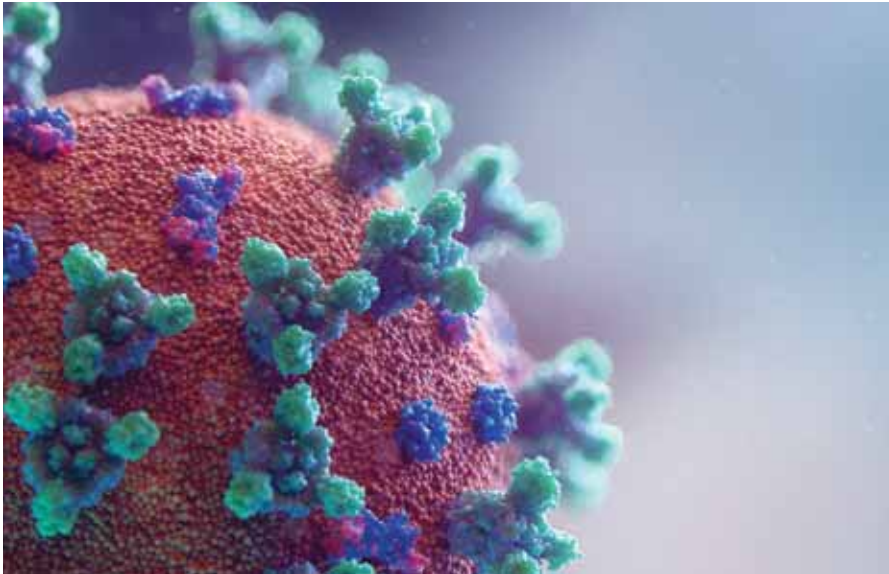
The Metropolitan Police Service Museum Heritage centre also found itself out of a home when the building changed use. It is being relocated to a new space in Woolwich, which will open later this year, but it does not

Carbon Literate museums are the future: 'Roots and Branches' project receives public funding

Manchester Museum, part of The University of Manchester, Museum Development North West and the Carbon Literacy Trust are delighted to announce that they have been awarded £136,750 of Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grant funding for an ambitious two-year partnership project, 'Roots & Branches', which aims to accelerate the museum sector's ability to respond to the climate crisis.

The launch of 'Roots & Branches' will coincide with the COP26 United Nations Climate Change Conference in November 2021. Over the next two years, this project will enable us to scale up the roll-out of Carbon Literacy training across museums in England.

In collaboration with Museum Development England and supported by a new Environmental Sustainability Museum Development Officer post, 'Roots and Branches' aims to train and certify as Carbon Literate 1,500 museum professionals and volunteers. It will also see



have a dedicated exhibition area. The Bruntingthorpe Aircraft Museum in Leicestershire closed in the summer of 2020 when the site was sold.

Elsewhere, finances were an issue. The Victoria Cross Trust opened the Ashworth Barracks Museum in Doncaster in 2014 to house their collection of military artefacts. In 2020 they announced its closure, commenting that running a museum had never been among its core objectives, rather they had been established to maintain war graves. The West Wales Museum of Childhood also faced financial difficulties. The museum, located in at a farmstead in

rural Camarthenshire, had closed for almost a year during the pandemic. The cost of running the site had become too much of a burden for the owners, Hilary and Paul Kennelly, who also had health difficulties. The couple had decided to downsize and early in 2021 moved the collection to a bungalow and associated outbuildings in Cambridgeshire.

All these museums were small, unaccredited, and, except for the Metropolitan Police Heritage Centre, run by private owners or voluntary groups. The Falconer Museum in Forres on the North East coast of Scotland was an accredited local

authority museum, and indeed the only museum in the Moray area that was funded by the local council. Faced with budget cuts of around £10m, in 2019, the council decided to close the museum service. The closure of these museums was a subject of regret for the owners and volunteers who had run them, and the groups and local residents who campaigned for their survival. The exception is the Jack the Ripper Museum in London, where news of its imminent closure was met with some delight. The museum was controversial because its founder originally applied for and was granted planning permission for a museum that focused on women's history, whereas it concentrated on the murder of five East End women. In September, the feminist historian Dr Louse Raw discovered that the company had declared insolvency. What is striking about these closures is that they have little relation to the pandemic and instead are due to other more usual factors such as retirement, health, the loss of a site, the difficulty of finding new accommodation or changed accommodation, lack of income, and government cuts to local authority budgets, often in combination.

This is an edit of a longer article on the Mapping Museums blog. For the full piece and more visit museweb.dcs.bbk.ac.uk

300 museums developing organisational pledges to take action against climate change. The training will start on 1 November 2021, the first day of COP26, as part of the Carbon Literacy Trust's 'Carbon Literacy Action Day' – an attempt to stage the largest ever low-carbon education event globally and set a record for the number of people completing their Carbon Literacy training in a single day.

Esme Ward, Director of Manchester Museum and Manager of Museum Development North West, said:

“We are passionate about the role that museums can and should play – here in Manchester, and nationally – in addressing the climate emergency. Through this unique collaboration with Museum Development North West and the Carbon Literacy Trust, this project will be pivotal in developing museum practice further, transforming our sector's capacity to support ecological thinking and action to build a sustainable future and inspire post-pandemic green recovery.”



Art Tickets_

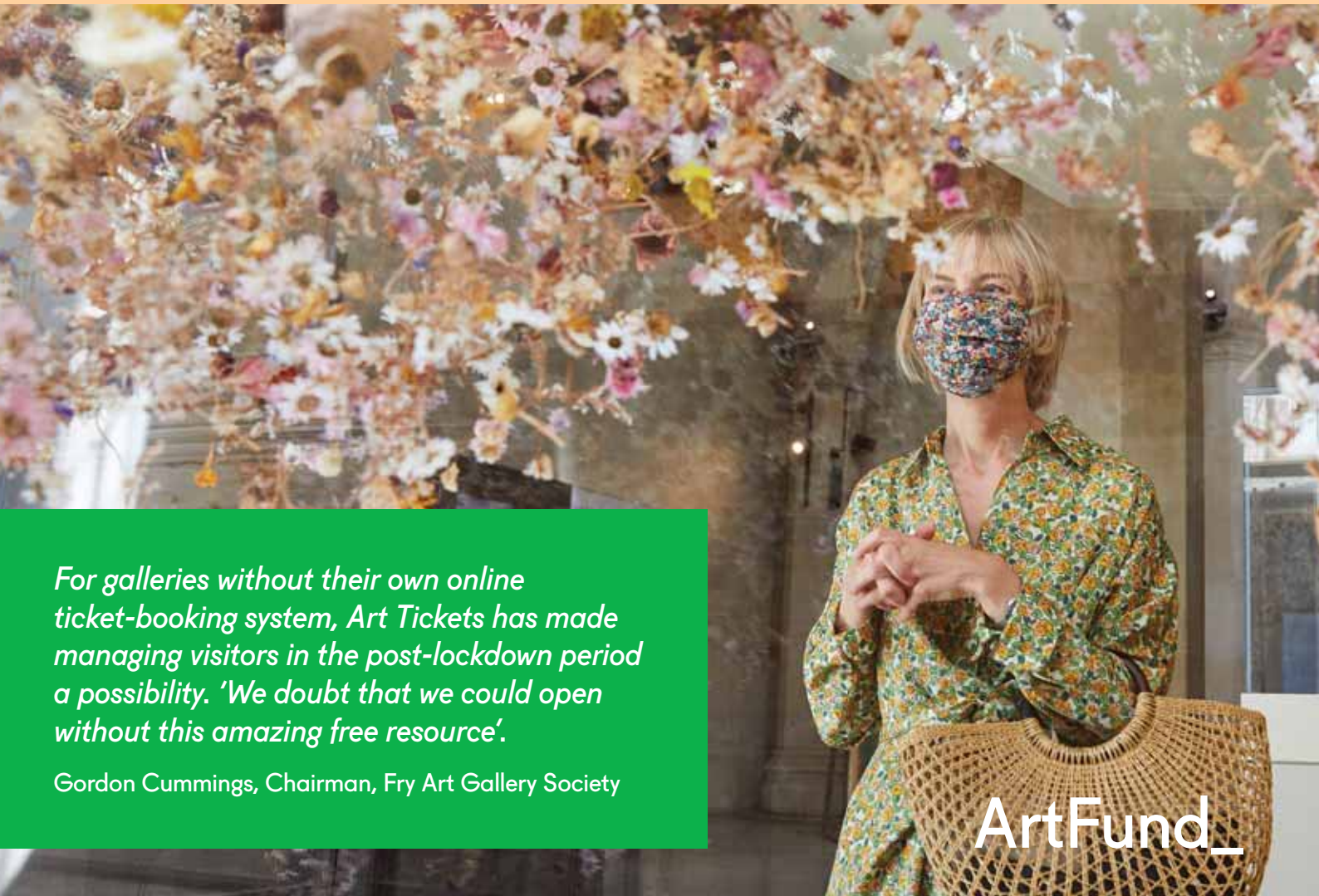
Plan for the future with Art Tickets, Art Fund's completely free ticket management system that makes things simple. Designed for museums by museums, we helped 120 museums re-open safely in 2020.

Art Tickets can help you:

- Manage social distancing with timed ticketing
- Reduce admin
- Improve visitor experience
- Get to know your audiences better

Get in touch at museums@artfund.org to book a 121 with one of the team to find out how we can help you open your doors.

Art Tickets. Ticketing made simple.



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

ArtFund_

Art Tickets is the only free ticketing system built by museums, for museums. Run by Art Fund, in the last 12 months it has helped over 120 museums safely re-open their doors between lockdowns and generated much needed income. Merrin Kalinowski outlines what the team have learnt working with organisations to meet these twin challenges and how Art Tickets is growing.

Opening Doors with Art Tickets

Soothing ticketing headaches

Now more than ever, having an online presence and reaching new audiences isn't just an ambition or an objective, it's a necessity. And that's why Art Fund created Art Tickets; the only online ticketing system created by museums for museums. And it is completely free to use for all.

Launched in 2018, Art Tickets has proved its worth by providing a huge boost to reopening plans, having grown to almost 200 organisations using the system to reopen their doors safely to the public. It is easy to use, quick to set up, and works effectively for timed entry, giving every organisation total control of their visitor flow.

When developing Art Tickets, timed ticketing had been an important factor for organisations with small but free-to-enter spaces, so the platform has the functionality in place to manage capacity and visitor flow. This practical support helps you not only to safely re-open and welcome your visitors back, but also generate income.

Nicky Brier, who leads Business Development at Macclesfield Museums, summed up the relief of many who were facing the future with trepidation: "Ticketing has been a major headache. And I now feel as an organisation we can move forward."

Donations and Data

The system is more than capable of handling tickets for general admission, events and exhibitions – whether those tickets are free or paid for. It has helped museums refine their customer service and reduce front of house administration and can be used for over the phone and front desk bookings, as well as online, putting an end to the juggling of several lists. Another important feature of the system is the way it encourages donations when a visitor buys a ticket – as a top up – handling Gift Aid along the way.

Crucially, Art Tickets also allows museums to get to know their audiences better. The visitor data gathered is hugely valuable for planning post pandemic. As well as opt-in data to grow your online audiences, an analytics dashboard pulls data from Google Analytics and Art Tickets to give you an overview of where your visitors are coming from.

Nicola Kalinsky, Director of The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, has been delighted with both the system, and the information it generates: "Art Tickets is very easy to use – simple and elegant. It's also providing us with postcode data and mapping info, which we never had previously, and it's free! And we can sell membership on it! And ask for donations!"

Looking ahead

The past 12 months has shown us that no-one can see into the future, but we can start to plan for it. The data from Art Tickets can provide us with some certainties about our audiences that will enable us to do just that. This year sees the launch of our partnership with The Audience Agency, meaning Art Tickets museums will be able to get even more intelligence about their audiences. All Art Tickets users will have access to Audience Finder – the world's largest cultural database – again, completely for free.

We are continuing to develop the platform to ensure that the technology goes on performing strongly and meeting the needs of museum partners. What's more, our dedicated Art Tickets team are on hand for one-to-one support to help you get started and answer any questions you have about using the system.

To find out more about getting Art Tickets for your organisation, book a one-to-one with a dedicated member of the Art Fund team, or visit artfund.org/arttickets for more information.

Merrin Kalinowski is Museum Marketing Relationship Manager at Art Fund

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 Pen Museum

AIM grant: £3,450

Storage for centre collections

The Pen Museum opened in 2001 to promote and preserve the history and legacy of Birmingham's important steel pen trade, and is an independent accredited museum of charitable status based within a former Victorian pen factory in Birmingham's Jewellery Quarter. It is run by one part-time employee supported by nearly twenty loyal and dedicated volunteers.

A significant proportion (26%) of 3,453 accessioned objects were previously in temporary storage and a Storage Report and Collections Audit raised concerns about this situation and concomitant environmental conditions, in particular light levels and relative humidity. The AIM grant provided crucial support by enabling the museum to improve both the storage of its collection and environmental monitoring capabilities.

At the start of this project a space review was undertaken to identify a suitable and permanent storage location in a secure area. This area then underwent a major re-organisation to accommodate two new sturdy lockable metal cabinets. New secure and robust

storage facilities significantly minimise the risk to our collection from physical forces as well ensuring improved consistency in collection care.

Acid free paper, archival plastic sleeves and labelling, were used to decant and relocate boxed collection objects into the new storage facilities whilst ensuring ease of retrieval. A new laptop and SPECTRUM compliant collection database were purchased to accurately transfer and update our records. A further benefit of this grant was the ability to provide a dedicated user-friendly volunteer working space to monitor, examine and clean collection objects. This improves our collection care procedures and increases our ability to arrange access and plan new exhibition displays.

New volunteers were recruited to expand our Collection Team with comprehensive training and instructions provided for database management, environmental monitoring, and correct packing and handling of objects to ensure appropriate, consistent and sustainable collections care. This experience enables our volunteers to acquire new skills and capabilities in support of their personal or professional development.

Jane Harris
Operations Manager



Storage at The Pen Museum before and after the project.



Left, work experience student Lukasz in The Devils Porridge Museum object store; Top right, young people accessioning objects at The Devils Porridge Museum; Above right, The Devils Porridge Museum young volunteer Rebekka adding objects to the CMS.

The Devil's Porridge Museum

AIM grant: £1,718.47

Collections Complete

This project was generously funded by AIM Pilgrim Trust and enabled the museum to achieve accreditation in November 2018. The object store was completely re-organised and a systematic approach to accessioning was developed. New archival object storage boxes and Tyvek and acid free tissue were purchased for wrapping. All objects are now correctly labelled and stored, increasing access. We have cleared our accessions backlog and created space for future growth within our object store.

The Devil's Porridge Museum involved volunteers (especially young people) in every stage of Collections Complete. Volunteers learnt how to accession, label, wrap and store objects. They also completed object entry paperwork and conducted research on recent donations. Many of their articles have featured on our blog and social media as well as in the local press. This has led to more historical objects and accounts being brought forward, further enhancing the general public's engagement with the museum.

Our work as part of this project has brought in lots of new young volunteers and we now have three students completing their Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Museums Galleries Practice with us. This SVQ is provided by Museums Galleries Scotland.

In the past, The Devil's Porridge Museum was mainly run by volunteers without the support of museums professionals. This situation has now changed, and the museum and its collection are on a much more secure footing thanks to achieving accreditation. During the Covid pandemic, this has been essential to our survival as, had we not been accredited, our access to funds would have been severely limited.

The Museum is now also working towards having its World War One collection recognised as being of national significance, a prestigious achievement within the Scottish Museums Sector and one which will further enhance the reputation, renown and security of the history that we share. The 'Collections Complete' project helped lay the foundations for this and The Devil's Porridge Museum is very grateful for the support we received.

Judith Hewitt

AIM Collection Care Audit

The Bahamas Locomotive Society

AIM grant: £1,181.69

The Bahamas Locomotive Society was founded 1967 and collects, preserves, maintains and operates railway locomotives, rolling stock and associated artefacts. It provides access, interpretation and education by exhibition to the public at its Ingrow Loco Museum, which opened



Display at The Bahamas Locomotive Society.

to visitors in 2002. A small archive was established as a repository for documents and books relevant to the Museum's Collections Policy.

The AIM Pilgrim Trust Collections Care Audit offered the ideal opportunity to seek an evaluation of our current methods of collection care and the success of our application enabled Peter Meehan ACR to visit the museum and provide a report.

It is gratifying to note that the overall care of the collections was considered to be "very good". It also confirmed that an assessment and condition report would be valid for some of the fragile archive documents and identified a small number of environmental improvements we could make.

A self-funded assessment of the fragile documents has been arranged and we are considering seeking grant aid to undertake the other recommendations, with the results of the document assessment perhaps influencing subsequent action.

One positive result of the audit is that it has brought the care and conservation of the collection to the attention of all the Trustees, in a manner that highlights the need to ensure the subject receives the necessary support. Its impartial evaluation and recommendations will continue to be a valid source in considering the Museum's forward planning.

Pete Skellon, Collections Manager

AIM Training Grant

Museum of Bath Stone

AIM grant: £160

Heritage Interpretation Online with Sarah Oswald, in partnership with AHI and GEM

Attending GEM's Heritage Interpretation Online course has transformed our approach to interpretation. We are so thankful to have been successful in our application to AIM's Training Grant scheme, which has enabled us to participate in this experience. It has changed the way in which I would naturally approach the creation of new interpretation and changed my perception of this being an academic practice to more of an art form.

The course has an outstanding structure and facilitator who, throughout the six sessions, shared a methodology we can each adopt to



allow us to make sense of and beautifully execute the changes and improvements we wish to make, with the visitor at the heart of everything we do. Thank you AIM for making this

possible and allowing this newfound knowledge to make a continued difference to our museum.

**Miranda Litchfield
Chief Executive**

The Power of Stories –

Why they matter and how to tell them

WANDR – a new mobile app start-up highlights the importance of telling a good story to engage visitors effectively.

As human beings we are characterised by ferocious levels of curiosity. Storytelling is cited as a central to human nature, fundamental in what makes us who we are. We tell stories to share, explore, and reinvent our understanding of the world. This makes storytelling one of the most powerful tools at a museum's disposal.

The stories you present with your exhibits can serve to demonstrate their significance and define how your visitors experience them. Facts and figures, for example, can lose their lustre if they're not presented in a way that connects with us. In this article, an ode to good stories, we'll celebrate their significance and explore how best to tell them.

Stories help to build trust

It's hard to find an aspect of a museum's life – from fundraising, to return visits, to engagement, that is not in some way affected by trust. Good storytelling demonstrates to your visitors precisely why your institution deserves to exist. It preserves the significance of your exhibits by connecting visitors with their history. An object on its own is soon forgotten; an object and its story can last a lifetime. To thrive as an institution is to establish authority and trust. To establish authority and trust is to tell the right stories.

Stories drive action

When a visitor understands why something matters, they're far more likely to take positive action. For example, funding drives or volunteer programmes can be transformed in scope if your stories are told effectively. Most people have the desire for positive action within them; all it takes is connecting them to what matters.

Stories can shape your entire visitor experience

Taking the time to find stories that work for your venue can unearth rich new territories of discovery. Once you've nailed down why your exhibits matter and how you want to share them with your visitors, the ways in which you present them may radically change. New visitor routes, connections, and opportunities are often just a story away.

How to Tell Compelling Stories

So, how do you tell a story that makes a lasting impression? Some rules of thumb include:

- **Good stories are honest.** Cultural institutions can serve as an antidote to today's data-driven, post-truth landscape. A good story will cut through the noise – not add to it.
- **Tell them why the facts matter.** Visitors will switch off if you only show them cold hard facts. If they can't relate to what you're showing them, they're far less likely to understand – or even care. Stories are powerful because they engage with our emotions. This isn't about misleading your visitors, nor is it about underestimating their intelligence. It's about conveying why the facts matter in the first place.
- **Remember the story behind the story.** Your stories don't just have to be about the objects themselves; the people and journeys behind your exhibits can be just as compelling. Your volunteers, trustees, colleagues, community, and your mission can all form valuable aspects of your venue's story. Think about your exhibits but remember what keeps them there too.

WANDR is a flexible low-cost mobile app designed to help venues tell their stories. Curate your own audio tours which visitors can take on their smartphones in-venue or remotely. Sign up and get 20% off all paid plans, free plan also available. Visit www.wandrguides.com for more information.

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Judy Niner from Development Partners highlights how a new fundraising approach paid off for Dorset Museum.

Relationships – the cornerstone of successful fundraising

A multi-million pound fundraising target is a tall order for any museum. But for one based in a small provincial town and with no significant record of fundraising, it could have been described as a bridge too far. Yet that is the monumental challenge Dorset Museum took on – and overcame.

The result isn't just a fantastic, transformed museum, a cultural centre for the whole of Dorset. It's also a new way of working together, of collaborating and developing relationships with audiences and with funders.

Success was never inevitable. It came from perseverance, focus, and a compelling case for support which brought out the value of the stories behind the collections and the romance of the county. It took five years.

It also took faith. Trustees with little experience of fundraising invested in consultants and staff and followed the advice they were given. They allowed us the time we needed to plan the campaign, brand it, and cultivate essential relationships. They put up with long, frustrating

waits before results started to come in and the ambitious target was chipped away. They understood that the campaign was vital to the future of the museum, not just for the money it would raise towards the Tomorrow's Museum project, but for the relationships it enabled the museum to build. Relationships which, if nurtured, will strengthen the organisation for years and decades to come.

This was a big campaign, but the lessons learnt from it are as relevant for a small discrete project or ongoing revenue work, for the smallest of organisations and the biggest. Take time to plan your fundraising and construct the case for support; focus only on those things that are going to bring the best results and don't be distracted; do everything with the long-term in mind. You will need to invest time, certainly, and possibly money. Bring in external help if you don't have the right level of expertise within the organisation. You will also need patience to allow relationships, the cornerstone of successful fundraising, to develop.

Congratulations Dorset Museum, you have created something wonderful. Thank you for letting us help you make it happen.

Judy Niner
Development Partners



Dorset Museum, 2021.

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Dorset Museum

Dorset Museum, based in the county town of Dorchester, has just reopened its doors to the public after a £16.4 million redevelopment.

The Museum, which holds a collection of around four million objects, has set out to establish itself as a major new cultural destination in the South West attracting more than 100,000 visitors per annum.

The origins of the Museum are deeply rooted in local history. In 1845 the Dorset poet, William Barnes, Revd Henry Moule and Revd Charles Bingham decided that in light of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's construction of the railways through Dorset, and the discovery of specimens and artefacts along the route, that it was "advisable to take immediate steps for the establishment of an institution, containing a Museum and Library for the County of Dorset".

The Museum had early homes in a variety of unsuitable premises around Dorchester until 1883, when its permanent home in High West Street was designed by the local architect G. R. Crickmay. This building has undergone much change over the decades, but none have been bigger than the recent redevelopment, the 'Tomorrows' Museum for Dorset' project. Delivered by a small staff team of 18 FTE, supported by over 200 volunteers, this has seen a completely new extension added to the historic building. This houses four new permanent galleries, GIS compliant temporary exhibition space, library, café, shop, dedicated learning centre, and community spaces, as well as the Collections Discovery Centre – which contains a publicly viewable store and conservation studio.

As a result, more of the Museum's internationally significant collections of archaeology, art, literature, geology, natural and social history are on display than ever before. Reimagined galleries have been designed to inspire, with Dorset's stories creatively interpreted using objects, hands on interactive

displays, and stunning audio-visuais. These are all contained within an architecturally striking, ecologically sustainable building. Careful thought to access has been included throughout, with a Changing Places Toilet and autism-friendly Calm Space, along with tactile trails across the galleries, the provision of Sensory Backpacks, and AV presentations designed to include BSL and sign language from first principles.

Galleries include Natural Dorset which reveals the Dorset's geology, landscapes, habitats, and wildlife. People's Dorset begins with the story of the Palaeolithic, travelling across half a million years of human history, through Bronze age gold, finds from Iron Age Maiden Castle, right up to the development of nuclear technology at Winfrith in the post war era. The four themed rooms in Hardy's Dorset draw on the world's largest Thomas Hardy collection, which is on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register. Artists' Dorset has a display of sculptures, prints, drawings, textiles, and fine decorative art all shown to stunning effect and includes sculptures and art by Elisabeth Frink.

The project has been possible thanks to contributions from many donors including a £12.4million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, £750,000 from Arts Council England and £500,000 from the Garfield Weston Foundation. The build also brought together several key players including Dorset-based firm Acheson Construction, who built the new extension. Real Studios' have developed the Museum galleries with Dorset's stories and the Museum's collection cleverly interpreted. These galleries were then brought to life by exhibition fit out specialists 'The Hub', working closely with Elbow Productions, RAE Models, Colin Lindley, and Out of the Blue Fabrications.

Professor Andrew Fleet, Chairman of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society, the charitable trust that owns the Museum, said "Wholly transforming the Museum would have been a tremendous achievement at any time. Undertaking and completing the work through lockdown is a breath-taking achievement by all those involved. The Dorset Museum now tells stories of Dorset and its 250 million years old heritage for all our visitors whom I hope will find enjoyment, fun and some wonder in the stunning new exhibitions."



Top, Dorset Museum in 2021. Above left, Dorset Museum in 1883. Above right, Reverend Henry Moule, poet, William Barnes and Reverend Charles Bingham instigated the development of the museum in 1845.

Jon Murden
Executive Director
Dorset Museum

If there is one take away from the last 15 months, it is that the unforeseen, or perhaps the unthinkable, can happen say
Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers.

Resilience planning for your museum

What do we mean by resilience?

Resilience refers to the ability to recover quickly from difficulties. From an insurance perspective, the major example would be the ability to recover from a serious incident, such as a fire. Some of these risks are known, and can be insured against, some are deemed to be too remote and chosen not to be insured against, and some may simply be uninsurable. Whatever the risks faced, trustees have a duty to consider all risks and plan accordingly to mitigate their impact. This is where resilience planning can assist.

Resilience planning

The objective of resilience planning is to help museums:

- minimise economic impact
- enable swift recoveries
- protect vital income streams such as funding and grant bids.

A sensible starting point could be to categorise key considerations:

People – you have a duty of care to all trustees, staff, volunteers, and members of the public. How are you managing this duty?

Property and assets – property is critical to operations and income. How could you manage without it and for what period?

Reputation – many museums rely on the goodwill of others. Would your ability to operate be impacted by reputational damage?

Business continuity – museums with robust documented business continuity plans are best placed to recover following a crisis. How relevant are your procedures?

After completing a resilience review, the museum should put in place plans and procedures to ensure that any identified threats can be dealt with quickly and efficiently. It is also vital at this point to ensure that all employees, volunteers, and other stakeholders are aware of such plans and their responsibilities in the event of a major incident.

Resilience Roadmap

Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers' Resilience Roadmap has been designed to assist museums in completing the above process. The roadmap outlines key considerations within each of the areas mentioned, where museums can self-score against their current approach with suggested recommendations to help identify areas for improvement. As with any scoring assessment, the recommendations are only helpful if you score yourself objectively and be brutally honest.

Visit www.hayesparsons.co.uk/blog/museums-and-resiliency-the-impact-of-the-unforeseen to download Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers' Resilience Roadmap

To find out more or discuss the resilience in your own museum, please feel free to get in touch with Hayes Parsons' museums expert, Ben Leah 0117 930 1675/07554 455 041

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AIM Bulletin

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Supported using public funding by
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Registered in England No. 1350939

Charity No: 1082215

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Page layout by Dorchester Typesetting Group Ltd, Dorchester, Dorset
Printed by Pensord: www.pensord.co.uk

AIM Bulletin is printed on Edixion offset, uncoated paper with ISO 14001 environmental certification and covered by the European EMAS standard, produced from sustainable forests.

