



Association of  
Independent  
Museums

# AIM Bulletin

October 2022

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place for the soul**  
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# Queen Elizabeth II 1926–2022

## A nation in mourning

**At the time of writing the country is in a period of national mourning for the death of Her Majesty The Queen.**

Announced on the evening of 8th September whilst this Bulletin was being finalised, the news resonated across the nation, and across the globe.

In a statement released later that evening, Chair of Arts Council England, Sir Nicholas Serota said Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II “embodied the values of duty, dedication, courage and determination” and expressed “immeasurable gratitude to Her Majesty the Queen for her support for the arts and culture sector over so many years.”

AIM members took to social media to share their sadness, condolences and warm memories of the Queen’s seven-decade reign.

The National Mining Museum, Scotland tweeted “Our heartfelt condolences to His Majesty the King, The Queen Consort and to the Royal Family. Her 70-year reign will be remembered in particular for her sense of duty and humility.”

Sharing an image of a visit by the Queen to Aberystwyth in 1955, Ceredigion Museum in Wales tweeted “sympathy to everyone feeling the loss of Her Majesty the Queen. We hope that anyone feeling grief will think of the museum as a place to come for solace at this sad time.”

Following the announcement, AIM Chair, Andrew Lovett OBE, said

“On behalf of the Association of Independent Museums I would like to express how very saddened we are to hear of the death of Her Majesty The Queen and I extend our deepest sympathies and condolences to the Royal Family at this sad time.



We also share our gratitude for Her Majesty’s many decades of peerless public service, her lifelong support and many patronages in heritage, culture and the arts, and the difference Her Majesty made to our country.

That legacy, and the positive impact Her Majesty made on the lives of so many, will live on.”



## Front cover

Armagh Robinson Library is the oldest public library in Northern Ireland, founded in 1771 by Richard Robinson, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, who wanted to make his collection of books and fine art publicly accessible. The library retains the collections provided by Archbishop Robinson, which include approximately 8,000 books, as well as Roman and Medieval coins, and casts of medals from the reign of Louis XIV. Read more in our profile on page 19.



# Comment

**Sometimes it feels like the problems are never ending. We have all moved from closure and pandemic; to project management and reopening; and now, when we have hardly had time to catch our breath, we move headlong into a cost-of-living crisis and possible recession.**

For all of us in the independent sector this is a major worry: if our visitors can't afford to pay their gas bill, where will they find the funds for a day out? Not to mention our own worries about our organisations' rising costs.

At my museum (London Museum of Water & Steam in West London) we are approaching this challenge from two directions.

First, we are looking at the cost of running the museum, looking for changes we can make, especially when our current fixed rate for energy ends. For example, we are moving to more local suppliers, reducing the annual costs of our IT by moving to cloud-based systems and negotiating discounts.

We are also planning the budgets and what we might have to not do if the costs don't allow. Although none of these ideas are a magic bullet, they will all help, and for us the key is starting to plan now.

Second, and just as importantly, we are looking at what we can do to support the local community. When people are choosing between eating and heating, those families will not have any

money for days out. We send out tickets to our local food bank to give to families in need of a day out, we have people using the building with their local community groups, all year round, and sharing that free access will be even more important when people have even less.

This is not lost income for us, we are already open, the lights are already on. These visitors bring their energy and enthusiasm and will take that back to their friends and family, who maybe are able to buy a ticket.

For families who do have some disposable income, we will continue to show what good value for money we are as a museum, and those visitor numbers and income will keep us going. This has been helped by moving to annual tickets and letting kids come in for free.

Having said all of this, it's still going to be hard, and there is no getting away from that. We will all need help and support. So do talk to your networks, get in touch with AIM and your MDOs, look for community partners outside the sector, and most importantly do not struggle alone. We are all facing this challenge together, and like the other challenges that have come before, we will get through it together.

**Liz Power**  
**Director**

**London Museum of Water and Steam**

## Sector continues to face challenging times

**Spiraling inflation and rapidly rising energy costs are causing great concern for museums and their visitors.**

Many AIM members saw reserves depleted as they sought to survive the impact of Covid 19 and AIM's advocacy, resources, and support for strengthening business practice have perhaps never been more relevant.

"There is significant concern right across the sector regarding the impact of rising

costs, both in terms of managing the day-to-day operations of a museum but also the impact on visitors' disposable income," says AIM Director, Lisa Ollerhead.

"AIM has launched a survey to gather evidence of the stresses our museums and their communities are under, and to support discussions with the government and public funders about the type and scale of support required. Museums were notably creative in the face of adversity, showing their appreciation for the Culture Recovery Fund through activities and programming up and down the UK, and AIM would repeat our message from the early days of Covid that supporting culture through generational crises like these is an investment, not a handout.

Recent initiatives, such as the museum VAT refund scheme VAT33A opening again for applications, are welcome – but it is likely that additional support will be required if museums and the high streets across the UK they are found in, are to survive these extreme economy-wide stresses."

If you are in the process of reviewing your activities to identify cost mitigations or income opportunities, do review existing AIM resources at

[aim-museums.co.uk/strengthening-your-organisation-in-challenging-times](https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/strengthening-your-organisation-in-challenging-times)

And if you are facing immediate issues, especially risk of permanent closure before the end of the calendar year, please do contact us for support on [info@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:info@aim-museums.co.uk)



# Museums and galleries urged to sign up for VAT refund scheme

The Government has announced a new round of the VAT Refund Scheme for museums and galleries is to open this Autumn. Institutions taking part in the scheme are entitled to a refund on VAT incurred on goods and services which are purchased in order to provide free admission. A total of 159 sites across the UK currently benefit from the scheme. Running since 2001, the scheme was last open to new applicants in 2018/19.

It is estimated that museums and galleries which were added to the scheme in 2020 will benefit from more than £70 million in VAT refunds in the six years after joining.

The full criteria for a museum and gallery applying are:

- being open to the public for at least 30 hours per week, without exception
- offering free entry without prior appointment

- holding collections in a purpose-built building
- displaying details of free entry and opening hours on the museum website

More information and a full list of current organisations on the scheme, can be found at: [www.gov.uk/guidance/vat-refund-scheme-for-museums-and-galleries-notice-998](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/vat-refund-scheme-for-museums-and-galleries-notice-998)

Any queries regarding the scheme may be directed to [vat33a@dcms.gov.uk](mailto:vat33a@dcms.gov.uk)

## Obituary: Tony Hirst OBE, former chairman of AIM

Tony, who lived in Wistaston, Cheshire, was the first director of The Boat Museum (as it was then called) at Ellesmere Port. He was a driving force behind the planning and teamwork for the restoration of the Ellesmere Port site before its opening in 1976. In 1981 The Boat Museum Trust was formed, and he was appointed its first director.

His initial career had been in electronics and computers, but he had always taken an interest in the past especially industrial archaeology and canals, becoming involved with canal restoration. He and his wife, Dia had their own narrowboat and explored the canal network throughout

Britain. As director of The Boat Museum, he became increasingly interested in tourism and the independent museum movement.

He became honorary treasurer of AIM before becoming its chairman in 1991. He was keen to capitalise on AIM's many achievements and grasped every opportunity to lobby Government and others on issues important to AIM members. His chief concern for museums' future "in a world where there is no more cash" was to find replacements for resources independent museums had relied on in the 1970s.

# ‘Restitution and Repatriation: a practical guide for museums in England’

**ACE guidance draws together existing policy and legislation and provides a practical framework for the processes and considerations involved in the restitution and repatriation of items from collections in museums.**

Whilst there is no strict legal definition within the museum sector, the terms ‘restitution’ and ‘repatriation’ have traditionally referred to the process of returning cultural material to its original owners or place of origin.

Responding to the release, AIM Director Lisa Ollerhead said

“This is a considered and considerable piece of work that will support museums, and their communities, in exploring a complex and sensitive area.

The practical, step-by-step approach of the guidance and the inclusion of helpful case studies,

checklists, and FAQs, alongside its underpinning principles of transparency, collaboration and fairness provide a firm foundation from which museums can review their own approach to this important area of practice.”

Read the guidance at

[www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/restitution-and-repatriation-practical-guide-museums-england](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication/restitution-and-repatriation-practical-guide-museums-england)



**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**

Describing the 1990s as the “decade of rationalisation”, compared to the “decades of collecting” in the 1970s and 1980s, he oversaw a survey of AIM membership following AIM’s report *New Visions for Independent Museums in the UK* (Victor Middleton, 1990).

This significant book highlighted independent museums’ achievements and explored how their future might look. More difficult economic conditions and growing competition were expected to require fresh thinking. “Even in the growth conditions of the last five years, many museums had to show remarkable resilience in order to survive,” it said.

Tony was practical and hands-on, hallmarks of many successful AIM museum directors over the years. He passed on the baton of AIM chairmanship in 1995, the year in which he was awarded the OBE.

In retirement his interests included helping save the steam powered tug/tender, *Daniel Adamson*, and he became the society’s chairman and then president.

**Diana Zeuner**  
(Editor, AIM Bulletin 1979–2018)



Tony Hirst, right, with Lord Leverhulme in 1993.





# Upcoming AIM events

## Hallmarks at Home – Planning your marketing

When: Wednesday 5 October 2022

Where: Zoom online forum

Time: 11:00 – 12:30

Led by Christina Lister, author of AIM's Success Guide 'Successful Marketing for Museums,' this session will help you with your strategic marketing planning and is an opportunity to pause and reflect on how your marketing can support your museum's goals and needs. It will cover:

- An overview of key sector research on audiences and the pandemic and other factors that may influence your approach
- Identifying how your audiences have evolved during the pandemic and the implications for your marketing
- How to choose marketing channels and decide how to spend marketing budget most effectively
- How to plan a marketing campaign.

The session will provide a framework for participants who wish to develop a marketing campaign and includes practical tips and examples as inspiration.

## Hallmarks Together – Undertaking a Core Business Review and networking

When: Thursday 20 October 2022

Where: The Story Museum, Oxford

Time: 09:30 – 16:00

AIM is pleased to launch a new series of in-person events – *Hallmarks Together* – sessions include a workshop from a leading consultant on a key topic related to AIM Hallmarks, along with time for structured and informal networking with members and an update from the AIM team.

The first of these new events is taking place on Thursday 20 October at The Story Museum in Oxford. Join us for a workshop on undertaking a core Business Review, presented by Judy Niner of Development Partners.

## To book your place visit

## Museum trustee induction

When: Tuesday 1 and 15 November 2022

Where: Zoom online forum

Time: 17:30 – 19:30

A good induction will enable your new trustees to become active and contribute more quickly and to greater effect for your museum. It's also a requirement of the Museum Accreditation scheme.

This session offers new trustees an essential and practical introduction to museum governance and best practice, and it is a great refresher course for existing trustees!

Consisting of two workshops – part 1 on 1 November and part 2 on 15 November – these sessions will provide tools for you and your board to use in improving the governance of your museum. They are also an invaluable opportunity to network with other trustees, exchange ideas and be refreshed in your thinking about trustee induction.

AIM's two session course is delivered by Hilary Barnard and Ruth Lesirge, the authors of AIM's *"Successful Governance for Museums"* and acknowledged experts in charity governance.

## Hallmarks at Home – Successful Museum Interpretation

When: Wednesday 2 November 2022

Where: Zoom online forum

Time: 11:00 – 12:30

Interpretation is at the heart of museums: without it, museums are merely a collection of objects, but what is it and how can we do it better? This workshop will introduce several types of interpretation and how these connect to our collections, from object labels to graphic panels, interactive exhibits, guided tours, and digital interpretation.

Ruth McKew, Director of Headland Design, and author of our new AIM Success Guide *'Museum Displays and Interpretation Success'* will lead the session.

## Hallmarks at Home – Care of Industrial Collections

When: Wednesday 16 November 2022

Where: Zoom online forum

Time: 11:00 – 12:30

The care of industrial collections workshop will introduce those who look after these, often complex, objects to techniques they can use to help look after them better. As many of these objects are large, they are often stored or displayed outside in less than ideal conditions.

The participants will be introduced to the Agents of Deterioration and how they impact an object's materials over time. They will then be introduced to a number of basic and simple things that can be done to help with the long-term preservation of these collections.

## Spark! Leadership programme

When:

25 October 2022 – Action Learning Set 2-5pm

07 November 2022 – Workshop 2-4pm

28 November 2022 – Action Learning Set 2-5pm

16 January 2023 – Workshop 2-4pm

30 January 2023 – Action Learning Set 2-5pm

Where: Zoom online forum

Strengthen your professional and personal resilience with this programme of support and development for independent museum leaders. Share your challenges and opportunities with a small peer group of museum directors and senior leaders. Reignite your creativity, re-energize your teams and face the future for your organisation with confidence.

Experienced consultants Ruth Lesirge and Hilary Barnard are your programme leads. Ruth and Hilary designed and delivered the AIM Leaders and Enablers programme (2015-18) as well as offer regular sessions on good governance, scenario planning and the induction of museum Trustees.

# News in brief

## Michelle Donelan appointed Secretary of State

Michelle Donelan has been appointed Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport by Prime Minister Liz Truss, replacing Nadine Dorries.



UK Parliament website used under Creative Commons

An MP since 2015, she represents the Chippenham constituency. Following her appointment, she tweeted “Packed first day relaying my passion for digital, tech and the creatives to be the engines of UK growth - before heading to the home of British innovation, the Science Museum. Cultural organisations like these are so important to our communities. The Science Museum has sites across the country, they’re free to visit and I have seen first-hand how they inspire a whole new generation of experimenters and innovators.”

## This Exhibition is a Work Event – The Tale of Boris Johnson

Since taking office, Boris Johnson has been the most cartooned politician in the history of our country. Accordingly, The Cartoon Museum has collected a diverse selection of political cartoons detailing the different phases of Boris Johnson’s career and the wider societal impact on Britain over the last four years on show in an upcoming exhibition 11 October 2022 – 16 April 2023.

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

## The Insurance Museum launches with an online exhibition

Fire! Risk and Revelations will go live on [www.insurance.museum](http://www.insurance.museum) from 7th September and is the first in a series of exhibitions to be launched by the Insurance Museum. With further support and funding from the industry, the plan is to produce further galleries, a pop-up museum with educational facilities and ultimately, a permanent



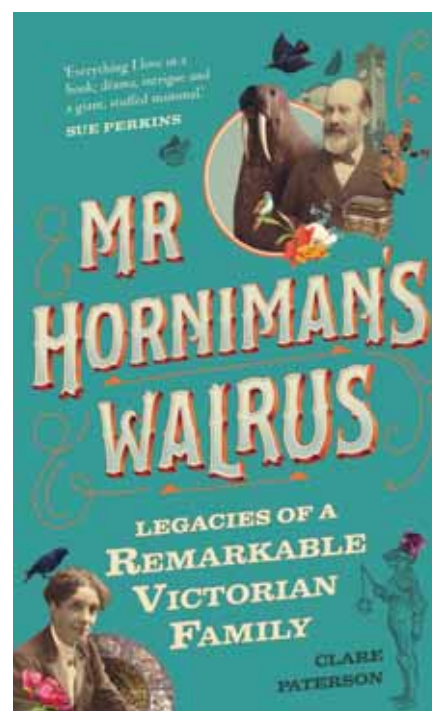
museum to be based in EC3, in the heart of the City of London.

The launch date, 7th September, coincides with the timing of the Great Fire of London – the event that was instrumental in highlighting the need for fire insurance, back at the end of the 17th century.

[www.insurance.museum](http://www.insurance.museum)

## Mr Horniman’s Walrus: Legacies of a Remarkable Victorian Family

In the 1820s John Horniman established Horniman’s Tea Company, which went on to become one of the best-known brands of



nineteenth-century Britain. His son Frederick created the famed eclectic Horniman Museum in London, and John’s granddaughter Annie was a leading member of the occult group the Golden Dawn who, along with W.B. Yeats and others, founded Ireland’s national theatre, the Abbey.





Image by Jorg Angeli on Unsplash

*Mr Horniman's Walrus: Legacies of a Remarkable Victorian Family* explores the lives and loves of this eccentric Victorian family – a story of a family embodying the high-point of Victorian entrepreneurialism and the changing middle-class attitudes ushered in by the Edwardian age.

Written by award-winning documentary maker Clare Paterson, previously a trustee of the Horniman Museum, the book draws on years of research and unfettered access to the family archive. For the first time, Paterson unpicks the lives of the Hornimans, revealing their slips from grace as well as their astounding achievements.

### **AIM National Conference – session call out**

Can you help? We are looking for ideas and contributions to our breakout sessions for next year's AIM National Conference in Edinburgh.

Always a popular part of our conference schedule, breakout sessions run for 45 minutes and focus on pragmatic advice and ideas from people who have been through it. We have three slots reserved for programming by you, the AIM community.

Following the theme of the conference, 2023 breakout sessions will explore how independent museums approach *creativity, community, and control*

(governance). The 2023 conference is particularly keen to explore the specific challenges and opportunities of independence around these areas and we want to hear how your independence has enabled you to innovate.

Interested?

All we need is 300-400 words (maximum) on your session proposal. You will receive support from the AIM team in planning the session, as well as speaker tickets too.

Send your submission in to Lisa on [Lisa.Ollerhead@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:Lisa.Ollerhead@aim-museums.co.uk) by the close of Friday November 11, and we'll see you in Edinburgh!



South Shields Museum and Gallery.

# Business Rates saga

**Could the recent landmark decision be the final instalment? asks Colin Hunter.**

**On 3rd August 2022, the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) published a decision in respect of three properties in Tyne & Wear which saw Shipley Art Gallery, Laing Art Gallery and South Shields Museum and Gallery, part of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, secure a landmark ruling over their rateable value and could result in significant savings for many other museums across England and Wales.**

This case is the third time the Upper Tribunal has decided in favour of the museum bodies and, hopefully, will be the final word on how museums should be valued.

## **Background**

The Valuation Office has fought hard against the idea that any museum can have a nominal or £1 Rateable Value, arguing that there must be a significant value because of the socio-economic and social value that museums generate.

Museums are rightly proud of the benefits they bring to their communities and even happier if that benefit spreads to the wider world, but that is no reason to penalise them with high rates bills. It goes against common sense for the Valuation Office to set high Rateable Values, meaning that more funding is required to keep the lights on and the doors open.

Unlike earlier appeals, in the case of the Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, the Valuation Officer admitted that their original approach had been wrong and defended much lower values than those that had



originally appeared in the Rating List from 1st April 2010, which were:

Shipley Art Gallery: Rateable Value £94,500

Laing Art Gallery: Rateable Value £193,000

South Shields Museum and Gallery: Rateable Value £62,500

In this case, the final decision saw all the properties have a Rateable Value of £10 confirmed.

### Appeals process

The appeals came about due to the Valuation Office appealing against a decision of the Vice President of the Valuation Tribunal, published in December 2020. That decision followed the reasoning and logic set out in an Upper Tribunal decision for the Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter, published in January 2020, where the Rateable Value was confirmed at £1 down from a previously agreed Rateable Value of £445,000, but with the Valuation Office arguing that it was under assessed.

In the earlier appeals, the Upper Tribunal was asked to decide between the Valuation Officer's approach of using the *Contractor's method* (which looks at the cost of building a modern equivalent and then takes a set percentage of that cost as the Rateable Value) or looking at *Receipts and Expenditure*, which takes account of the sustainable net surplus or loss that the museum makes. Where there is free admission, the potential income from charging visitors is added to the actual income. In the previous cases, the Valuation Officer's approach was thrown out.

For the Tyne & Wear museums, the Valuation Office abandoned the Contractor's method and instead argued for positive values for loss making museums and galleries based on a percentage of gross receipts (including notional income from admissions), backed up by social value calculations using the reports published by Arts Council England for local and regional galleries.

**“ Social value is a value to the community not to the occupier of the museum and there is no evidence or mechanism to show that there is any benefit to the occupier, other than the satisfaction of a job well done. ”**

They also argued that museums would make an overbid because of the objectives of providing cultural, educational, and social benefit to the local and regional community. Finally, they insisted that museums would pay a rent based on the cost of renting storage space to house their collections if they didn't have a museum in which to display them. Several rents were put forward as “proof” of the overbid and storage argument.

All the Valuation Officer's arguments failed.

Social value is a value to the community not to the occupier of the museum and there is no evidence or mechanism to show that there is any benefit to the occupier, other than the satisfaction of a job well done.

Seven out of ten rents put forward by the Valuation Office were rejected as not being of any assistance and it was noted that this left three rents against thousands of museums and so no useful conclusions could be drawn from them.

These Upper Tribunal decisions have come at a high cost to the three bodies responsible for defending the use of receipts and expenditure valuations, namely York Museums and Gallery Trust, Exeter City Council and now Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums.

AIM has provided support and backing to all three of the organisations because of the potential benefit to their members.

**“ Not all museums will be over-valued, some may be under-valued, so it is important that advice is taken from competent, qualified, and experienced Chartered Surveyors. ”**

### Where does this take us now?

As a result of the three decisions, museums should be valued according to the potential to generate a surplus. Those that are loss making should have nominal values and so nominal rates liabilities. Even if the Valuation Office accepts what the Upper Tribunal is telling them, they don't have the resources or the information needed to unilaterally alter the Rateable Values in the 2017 Rating List and it is unlikely that they will be able or inclined to amend the valuations for the 2023 Revaluation, due to come into effect on 1st April 2023.

If museums want to benefit from these decisions, they will need to consider appealing against the 2017 Rateable Value before time runs out. However, not all museums will be over-valued, some may be under-valued, so it is important that advice is taken from competent, qualified, and experienced Chartered Surveyors.

### Free Consultation

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



**AIM spoke to Ameeta Lodhia, Business Development Manager, Museum of the Order of St John to uncover how the team set up an Escape Room, opening up new markets in their Clerkenwell neighbourhood.**

# Setting up an Escape Room

Someone has been leaking parliamentary debates to *The Gentleman's Magazine*, a treasonable offence! Come and solve this 280-year-old crime in the very room that it occurred . . .

The Museum of the Order of St John opened up its Council Chamber as an Escape Room in April this year, revisiting the room's historic use as the editorial hub of *The Gentleman's Magazine*, one of the most widely read publications in Georgian London. Players have 60 minutes while the 'editors are out to lunch' to snoop around and figure out who has been causing international uproar by leaking parliamentary reports. By using their powers of deduction and lateral thinking, can they solve the mystery?

An Escape Room – sometimes called a Puzzle Room, a Crystal Maze, or an Exit Game – is a game in which a team of players are 'locked' in a room, working together to solve puzzles and uncover clues that lead to a final answer to win the game, and escape the room, all within 60 minutes.

"We are focussed on growing and diversifying our public programme and encouraging new audiences to come in and engage with our spaces," explains Ameeta Lodhia, Business Development Manager

"Clerkenwell is the design hub of London, so many young working professionals are returning to the area now that offices are open. We're keen to engage more with people who walk under our Gateway constantly yet have never stepped foot within the building."

As with many recent initiatives across the sector, Covid disrupted the original plans, Ameeta explains

"We began planning this pre-Covid so it was held up for almost two years whilst we figured out if we could afford to run it again. We looked at the investment we had made and weighed that against the opportunity to re-launch our public programmes, working in tandem with our Audience Development Plan to get new people into the museum."



The team set themselves clear goals: increase museum revenue; maximise the use of spaces in a low impact manner that respects the integrity of the building; increase and diversify audiences; and raise the profile of the museum. So now it is up and running, how is it going?

"We have had much more interest now than when we first launched; offering it out to local partners with a discount has meant that we have had a range of team 'Away Days' here. We've also learned how easily parts from the room need replacing through constant handling and use. And having multiple members of the team trained to facilitate this is something I would do again. I think having a range of offers within our public programme is useful. For our team, it's about not just appealing to a particular type of person."

Whilst the pandemic interruption was the key challenge, now the room is open, the team have one key suggestion to share with those thinking about a similar initiative.

"Do your research to see how these types of ventures run in your area; overall it's a great way to use a room differently and to engage staff."

[museumstjohn.org.uk](http://museumstjohn.org.uk)

# Award-winning local marketing

**We caught up with Samantha Jennings, Marketing Manager at Kiplin Hall and Gardens to find out how they planned their Museums + Heritage Award winning marketing campaign.**

**What was the basis of your campaign?**

Kiplin's 2021 marketing campaign aimed to go local, attracting first time and repeat visits from residents living in the surrounding towns and villages. The concept of a 'destination on the doorstep' gained popularity as people stayed local while lockdown restrictions eased. Kiplin reported record-breaking visitor figures in 2021, welcoming just over 30,000 visitors, a 65% increase on the previous best. And like most AIM members, Kiplin Hall and Gardens is an independent museum reliant on ticket income.

**Press coverage was fundamental to the success of the campaign. Was this paid-for? Or did you generate coverage via PR activity?**

A combination of both. Our audience and rural location mean that there are a few key paper publications; The Darlington & Stockton Times has a strong following here and The Northern Echo is also very popular with our audience. And there are a couple of well-read local magazines including Dales Life and Richmondshire Today. We had to do a

LOT of work to write the content. During 2021 we pitched a regular series with The Northern Echo called An A to Z of Discovery at Kiplin, which was 400-500 words and 3 or 4 photos to create a full-page article. The feature ran each fortnight, so we had a page of coverage every two weeks for a WHOLE YEAR! It gave us loads of room to explore our collection. We were also able to publish each article on our blog, so the work that went in bore fruit twice. The Northern Echo publishes in print and online, so the content was on the web via them too.

**You've clearly built up a mutually beneficial relationship with your local press contacts. How did you do that?**

Trust is especially important here; the journalists have come to trust my content as it's always good quality. I offer draft articles so put in the work without the promise of publication. I expect to do a lot of the work at my end. This includes providing good photos!

We work hard to keep local journalists on side. I track them down on Twitter and invite them to Kiplin if I've not met them before for a coffee and short tour. I often offer complimentary annual family tickets to members of the press. (Some accept and some insist on buying their own). We invite them to previews. If we have unsold tickets for events, I will offer them to the press at short notice. Not for the promise of coverage, simply to harbour a good relationship.

**Was there any other marketing activity that formed part of your 2021 campaign?**

Alongside the press coverage and local newsletters, we continued with our normal marketing, which includes

social media, blog, posters, leaflets, email. I work part-time so I tend to find if I put a lot of energy into press, something must give elsewhere. Sometimes this can be social media content. I accept I cannot do it all the time.

**What advice would you share with other AIM members on delivering successful local marketing?**

Have staff with dedicated responsibility for marketing. Even part time staff can do a lot to make a difference. But it's not instant. I started working at Kiplin in June 2019 and the relationships I've built with journalists have taken time.

If you want to gain editorial coverage you've got to give journalists the GOOD STUFF. A press release saying you have an event coming up is just an advert. Editorial and feature content is about stories. And AIM members have so many stories to tell about unique objects/people/places. If you tell readers something amazing, they will want to see it for real as a result.

Journalists have fewer resources than previously so heritage organisations can help fill that gap in the press industry. It's a big job to fill a daily or weekly newspaper. They need and want your content. Make it easy for them, make your content cost them less time. You will have to put effort in but will reap the rewards.

**Samantha Jennings  
Marketing & Communications Officer  
Kiplin Hall & Gardens**

To read the full story visit  
[aim-museums.co.uk/case-studies/award-winning-local-marketing-kiplin-hall-gardens/](https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/case-studies/award-winning-local-marketing-kiplin-hall-gardens/)



AIM administers grants including AIM Hallmarks Awards, supported by Arts Council England and the Welsh government; and AIM's Conservation and Collections Care and Collection Audit Schemes, supported by the Pilgrim Trust.

# AIM grants case studies

## AIM Training Grant

### Museum Tech 2022

Our day at the Museum Association's Museum Tech 2022 was enjoyable and although a lot of the information presented was targeted towards higher budget organisations, there were plenty of ideas that applied to us.

We particularly enjoyed the immersive storytelling presentation by Tim Powell: although he himself works on multi-million pounds sized projects, the core ideas of immersion

can apply to anyone that wants to tell a story.

The planned new cloud-based database system for museums was also a highlight – the problems with museum approaches to databases and data sharing resonated, and the proposed solutions seem promising.

It was exciting to hear about the new Anglo-Saxon exhibition in Winchester, especially their successful partnership with Ubisoft. There were

a few presentations that missed the mark for us, where the content seemed more targeted at massive theme parks rather than museums, but those sessions did still present some challenging information to think about.

Overall, it was a positive learning experience and we'll be applying the knowledge we gathered to improve the visitor experience of our museum.

**Jayna, Tetbury Police Museum**

## From Museum to Film Set: Protecting Your Collection

A recent article *Lights! Camera! Action!* posted on the AIM website really struck a chord with the London team at Integrated Contamination Management UK (ICM UK). It is fantastic to see opportunities presenting themselves to UK museums through the film industry, as these much-loved institutions become sets for some of the biggest films and television series to be released over the past few years, and interesting to learn of the challenges that come with these events.

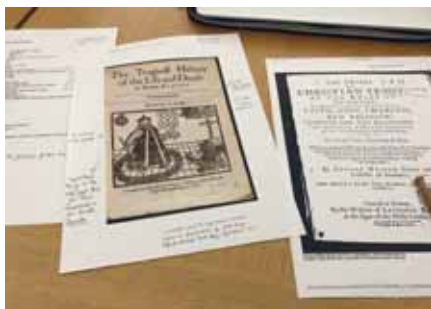
ICM work with many museums, treating works of art and heritage objects for insect pest eradication using a humidity-regulated

warm air treatment process, and work with clients in training and implementing Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programmes.

Over the past year, ICM have seen an influx of projects requiring the treatment of film props on their way to museums and heritage sites. Despite the excitement and challenges filming can bring to a museum in equal measure; requesting insect eradication treatment is a clear sign that IPM programmes remain a priority for venues, and it's great to see!

Insect pests are one of the biggest threats to museum objects, making IPM a key principle in protecting collections. Any new





## Lincoln Unlocked: What to do with Early Printed Books

I was lucky to receive an AIM Training Grant to fund my travel and overnight stay for a place I had gained on a residential course 'What to do with Early Printed Books?' held at Lincoln College Oxford in March 2022. The librarians at Lincoln College – Sarah Cusk and Lucy Matheson – had designed training specifically for smaller and independent museums and libraries with significant collections of early printed books. This focused on developing skills in cataloguing, describing bindings, and conserving collections, and encouraging discussion and skill-sharing. We received talks from leading experts in the field – such as David Pearson on book bindings and armorial stamps – and then applied this knowledge in practical sessions,

alongside librarians from across Oxford colleges and the Bodleian Library.

Chawton House has a collection of over 4,500 rare books and manuscripts written by women from 1600 to 1860. In my role as Curator and Collections Manager I care for this collection, make it accessible for researchers, and interpret it for visitors. We have transformed from our original setup as a research library, to integrating research into our wider offer as an historic house and independent museum that tells the story of early women writers and the Knight family, who chose Jane Austen's brother Edward as their heir.

With Museum Accreditation as a key goal for the coming years, we need a new Collections Management approach where we can catalogue all our different collections together. Sarah and Lucy gave useful advice on this and the flexibilities and inflexibilities of different systems, as well as the latest guidance on cataloguing standards.

A hugely valuable part of the course was the opportunity to meet other Curators and Librarians from smaller and regional venues like my own. With attendees from across England and Scotland (including from other AIM

members like the John Bunyan Museum in Bedford), we have now established an informal network via email where we can continue to share ideas and ask questions.

The skills I developed, the contacts I made, and the inspiring environment of staying in an Oxford college led to a truly amazing experience. I am now better placed to select a new collections management system and have tools for training volunteers in upcoming cataloguing. Without the AIM grant it would have been very hard to go on this course. I would encourage anyone in a similar position to make an application to this fantastic scheme.

**Emma Yandle**  
Curator and Collections Manager  
Chawton House



Top left, Emma Yandle's notes in one of the sessions; Above, The Lincoln Unlocked study group.

A new Training Grants round will open shortly.  
For more information visit [aim-museums.co.uk/for-aim-members/grants/aim-training-grants](https://aim-museums.co.uk/for-aim-members/grants/aim-training-grants)

items brought into a building could introduce insect pests. This could be through incoming or returning exhibition loans, gallery furniture or even the crates that encase works, and film props are no different.

Props can be sought from many differing sources, so it is often unknown what environment objects are arriving from and what they could secretly be carrying.

It is not always initially clear that an object is infested. Museum pests such as Clothes moth and Carpet beetle (which feed on animal-based fibres), prefer dark, undisturbed environments in which to dwell. Therefore, they're often found hidden down the back of sofas or underneath cushions, in the centre of rolled carpets or deep inside packed boxes of textiles.

Many wood-boring museum pests such as the Furniture beetle,

can tunnel through wooden objects for up to five years without ever showing any sign of their presence.



ICM's process allows for mixed materials to be treated together, from gilded and upholstered furniture, paintings and sculptures to costumes, tapestries, and taxidermy. The ICM process is fast, with completion achieved overnight; allowing for large volumes to be treated weekly. The last such project allowed the London team to treat 300+ pieces of furniture in one week – a quick stop between prop store and set.

ICM hopes the message continues to spread of the importance of having an Integrated Pest Management programme in place and how all museums can best care for their collections alongside these exciting, new opportunities.

[www.icm.works](https://www.icm.works)

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Consultant **Colin Mulberg** outlines how to maximise earned income while staying true to your principles.

# Developing your mixed economy model

The Covid-19 pandemic and cost of living crisis has brought into sharp relief the need for many museums and heritage venues to maximise their earned income to keep going in the short-term and to build future resilience. The predicted recession means that there will be less public investment in the sector, costs will rise, and visitors will certainly make fewer visits overall and spend less when they do.

Yet for many organisations, staff and volunteers, income generation feels like it goes against the grain of their charitable aims and their relationships with local visitors and communities, especially if a visit and much of what they offer is free. Even for places that have a history of charging, there are many audience groups that cannot simply afford to pay, and more people are likely to fall into this category as the cost-of-living crisis bites.

However, it does not have to be all or nothing – charging for everything or not charging for anything. Many venues are adopting a flexible, mixed economy model to still serve their local communities while taking advantage of income opportunities.

In its simplest terms, a mixed economy model looks at charging for some activities while others are given away at a discount or are free, to particular audiences or at specific times. A venue chooses a mix that suits it best and can change the mix when situations change.

A good starting point is to look at your standard visit to define which elements should be included to make it a great, compelling, and attractive offer. This standard offer should deliver good value to a range of audiences.

The next step is to then explore what other elements could add value to a visit, that visitors might be willing to pay for. Some of these may already exist (e.g., special tour; demonstration; family activity) and others may need a new approach – for

example, the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu charges extra for special rides in a reconstructed Chitty Chitty Bang Bang car, celebrating the famous film.

In many cases it is possible to make more of things that you are already doing. Zoos are great examples of this, where they advertise animal feeding times – popular with visitors and it happens anyway. You may be able to make more of existing provision, by extending an existing offer to different audiences – for example, a special talk or course with some audiences paying and with some places for other audiences receiving a discounted or free ticket. Or an activity can be repeated with one session paying and other sessions for targeted audiences at reduced rates (e.g., community groups).

Another way to tackle this is to develop enough audience insight to uncover what your audiences are interested in, the types of experiences they are after and in what circumstances (e.g., specialists/enthusiasts; families). You can then determine which offers are attractive to each key audience and will also generate income.

It is helpful to review your offers to visitors with fresh eyes. This could be by using staff or volunteers from different areas or who can ask questions about audiences that are less familiar to them, or by buying in a little outside help. Researching the standard offers and extra value experiences available from nearby and comparable venues may also generate ideas.

There are a range of tools that can be used to promote a mixed economy, including priority booking, targeted discounts, incentives to return (e.g., book an upcoming event) and discounts (e.g. for shop or café). Brighton and Hove Museums are one of many venues to give reduced admission to residents in local postcodes. Allowing Friends/Members to buy last-minute unsold tickets for events at a discount is another possibility.



The National Motor Museum at Beaulieu sells rides in a reconstructed Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Flexible ticketing can also help, such as 'early bird' or off-season discounts to spread out loading to quieter periods. A Carnet of tickets (e.g., 10 tickets) could be more attractive to some audiences, as they can be used as visitors want, but still encourage repeat visits. This may give some visitors more flexibility than the usual one-off entry or year membership. Carnets can also remove the issue with different family tickets that have fixed combinations of one or two adults and set numbers of children. Introductory offers can be helpful when trying out new visitor offers and building up an audience.

A mixed economy gives venues a way of increasing earned income while still building relationships with priority audiences. If desired, income from one audience can be used to subsidise provision for other audiences. Flexibility is key – a venue is not locked in to always charging or never charging but can target and control where income is earned and used.

**Colin Mulberg is Director of Colin Mulberg Consulting, specialising in improving the visitor experience for museums, galleries, and historic properties/sites.**

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



The joint collections of five museums in Denmark have been brought together under one roof in a new facility known as the **Kolleksjesintrum Fryslan**. Rob Dakin from Associate Supplier **Bruynzeel Storage Systems**, shares how space was maximised and costs minimised.



# Efficient storage, minimal costs

The design team had to find suitable options that would match the brief of creating a stable climate while avoiding the high costs of maintaining its consistency.

## The Building Design

The collections are kept in a 'black box' inside walls of powder-coated aluminium. Slender ribs along the sides create niches which plants will fill up, blurring the boundary between building and landscape. In a departure from conventional practices, the various collections are merged and organised along respective climatic requirements. A central walkway connects the depot to a second volume with workspaces. By standing atop a large mound, the Kolleksjesintrum keeps its collections well above street- and water-levels.

Basic to the climatic concept is an airtight shell with an exceptionally high R-value of 10 m<sup>2</sup>K/W and a purposefully uninsulated concrete floor. This floor facilitates thermal accumulation in, and exchange with, the earth keeping inside-temperatures and humidity remarkably stable all year round. Combine this with a minimum

of technical installations, and the fact that the sum 26 KW of power required for the entire depot competes with that of a single-family home!

An air-cooled heat-pump warms and cools the insulated strip that connects various facility rooms. Energy consumption is further minimised using motion-detection sensors and LED lighting. Indeed, the 400 solar cells on the roof produce more electricity than the building requires.

## The Storage Design

The first estimate indicated they would need a 10,000m<sup>2</sup>, 45,000m<sup>3</sup>, 4-Storey building. The five museums had stored their collections at 30 different locations. Many of the locations had low visitation numbers with high running costs, so the team evaluated decreasing the space required to reduce costs accordingly.

It is well known that effective storage solutions play a significant role in the reduction of space and in this instance a double-decker system offered a potential 65% reduction in the space needed. The project team was excited by the ability



Bruynzeel storage solutions at the Kolleksjesintrum Fryslan.

of a two-storey system to reach a height of 6m. Other advantages they appreciated were low energy usage motors, and the controlled movement of each individual rack when opening an aisle.

The combination of space-efficient storage systems, solar energy and low energy requirements brings costs down to only 50% of those of more traditional storage facilities and the result is a safe, energy-generating home for Frysian heritage for many years to come.

**Rob Dakin**  
**Bruynzeel Storage Systems**

[bruynzeel.co.uk](http://bruynzeel.co.uk)

[info@bruynzeel.co.uk](mailto:info@bruynzeel.co.uk)

# Armagh Robinson Library

Armagh Robinson Library is the oldest public library in Northern Ireland. It was founded in 1771 by Richard Robinson, Archbishop of Armagh, and Primate of All Ireland, who wanted to make his collection of books and fine art publicly accessible. It was the first of several public buildings that Robinson erected in Armagh before his death in 1794. The architect was the English-born, Thomas Cooley. To accommodate the growing collection, the building was extended at each end in the mid-1840s, according to a design by Robert Law Monsarrat.

The Library retains the collections provided by Archbishop Robinson, which include approximately 8,000 books, as well as Roman and Medieval coins, and casts of medals from the reign of Louis XIV. There is also Robinson's exquisite collection of over 4,000 (mainly loose) prints and engravings, which span the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries and include examples of the work of the foremost printmakers operating in early modern Europe.

Over the years the collections have grown through donations and purchases. Today there are over 45,000 printed works, of which almost half were published before 1800. The earliest books date from the 1480s. Among the holdings are many first editions and other rarities, for instance, Sir Walter Raleigh's *Discoverie of Guiana* (1596) and his *History of the World* (1614), as well as Jonathan Swift's personal, annotated copy of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726).

In addition, the Library has over 300 manuscript collections, ranging in date from the thirteenth to late twentieth centuries. Examples of non-book treasures are on display nearby at No 5 Vicars' Hill, the former Armagh Diocesan Registry, which is owned by the Library. These include antiquities such as polished stone axe heads, Bronze Age weapons and adornments, and medieval handbells which were used in early Christian worship in Ireland.

The Library is governed by an Act of the Irish Parliament, which received royal assent in 1774. It established a Board of Governors and Guardians made up of the Church of Ireland Archbishop, Dean and Chapter of Armagh Cathedral, along with two other members of the Diocese. The Library is staffed by a



full-time Director, supported by a part-time Assistant Keeper, Archivist, Administrative Officer, Visitor Engagement Officer, and Cleaning Supervisor. There are also temporary posts related to specific externally funded projects. In addition, a wonderful team of volunteers, undertake various tasks including cleaning the books.

The Library and No 5 Vicars' Hill annually welcome approximately 12,000 visitors. Admission is free, with a modest fee requested for guided group tours. Visitors include local people, as well as tourists, school pupils and researchers. There is an active programme of temporary exhibitions and in-person and online events. Recordings of previous talks can be found on the Library's YouTube channel, and digital versions of past exhibitions can be found on the website.

An accredited museum since 2001, the Library remains an independent institution. It receives no public funding towards its core costs, which for over 250 years have been met by an Endowment provided by Archbishop Robinson. With increasing costs, the Endowment is becoming strained, so the Library is currently fundraising to create a new Endowment to sustain it into the future. The National Lottery Heritage Fund is matching all donations received by 31 August 2023. Another way that the Library can be supported is through its Adopt a Book/Shelf Scheme.

In 2019 the Library made it into *The Lonely Planet Guide's* 'Top 500 Places to Visit in the United Kingdom', being one of only twenty venues in Northern Ireland to feature. Above the Library entrance there is a Greek inscription, which was chosen by Archbishop Robinson. Translated, it reads, 'The Healing Place of the Soul.' All are welcome to visit and experience that for themselves.

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







**David Cooksey from Touchstone Energy Services on the tumultuous energy markets.**

Image by Aurélien Lemasson-Thibault on Unsplash

# Energy Action Group update

The Government's proposals of the 8th September should have a positive effect on the energy market turmoil we are all currently experiencing; however, at the time of writing, details remain unclear, and it may be weeks before the benefit can be evaluated. For both domestic and business customers, our current expectation is that while the proposals may alleviate some symptoms, they won't alter the fundamentals which will remain acute through to Spring and Summer 2023.

Sooner or later these market conditions affect everyone, but in the short term their effects can be unequal. While organisations renewing now may be experiencing extreme cost increases, others have one or more years to run on old tariffs which appear exceptionally cheap by comparison. I urge those in that fortunate position to use that cushion to prepare for unrecognisable increases when they do renew. I recommend:

- Budgeting for considerable cost increases
- Monitoring energy carefully use across your portfolio

- Utilising existing, older contracts to cushion the impact of current market rates, if possible
- Continuing to enter fixed price contracts to minimise the effect of variable or out of contract rates
- Rigorously reviewing energy use to identify any savings that can be achieved and to eliminate energy waste

One EAG member recently told me that they'd analysed their energy needs and decided that they could reduce electricity use in almost all non-essential areas, except the educational area, reducing their consumption from approximately 30,000 kWh p/a to a more manageable 6,000. This involved reviewing the controls and timers for their night storage based heating system and reviewing policy with the museum staff and stakeholders, a good example of drastic and creative forethought which should provide much needed financial breathing room. Energy monitoring, more efficient equipment, intelligent controls and behavioural change can all make a positive impact at reducing consumption.

It has long been understood that most charities qualify for all or some of the discounted VAT on energy bills, which also cancels liability for the Climate Change Levy (CCL) element of the bill. However we've had a few cases of HMRC reviewing the eligibility of charities for discounted rates of VAT on energy. Given this, we recommend you consult your accountant to re-confirm eligibility for discounted rates of VAT.

The flip side of these desperately high prices is that the economics of renewables have become more attractive. We understand that heritage sites can present difficulties for the adoption of modern renewables, but we recommend revisiting the topic to fully understand their potential.

During these difficult times the role of the AIM Energy Action Group seems to be more important than ever. Although we cannot prevent these savage market conditions, we can share market knowledge and energy saving strategies and discuss the specific energy circumstances of any AIM member.

[aim-museums.co.uk/aim-energy-action-group](http://aim-museums.co.uk/aim-energy-action-group)

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