



Association of
Independent
Museums

AIM Bulletin

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**The power
of possibility!**
Conference 2023 launches

Welcome to AIM Bulletin!

Prioritising reflection

Entering a new year is a strange, liminal period, a time of renewal, reflection and goal-setting, both professionally and personally.

At the end of January, communities across the UK and the world celebrated Chinese New Year, beginning the Year of the Rabbit, a symbol for longevity, peace and prosperity.

Post-pandemic, the pace of change, tightness of deadlines, and pressure facing the museums sector has continued to ramp up, increasing the challenges faced by small, agile, and often voluntary teams. This year, in my work and with my colleagues, I'm advocating to make time for consideration, the prioritisation of reflection, and the centering of wellbeing to level-up my practice to ensure I'm making good decisions. In a world where so much feels out of direct control, being thoughtful helps me make informed decisions and remain authentic to my goals.

As part of my role on the AIM Board, I have the pleasure of sitting on the New Stories New Audiences grant panel, the second round of which is detailed on page 4 of this bulletin. The projects we've funded are inspiring, exciting, and ambitious approaches to working in partnership to tell new stories. The projects the panel and I often find most compelling are those where the museum team deeply understands their audiences, have taken time to build relationships in the community, and there is a clear, needs-led approach. The partnerships are equitable, and communities have been able to contribute to the development of the project, and it's clear how they'll be able to continue to influence the museum throughout the work and beyond the funded period.

This partnership-based and needs-led approach to museum practice takes patience to develop and commitment to maintain. It can be hard work and shouldn't be underestimated. Strong relationships and partnerships, where all parties can be clear and honest, take significant time to build, and can be the foundations of successful museum futures. Committed and invested community partners can influence museums' ability to diversify their audiences, telling stories which resonate with more and different people, leading to more diverse engagement with museum activities, including governance.

How can partnerships like this affect systemic change in museums, altering approaches to governance, decision making models, and economic choices? To me, this is where wellbeing is key. When museums focus on the wellbeing of their communities (including staff) over their institutions, systemic change can happen. Museums can ask questions about how their behaviour affects the health of their cities, towns and villages, the emotional impact of their interpretative methods, how their website reaffirms unconscious assumptions about their audience base.

The Chinese zodiac predicts 2023 to be a year of **hope**. I'm hopeful museums will work more meaningfully in partnership, focusing on communities wellbeing, enabling need-led, equitable and audience-driven decision making.

Charlotte Morgan
Collaborative Programmes Manager
Cornwall Museums Partnership

Front cover

Meini Hirion Standing Stones lie above the coastal town of Penmaenmawr in North Wales. There, behind the façade of a former Post Office is an independent museum bustling with volunteers and community activities. Penmaenmawr Museum is managed by a group of trustees, 28 volunteers and Suryiah Evans, a heritage and community consultant. Together, they manage the museum and coffee shop, a retail shop, the archive collection, a membership scheme, and organise lectures, community events and heritage walks. See the profile on page 19.





Lisa looks ahead

Is it too late for me to wish you a happy new year? Most likely, but I do hope you have returned to work after a good and restful break.

As we look ahead, the challenges facing the sector continue unabated. As ever, AIM is here to support you, so please do lean on us, and each other, for that support as you navigate these times. I know that last year didn't turn out as anyone hoped, but I believe in the ingenuity and ability of the independent sector to evolve new responses and ideas. I hope all our members, their staff and volunteers, can find time to take care of yourselves and each other as you do so.

As I write we have just heard the results of the review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme that capped surging energy prices for businesses until Spring '23. Many of you will recall that energy costs were highest on the list of financial challenges you described when we surveyed the sector back in September, and we know it is unlikely that that position has changed, despite the pockets of mild weather in the winter to date and the drops in wholesale prices.

With the support of the information you provided in our surveying, AIM and our colleague organisations across the sector highlighted the pressing need for help for museums on these costs in our representations to Government

last year. The new Scheme sees a (much-trailed) reduction of the Treasury support on offer but museums are included in the higher rate of support provided to Energy and Trade Intensive Industries until 2024. We know that this help might not be as much as our members hoped, but almost all the other industries eligible for the higher rate are manufacturing and it is an enormous sign of support for our sectors and recognition of the case sector bodies were able to make with your information that we were included.

We await more detail on how museums will access this support – it will need to be actively applied for, so watch closely for more information.

AIM also continues to encourage members to take up the financial support currently offered by Government through reliefs such as MGETR and the recently reopened VAT33a scheme. On the latter, it was good to see the extension of the application deadline to March 2023 with an emphasis that seasonally-open museums can apply for the first time, so if you are a free to enter museum who isn't on the scheme do check to see if you can apply: it's how the UK Government encourages free entry and it's free money!

We continue to push for a more appropriate evaluation approach to museum Business Rates. Watch out for updates on this from Colin Hunter and do attend the webinars we are running to support a better understanding of the opportunity this could create for you (potentially more money!)

Westminster has said it will publish a 'sector vision' setting out the government's strategy for increasing growth in the creative industries sector early in 2023 so we will be sure to share details of this, and any opportunities it provides to the sector, as soon as the opportunity arises.

2023 will also see AIM release the findings for several fascinating research projects – on the emotional drivers behind successful museum campaigns (see page 12 for more on this) and on strategic approaches to admissions pricing later in the year.

We are *stop-the-presses* launching a new and significant grant scheme in England, AIM Connected Communities – check our socials and website for more information. And we welcome the continued support of The Pilgrim Trust and the Worshipful Company of Arts Scholars Charitable Trust for the return of our Conservation Grants and Brighter Day Grants respectively. Do check these out, they are designed for you.

I won't gaze too far into the future, but it is shaping up to be a busy and exciting Spring and Summer. We're already deep in planning for our Conference in Edinburgh and I look forward to catching up with many of you there. The Coronation of King Charles III is set for May and this year sees the 75th anniversary of the HMT Empire Windrush arriving in Britain. As ever we look forward to celebrating these events and the opportunities they provide in engaging our communities in Britain's past, present and future.

Fourteen organisations share over £165,000 in the latest allocation of AIM's New Stories New Audiences grants, generously supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery players across the UK.



New Stories New Audiences grants awarded

Museum of Royal Worcester

£15,000

Taste, touch and smell: exploring Worcester porcelain's food and drink stories through sensory experiences including workshops, performances, field trips and the website.



A recent Museum of Royal Worcester creative workshop on flower modelling.

Wiltshire Museum

£14,475

Lest we Forget: Black People's Contribution to the World Wars in Wiltshire. Working with the local race equality council and the army to tell stories of the black community's experiences in WW1, WW2 and after through oral testimony, creative projects and an exhibition.

Englesea Brook Chapel & Museum of Primitive Methodism

£11,371

Root and Branch: A travelling exhibition beginning at Englesea covering the other three Methodist Heritage sites (London, Bristol and Epworth, Lincs), as well as universities, faith settings such as mosques, gurdwaras and other places of worship, and the NAPO annual conference.

Hundred Heroines

£11,274

Dorothy Wilding – Gloucester Pioneer: Exhibition of Dorothy Wilding's work and legacy, including a series of podcasts and creative workshops, marking 130 years since her birth in Gloucester.

St George's Hospital Medical School

£14,990

Deadly Diseases: themed workshops, co-run with local artists Meet & Make, for local community groups in Tooting to encourage its rich and diverse communities to engage with our collections and shared heritage.

Ledbury Places – The Heritage Centre

£11,850

Ledbury Education Through Time: We will link existing displays and artefacts covering education from the 17th to 19th centuries with the experiences of local older residents, and current school children, through filmed interviews.

The Mixed Museum

£14,850

Sussed Black Woman: Targeting 13–18-year-olds by co-establishing a digital resource for The Mixed Museum – a digital museum archiving the history of racial mixing in Britain – that shares Manchester's history of racial mixing through a focus on SuAndi's (poet/artist) life and creative work.

Bawdsey Radar Trust

£6,980

Bawdsey Radar Connections: Creating a unique national collection of stories and details of some of the many thousands who worked, trained or served at RAF Bawdsey from 1936 to 1991, including online and face-to-face community events.

Royal Engineers Museum

£15,000

Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers by increasing content, material and the relationship with the local Nepali community through workshops with the QGR.



A Royal Engineers Museum Making African Connections workshop 2021.

Turner's House Trust

£10,325

Tales and Travels: Capturing and sharing memories and experiences of the travels of JMW Turner. Working with local refugee centres and residents to share stories, improve wellbeing and bring them closer together.

Teign Heritage

£9,000

Tackling the Heritage Gap: Looking to appeal to 18–30-year-olds by partnering with Teignmouth Rugby Football Club to trace the origins of their sport from earliest times to the present-day using artefacts and memorabilia on loan from the club, original research and a digitised record of the result.

Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation

£12,294

Forging a Family – Caribbean Harmony in Letchworth: Addressing a substantial gap in collections which overlooks the representation of global majority communities within Letchworth – particularly Caribbean – with permanent online resources, including for local schools.

Foxfield Light Railway Society

£9,500

Going Underground – Hidden Lives at the Pit: To create displays and handling collections exploring the roles of women, children and animals in the colliery. We will create AV content for use on site, and a resource pack.

Groundwork South and North Tyneside

£9,088

Climate emergency project: Sessions (incl. carbon literacy) for young people focused on the climate emergency to develop blogs, social media content and a digital exhibition hosted on the Jarrow Hall website, also making use of a temporary exhibition space to project images and content.



Image by Kate Biedanski on Unsplash

Join us in Edinburgh for AIM National Conference 2023, 15 and 16 June.

The power of possibility!

Join us in exploring what it means to be independent in today's museum sector. How does being independent help museums engage their communities, drive new approaches to competition and commerciality, and ensure astute control and governance in challenging times? What lessons can independent museums share with the rest of the sector?

Sessions will cover

- The meaning of being an independent
- Strategic updates from key sector stakeholders
- Strategic approaches to admissions pricing
- Starting a new museum
- 'Coming back from the brink'
- Communities re-interpreting objects
- Creating a volunteer philosophy
- Appointing a Board from scratch
- Good governance practice
- Driving audience engagement
- Delivering a destination on your doorstep
- And much more!

Speakers confirmed to date

- Caroline Hamson, Heritage Manager, Anaesthesia Heritage Centre
- Matthew Moran, Museum Director, HMS Unicorn
- Rosie Barrett, Events Coordinator, Make More Arts and Ryedale Folk Museum
- Esther Graham, Arts and Events Officer, Ryedale District Council

- James Etherington, Director, Kiplin Hall
- Sally Dixon, Assistant Director, Beamish Museum
- Hannah Mather, Collections and Engagement Coordinator, Groundworks

The Venue

Surgeons Quarter is found in Edinburgh's beautiful old town and is run by the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, established in 1505.

“It's friendly, supportive and practical. There's always things that will inspire and really practical tools you can take away and apply in your own organisation.”

2022 ATTENDEE

Why attend AIM conference?

For everyone in the sector

AIM Conference is the ideal place to learn and hear about the latest trends and best practice across the UK's museum sector. Delegates and speakers come from a range of organisations and backgrounds, not just independents! So, whether you are at the start of your career or at the top of it, there is something for you.

For your professional development:

Conference is a valuable investment in your professional development and can

help you stay connected, not just with the wider museum community but the latest thinking too.

For building your network:

Seeking advice or support? Conference is a fantastic opportunity to connect with other museum professionals from across the UK, share ideas and experiences, and build professional relationships that can be valuable throughout your career.

For inspiration and new ideas:

The conference brings together experts and practitioners from a range of museums and sectors, giving you the opportunity to learn from their perspectives and experiences. This can help stimulate new thinking and inspire fresh approaches to your work and that of your museum.

For opportunities to collaborate:

Conference is a great place to explore potential partnerships and collaborations with other museums and organisations.

For fun!

Conference is a fun and enjoyable way to spend time with like-minded professionals and explore new ideas and opportunities. Edinburgh is the perfect spot to explore, too.

A limited number of Training Grants are available for members.

Early bird tickets on sale now.

www.aim-museums.co.uk/aim-national-conference-2023

AIM extends warm thanks to our Headline sponsors Azets, and our Gold Sponsors Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers and Minerva.

In the first of regular updates, Lucy Casot, CEO of Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) shares news about MGS's work with Scotland's museums and galleries.

Museums Galleries Scotland update

There is a development focus to the update this month as the new strategy for Scotland's museums and galleries launches on 2nd February. Extensive consultation identified ten priority areas for the museum sector and MGS to focus our collective work. These priority areas are grouped under the three strategy strands of Connection, Workforce and Resilience. MGS also launches a new website which will help museums to get support and inspiration to deliver the strategy. The website will showcase the work of museums, share learning and also spotlight best practice. The strategy can be found on MGS's website.

Continuing with the development theme of this update I'd like to highlight two programmes already taking place, which can support museums with the strategy areas. These are:

Delivering Change is a project, funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF), which aims to support between 70-100 museums from across Scotland to make changes to their organisations and programming to help all people to access culture. Using anti-racism and anti-ableism as the guiding principles, this project will acknowledge the multiple oppressions that people face, and the interconnected nature of all justice movements. The goal is to start the work necessary for all people to have the freedom to explore and claim their place in Scotland's heritage. As part of the Development Phase for Delivering Change, the programme is delivering training pilots, information which can be found on the MGS website in the events section.

Modern Apprenticeships allow employed people aged between 16-29 in Scotland to gain a fully accredited and industry recognised qualification while they work. They provide an invaluable opportunity for organisations to train new staff and upskill their existing employees. MGS currently offers the Museums and Galleries Technician Modern Apprenticeship and the Digital Marketing Modern Apprenticeship. A number of museums have already benefited from hosting Modern Apprentices, from Culture Perth and Kinross to the Devil's Porridge Museum.



Past, Present, Potential displays the work of Perth High School's LGBTQIA+ and ally group, PRISM. This community case was created by pupil steering group made up of young people from S1 through to S6. The display explored and promoted LGBTQIA+ culture, history, and heritage in Perth.

Lastly, as many will already be aware, the cost of living crisis and rising energy prices are continuing to impact many museums across Scotland in a number of ways. The MGS team can be contacted to talk about concerns museums may have at inform@museumsgalleryscotland.org.uk

www.museumsgalleryscotland.org.uk

News in brief

MEND timelines announced

Arts Council England have announced details of the next rounds of the programmes that make up the Cultural Investment Fund. These are:

- The Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND)
- The Libraries Improvement Fund (LIF)
- The Cultural Development Fund (CDF)

New rounds of MEND and LIF will open in early 2023 with £22.6 million available through this round of MEND, and £10.5 million through LIF (note exact funding amounts may be subject to DCMS business planning). This will be the final round of LIF, while further applications for MEND will take place in early 2024, alongside another round of CDF.

Guidance for MEND and LIF will be published on 6 February 2023.

Timelines

MEND:

Expressions of Interest open: 9am on 6 March 2023 with a deadline of midday on 21 April 2023.

Full application forms open: 9am on 30 May 2023 with a deadline of midday on 18 August 2023

ACE will also be running a webinar for applicants to MEND on 27 February.

Find out more about the three programmes and to sign up to the webinar visit

www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-open-funds/cultural-investment-fund

Windrush 75

2023 sees the 75th anniversary of the HMT Empire Windrush arriving in Britain on 22 June 1948. The Windrush 75 network brings together organisations across the country

who are committed to marking this significant moment in our shared history.

It meets every two months, online, to share plans and coordinate activities, linking up different organisations and opportunities. The network helps to amplify the voices of those working at grassroots and national level, raising awareness of activity taking place all over the UK.

AIM is keen to hear of your plans and share them across our networks, do keep us posted!

[Read more about Windrush 75 at www.windrush75.org](http://www.windrush75.org)

New Year Honours

AIM member organisations were amongst those listed in the latest New Year Honours released by the Cabinet Office on 30 December.

Recipients from across the UK are recognised for their outstanding contributions to public life, sustained public service, youth engagement and community work.

Peter Kyle, previously Chair of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust received a CBE for his services to cultural heritage. Keith Schnaar, Museum Guide and National Fellowship Volunteer at the Order of St John received a Medal of the Order of the British Empire for his voluntary service. Pete Jardine, a long-standing volunteer and employee at the Isle of Wight Steam Railway was awarded an MBE for services to railway heritage. Professor Pamela Robertson of the Hunterian Art Gallery also received an MBE, for her services to architecture.

Other sector honours went to Roly Keating, Chief Executive of the British Library who was knighted for his services to literature. Lord Neil Mendoza, Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal, received a CBE for services to the arts and culture.

Dr Frances Morris, outgoing Director of Tate Modern, received a CBE for services to the arts. Former Chair of the Horniman Museum and Gardens, Eve Salomon, received a CBE for services to the arts and heritage and Simon Mellor, Deputy Chief Executive, Arts and Museums, Arts Council England was recognised for his services to the arts with an OBE.

VAT33a Refund Scheme – deadline extended

The VAT Refund Scheme for museums and galleries application deadline has been extended to Wednesday 1 March 2023.

See the updated guidance at

www.gov.uk/guidance/applying-for-the-vat-refund-scheme-for-museums-and-galleries

For further questions get in touch through the VAT33A Enquiries Mailbox v33a@dcms.gov.uk

AIM Database updating

AIM is in the process of migrating to a new membership database, with some great new functionality. We'll be in touch with all members about how this new system can better serve you and our work prior to launch so do keep an eye on your in-box for updates in the coming weeks.

AIM Bulletin online

Don't forget that, since the pandemic, we've been uploading the AIM Bulletin online shortly after it has been posted out, so you can always access the latest news, views, advice and guidance.

[Access back issues at aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/resources](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/resources)

New 'Essentials' book series launched

A new series of books authored by some of the sector's most experienced people offers practical advice on a range of key issues facing museums. The first, *Displaying Organisation* was published in January 2023 and is written by AIM Trustee Rhiannon Goddard.



It draws on her in-depth experience of project managing or directing exhibitions and installations at some of the UK's finest attractions including 'Superbloom' at the Tower of London.

Rhiannon said, "The series plugs a gap for those working in the industry and will illustrate how the theory of museum studies is put into real life practice with all the guidance and help needed to guarantee success."

Displaying Organisation is available to pre-order now from Facet Publishing.

Scottish Museums – Developing Your Leadership

Effective leadership will be essential to support a thriving and resilient museums and galleries sector in Scotland. Delivered by the Social Enterprise Academy, *Developing My Leadership* offers an invaluable opportunity for new and aspiring leaders in this sector to connect, share challenges, good practice, and experience with peers and covers

- Building the skills required to engage and lead individuals and teams so they can thrive and grow professionally
- Developing tools to support your museum or gallery in the current climate
- Gain a 10-credit SCQF level 9 leadership qualification through the Glasgow Caledonian University

This programme consists of 6 online sessions:

Module 1: 23rd Feb & 2nd March 2023

Module 2: 23rd & 30th March 2023

Module 3: 4th & 11th May 2023

Deadline to apply: 14th February 2023

For more information Contact: John Campbell, Museums Galleries Scotland, johnc@museumsgalleriesScotland.org.uk

Museum Data Service plans to unlock millions of records from UK collections

Objects and knowledge from the UK's museums will soon be easier to find and work with, thanks to an ambitious collaboration between Art UK, Collections Trust and the University of Leicester. With generous funding from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the *Museum Data Service* will pool millions of object records – decades' worth of knowledge from UK institutions large and small – and share them as the raw material for public and research uses.

The first major user of data from the new infrastructure – Art UK – will use it to scale up its operation adding millions more artworks over time; Collections Trust will use its longstanding relationship with hundreds of smaller museums to help them make the most of the new service and broker data-based projects; and the University of Leicester's Institute for Digital Culture completes the partnership, bringing a research dimension to the design and use of the service, data expertise and technical capacity.

Guided by the Open Data Institute on sustainable data stewardship, the three founding partners will set up a new joint organisation by spring 2024 to run the core service.

Obituary George Gawlinski – (December 1946 – September 2022)

George Gawlinski was a wise and generous man who inspired many in the world of museums and heritage. He died suddenly and sadly at the end of September in Kings Lynn, his home, for many years.

He leaves a substantial and important legacy in the sector. George trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama, starting out as a stage manager

at the RSC and then as a producer at the BBC. Through prison visiting, he was drawn into training in probation and then to social work, before finding his true vocation enabling reflective conversations as a group facilitator, coach and mentor.

In the museum sector, he is best known for his creative and insightful facilitation of Directing Change; started as a training resource for new directors in 1990, it is still going strong. Meeting annually, it has become an influential leadership network, with some 60 senior figures from museums contributing to its evolution. George worked with the group for 27 years and was the foundation of its enduring success. He was warm and empathic with a distinctive way of doing things and the ability to deftly encapsulate truth and profound insight in a few wise words. Over the years, George worked with museum leadership teams and other cultural organisations to support organisational change and leadership development. He was a key faculty member of The Museum Leaders programme at the University of East Anglia and worked with the London Transport Museum board and executive from 1995 – 2021.



A dear friend and mentor to many, his funeral in early November at the beautiful Colney burial park near Norwich was packed with people from all parts of his life – a deeply moving occasion filled with tributes, music, love and sunlight. George was a great advocate of walking and thinking supportively together. Many of us will carry a small part of him with us as we continue to walk forward in our lives.

Anne Murch



Image by James Eades on Unsplash

A timely report by the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust reviews the effectiveness of current anti-racism and EDI initiatives across the heritage sector. AIM spoke to the Trust's Maya Sharma to find out more.

If Nothing Changes, Nothing Changes

Uniquely positioned

The Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre is an open-access library and archive, focused on Global Majority histories and experiences, anti-racist activism and the history of thinking about race and ethnicity. It is part of the University of Manchester Library and based at Manchester Central Library. Nationally recognised, it is a resource for anyone with an interest in anti-racism and Global Majority histories.

Its sister organisation, the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Education Trust, supports Global Majority communities to document and archive their experiences, and therefore occupies an interesting position. Being both *of* and *between* community and heritage sectors, affords a unique insight into how the heritage sector is engaging with anti-racism and equity,

diversity, and inclusion (EDI) work, and how Global Majority communities and their groups experience this.

Maya Sharma, Project Manager at the Trust, explains what prompted the research:

“Following the murder of George Floyd in 2020 the heritage sector appeared to wake up and recognise an uncomfortable truth: despite pockets of good work, overall, it wasn't serving the needs of Global Majority communities, nor reflecting the UK's diverse population in its workforce. We wanted to find out what was holding the sector back from the change (it says) it wants to see.

We felt that by gathering up-to-date information on the state of play and combining this with our significant

expertise and observations from the unique position we enjoy, we could offer the sector reliable data combined with clear recommendations for change.”

Funding support

National Lottery Heritage Fund, Museums Development North West, West Midlands and Yorkshire and Humber provided the additional funding to enable the Trust to undertake its research. Alongside an online survey, focus groups and interviews with heritage organisations, key funders, and sector support organisations, the team also interviewed members of Global Majority community groups to ensure their experiences of working with the Heritage sector, and the offer of the heritage sector in general, was central to the research.

“Our trusted relationship with community groups resulted in important and honest insights; data and voices that are often missing from comparable pieces of research,” explains Maya.

Key findings

The findings, as well as discussion and detailed recommendations for change, are set out in the report *If Nothing Changes, Nothing Changes* available now on the AIUET website.

It found:

- An absence of concrete action plans and budgets to support statements of intent
- A lack of a *whole-organisation* approach to anti-racist EDI work
- Poor relationships with Global Majority communities
- An unrepresentative workforce and an uncomfortable environment for Global Majority staff
- A lack of co-ordination and collaboration from funders and networks

Open, honest and reflective, the report is, in many ways, not easy reading. It does however offer a set of pragmatic, detailed and targeted recommendations, including

1. EDI work needs to be treated as an essential and core part of the sector’s business, as important as collections care, marketing, and financial management. It should be embedded into all aspects of organisational life.
2. Statements of intent, broad policies and commitments to EDI must be supported by concrete action plans, which detail realistic targets, timescales and responsibilities. The impact of these plans must be actively evaluated.
3. Funders and sector support organisations need to make significant resources available for heritage

organisations to develop a vision and plan for their EDI work, and to build their EDI skills, knowledge, and confidence. These should be sustained rather than time limited.

4. There needs to be a greater accountability for EDI work across the sector. Heritage organisations should ensure that EDI work is everyone’s responsibility, and leaders must be held accountable and responsible for driving the work forward. Funders and sector networks should take a tougher approach where they see poor practice, and a lack of commitment.
5. The sector needs to take a more nuanced approach to global histories, which treats them as part of our collective history, rather than only relevant to Global Majority audiences. This means not shying away from contentious, painful and traumatic histories, and taking an honest approach to the legacy of colonialism and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Heritage organisations should improve their collections by working ethically with Global Majority communities to include their perspectives and knowledge and consider updating collections by acquiring new items to better represent Global Majority communities.

“ Our trusted relationship with community groups resulted in important and honest insights; data and voices that are often missing from comparable pieces of research. ”

What next?

AIUET is continuing its work as a trusted critical friend to the sector, offering both challenge and support, and will be sharing the results of the research throughout 2023 and beyond.

The Trust is a strategic partner on AIM’s *Re: Collections: Anti Racist Museums Wales* programme funded by the Welsh government and is working with the AIM team to embed the report’s findings and recommendations in this new work.

“We do feel the pace of change is beginning to quicken, and in many places see a willingness to change and a desire to find new ways of working, Maya concludes

“If this is matched with brave, clear and compassionate leadership, we believe a transformational change is possible.”

www.racearchive.org.uk

www.racearchive.org.uk/download/if-nothing-changes-nothing-changes-september-2022

www.aim-museums.co.uk/reollections-anti-racist-museums-wales



Image by Alex Alvarez on Unsplash

Pleasure, Connection, Purpose:

How museums can leverage emotions to build greater public support

New research funded by AIM and ArtFund seeks to unpack the complex behaviours behind public support for museums, and asks 'how can we better harness that energy, all the time?'

The start of 2023 has seen the continued impact of the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis, presenting considerable challenges to museums' operations, staff, and audiences. AIM's recent impacts survey (September 2022) saw 40% of organisations planning to scale down activity and over a third struggling to increase income given economy-wide pressures.

Yet, even in the face of such adversity, there are numerous examples of passionate people across the UK supporting campaigns to 'save' their local museums.

If you are serious about getting the most out of an online shop this Christmas, now is the time to start planning says Associate Supplier, Rod Barlow.

Time to start thinking about Christmas?!

There have been huge leaps made in the technology that powers online shops that has reduced complexity and cost, making it much more appealing to small museums. Much of this has been driven by the pandemic, where the need to get products online simply and cheaply has never been in greater demand.

The upshot of all of this is that online shopping software is now very affordable, with the popular Shopify platform starting at £19 a month for non-profit organisations.

An online shop is also a great way to engage volunteers who may not be able to attend the museum often or

help with physically demanding tasks but can access a computer at home. The tools to create and manage online shops are more straightforward than ever before so volunteers will often be able to update products and prices.

With careful planning and making a start this Spring it is perfectly feasible

What drives them? What can be learned about how local people feel about their museums? And how might we harness the public's emotions in a more sustained way, rather than when under threat?

Art Fund's *Looking Ahead* Museum Directors Research (May 2022) found increasing earned income and developing relationships with communities were major priorities for the year ahead. Now more than ever, we need to better understand how museums can leverage emotions to build greater public support. That understanding should help museums, funders and sector support organisations make a more compelling case to the public, and to policymakers, for that support.

A novel research project *Pleasure, Connection, Purpose: How museums can leverage emotions to build greater public support*, undertaken over Summer 2022 by behavioural research and insights consultancy M.E.L, and funded by AIM and Art Fund seeks to understand which emotions most powerfully drive public support for museums.

For those developing campaigns, it explores how to leverage the power of emotions to build greater public support. Through case studies and guidance, it looks at how campaigns are mounted, how people are mobilised, what motivates those involved, and what narratives or strategies resonate most effectively.

For those wanting to build longer term emotional connection with their audiences, it includes practical recommendations for fostering emotionally driven engagement for museums, funding bodies and IPSOs/SSOs.

The research concludes that museums spark feelings

of pleasure, purpose and connection in their visitors, communities, and the wider public. It found campaigns which play upon pleasurable emotions are the easiest to evoke but result in fleeting support, campaigns that inspire connection reach a wider cross-section of the public, and campaigns evoking purpose are the most powerful but the most difficult to cultivate.

“Museums spark feelings of pleasure, purpose and connection in their visitors, communities, and the wider public.”

The report goes on to identify nine key emotional drivers which are the building blocks of creating pleasure, connection, and purpose: pride, hope, fulfilment, belonging, nostalgia, ownership, curiosity, excitement, and awe.

Museums are then guided through how to identify their current positioning and given tips on how to elicit the emotions most relevant to them and their audiences. The ability to articulate the relevance of an emotion and how to foster it, provides an exciting opportunity to build tailored campaigns which successfully emotionally resonate with specific audiences.

We hope by highlighting the motivations behind emotional engagement in the museum context, we can strengthen the work of museums across the sector, not just when campaigning, but in building sustained and sustainable relationships with our communities.

Read the report at aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/resources and join us for a webinar on 22 February to find out more.

to have a professional looking, well thought and laid out online shop up and running for the Autumn. This will give you time to get processes in place for managing orders as well as build up those important Google rankings to get to a worthwhile level of sales for the Christmas period, which for online shopping starts in early October and peaks at the first week of December.

5-Point preparation checklist

1. **Product** – Do you have products that are appealing to an online audience? Customers looking at museum online shops are on the hunt for unique gifts or publications and are generally willing to pay a little more to support you. Start with product that you already sell in your shop that are either unique, quirky, desirable or have close ties to your museum.

2. **Presentation** – Good photography of products and detailed appealing descriptions make items far more appealing. There are many photographers now specialising in online product imagery at affordable prices.

3. **Content** – Engaging blog posts that link items for sale with your artefacts or the local area as well as reviews of publications and products make a shop far more appealing to the public and the search engines that will rank you far higher if they spot this uniqueness and care.

4. **Platform** – What online shop platform should you use? The choice is enormous, but the key ones to take a close look at are Shopify, WIX and Squarespace for their low cost, simplicity, and great designs.

5. **Fulfilment** – You will need to consider where you will ship to and how much you will charge for postage. My advice would be to start with UK mainland only unless you have a particular overseas following and look to charge between £4 and £7 for orders up to £100 and then free after that. Also think about packaging and who will manage the orders. Again, the software makes it relatively easy, and you do not have to offer next day delivery, so having someone check for and pack orders for a while each morning would be sufficient.

If you are now inspired to start thinking about maximising sales for this coming Christmas, but you would like some professional help and advice, please reach out to us at rod@rodbarlow.com or fill out an enquiry form at www.rodbarlow.com

AIM administers grants including AIM Arts Scholars Brighter Day Grant funded by the Worshipful Company of Arts Scholars Charitable Trust and AIM's Conservation and Collections Care and Collection Audit Schemes, funded by the Pilgrim Trust.

AIM grants case studies

AIM Arts Scholars Brighter Day Grant

Gordon Russell
Design Museum

£7,820

Design Stories

The Brighter Day funding from AIM and the Worshipful Company of Arts Scholars Charitable Trust has enabled the museum to digitise a significant proportion of the archive collection, preserving the remarkable story of Gordon Russell and his company, and unlocking new opportunities for research, engagement and income generation.

Townsweb Archiving were appointed to undertake the digitisation, beginning with the collection of over 3,000 photographs. They are due to complete the final phase of the project – the large format design drawings – this month. Once complete the images will be transferred to secure cloud-based digital asset management system, providing a fully searchable archive. We will then be able to see the collection together for the first time, and to catalogue images with the support of volunteers.

We have shared stories from the collection via our digital channels

throughout the project, thanks to the funding of the Digital Engagement Assistant role. This has been invaluable in building the museum's profile and developing our understanding of our audiences. The project is central to our digital strategy, enabling us to draw together the different elements of the collection and create new ways to experience the Gordon Russell story.

Looking to the future, the Design Stories project will form the basis of new initiatives around learning, digital

and community engagement, as well as income generation to improve the museum's resilience.

Thanks to the support of the AIM and the Company of Arts Scholars Brighter Day Grant Scheme we will have an invaluable resource of digitised collections to realise our ambitions of widening access to, and understanding of, the collection and the company's broader contribution to British design and education.

Verity Elson
Director



Digitisation in progress © Towns Web Archiving.

AIM Collections Care Audit



The Keep Military Museum in Dorchester.

The Keep Military Museum £1,100

When we applied for the AIM collections care audit grant, we were aware of several existing issues within our museum collection. The museum has remained unchanged for many years, and we are becoming increasingly concerned about long-term storage and display of our objects. Being a small museum, we lacked the resources and funding to undertake such a task on our own.

After being awarded the grant, we received an on-site visit from Humphries & Jones conservators over a three-day period.

After the visit and some additional conversations, we

received our final audit report, which outlined the issues we are facing with our collection.

This is invaluable and will allow us to fix the issues identified and apply for additional funding as required. The audit will also give us a basis to re-write some of our collections-based policies and stay at the forefront of best practice for years to come.

We found the process extremely easy from application to result, with assistance being provided the whole way by AIM. We would highly recommend applying to any museum who would like to improve how they store and display their collections.

Elliott Metcalfe
Director

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Ian Walker, then Chairman
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In a thinkpiece for the AIM website, extracted here, Hilary Barnard and Ruth Lesirge, founders of HBRL Consulting consider how museums may best respond to the current challenges facing the sector.

Planning for lean times

Many museum Boards face tough decisions in the face of a myriad of challenges, including soaring inflation, reduced visitor spending power and an economy falling into recession.

Our assessment is that many independent museums face a choice between four major approaches:

Shrink

The critical choices in shrink are between ‘salami slicing’ provision (e.g., closing some days or at some times) or specific major cuts (e.g., close part of the site).

Shrinking activity requires a tight focus around current and potential audiences, understanding their likely reactions to changes and crafting effective low-cost engagement with them. If you decide to shrink beware of doing too little too late, requiring yet further reductions in service that could otherwise have been avoided.

Growth

It may seem strange at this time to suggest growth as an option. However, a hollowing out of provision in the wider charitable sector over the last decade may provide space and fresh opportunities for new projects or expansion.

Growth requires realistic focus on what can be achieved, by when and with what resources. It is essential that the museum works within its existing objects and powers in developing any new work.

Merger

Mergers often involve wholesale change, and, unlike collaborations, are much harder to undo. Not a strategy in itself, the key consideration in any merger is what synergies it enables you to achieve. These can be in governance, staffing, technologies, collections, programming/exhibitions, new audiences, or volunteering.

While some mergers can release cost savings, the prime benefits of mergers are usually in greater resilience, efficiency and effectiveness. The most effective mergers are ones that create a new and more capable organisation

with similar objects looking outwards to new opportunities and audiences.

Closure

Closure though regrettable should not be seen as a statement of failure. It is recognition that the current proposition cannot be sustained at this time. Look at what positive legacy can be left and above all how interests of visitors and the wider public can continue to be served. The Museums Association guidance is helpful if facing closure and underlines the value of planning in advance to close well.

Scenario planning

Consider using scenario planning to incorporate the impact of:

- ‘Big Picture’ factors
- changes in the immediate environment (e.g., visitor numbers, alternative attractions, recruitment, retention and motivation of staff, entrance costs etc)
- finance, culture, and operations of the museum

Best- and worst-case scenarios can be developed and subjected to robust critique, helping determine the bandwidth in which the museum operates now and in the period ahead, and the option that is most suitable.

Conclusion

How work is allocated to pursue these four options will depend on whether the museum has the staff, skills and expertise, and how involved the Trustees are or should be in the operations.

Any of these approaches will require both leadership and collaboration, to sustain a process that will be challenging and can be draining. As ever during change management, it is of critical importance to attend to the welfare and wellbeing of all those involved.

For Hilary and Ruth’s full article visit aim-museums.co.uk/planning



We are not all the same:

Image by Tim Gouw on Unsplash

Accessible and equitable recruitment practices

Curating for Change, the ground-breaking work placement programme for D/deaf and disabled curators in museums, is calling for the heritage sector to change recruitment practice with their action plan *We Are Not All the Same*.

The plan addresses the most cited reason for D/deaf, disabled and neurodivergent people not making progress in museum careers – inaccessible recruitment practices and unnecessary requirements in role descriptions.

It evolved from the recruitment experiences of 20 museum partners – independent, local authority, national and university organisations – in appointing eight 18-month Fellowships

and eight 40-day trainees as part of Curating for Change, a 3-year National Lottery Heritage Funded project to create strong career pathways for d/Deaf, disabled and neurodiverse curators in museums.

Tackling this recruitment problem – where only 4% of museum workers identify as D/deaf and disabled – will enable a more diverse work force – essential for museums to remain relevant to their communities.

Schemes such as Disability Confident, and equal opportunities policies are not always giving disabled people a fair chance and often miss the point of equality suggests Esther Fox, Head of Accentuate and Curating for Change:

“You may have to treat people differently in order for them to compete equally. This is recognised in employment law and often falls under what is termed “reasonable adjustments”.

How can organisations make a change?

The action plan, *We Are Not All The Same*, provides practical and

achievable steps to invite a wider diversity of applicants.

In addition, a series of short presentations and panel discussions on the Curating for Change website includes helpful testimonies from museum partners who have participated in change within their own organisations, as well as the people whose lives have changed by successfully securing a role in the museum sector.

Karl Mercer, Curating for Change Trainee, Colchester and Ipswich Museums says

“The video application allowed me to show how I’m different, what I can offer, and the value I can offer to the sector. My life experience doesn’t look good on paper, that’s a fact. If it was a paper application I probably wouldn’t be here today.”

[Download the action plan at
curatingforchange.org/2022/11/02/
our-action-plan-for-recruitment/](https://curatingforchange.org/2022/11/02/our-action-plan-for-recruitment/)

[Join the Curating for Change Team for a Hallmark at Home session on recruitment March 8th. See our upcoming events page for details.](#)

Penmaenmawr Museum

Behind the façade of a former post office in the coastal town of Penmaenmawr in North Wales, is an independent museum bustling with volunteers and community activities.

Penmaenmawr Museum is managed by a group of trustees, 28 volunteers and Suryiah Evans, a heritage and community consultant. Together, they manage the museum and coffee shop, a retail shop, the archive collection, a membership scheme, and organise lectures, community events and heritage walks.

The museum's origins started with a historical society established by Dennis Roberts in 1973. An avid collector of local history objects, Dennis' collection inspired Conwy Council and the town council to open a museum in one of a row of terraced houses in 2002.

In 2006, Penmaenmawr Historical Society took responsibility for the museum and a successful National Lottery Heritage Fund application in 2016 enabled the museum to move to the former post office.

Refurbishment started in 2019 and took about 14 months to complete with the new Penmaenmawr Museum opening to the public in March 2020. Just two weeks later, the pandemic struck, closing the museum. Lockdown saw significant work on the collection – over 1500 catalogue entries were updated and researched to create narratives for social media and grow the museum's audience online.

The collection

The museum has a collection of 4000 objects relating to the history of Penmaenmawr including Bronze Age and Neolithic axe-making objects, items relating to the local quarry industry and tourism, and many social and cultural history photographs. New cabinetry purchased through the NLHF grant helped secure long-term loans of objects such as Bronze Age pots and a Neolithic bowl, first discovered on the landscape above Penmaenmawr in the 1890s.

The grant also covered capital improvements and the installation of the ground floor gallery, coffee shop, toilet and archive. Volunteers refurbished the first floor, creating a quiet room and a



temporary exhibition gallery. Additional funding from the Welsh Government enabled the installation of a green heating system, improvements to the children's area and a 270-degree projection to be set up in the quiet room, all resulting in a museum that is very different to when it first opened in 2020.

In 2022, the first full year of operation, volunteers welcomed 7000 visitors over the summer, a growth of around 400%. Most income is generated through the museum's retail shop. Originally intended to be a high street pop-up, the shop has had its lease extended as its profits help pay the museum's core running costs.

What is working for us?

- We receive excellent support from FED, the Welsh Government and other county and independent museums. There is always someone we can call on – it's like a Welsh museums family!
- Securing partnerships with Conwy Council and other HLF projects to work on joint initiatives as part of a cultural collective.
- Strict local, green and ethical policies for our retail shop – we look for Wales-based suppliers who share our values and aim for high quality, bilingual products, and plastic-free items and packaging.

- Commitment to accessibility and wellbeing – the museum has trilingual interpretation (Welsh, English and BSL), a quiet room and information for neuro-diverse volunteers and visitors.
- Every part of the museum is an interpretation opportunity – the coffee shop is themed as an old post office and the menus are designed like old telegrams; and the corridor leading to the toilet has a timeline showing the history of toilets in Penmaenmawr.
- Commissioning illustrations that we can commercialise – we build the contracting of local artists to produce illustrations into nearly every grant opportunity. This helps local artists and gives us the chance to make unique products with illustrations that have been developed for interpretation, on cards or other products that we make to sell.

Feedback from visitors has made everyone involved in the museum proud of what they have achieved:

"When you read the visitor book and see the positive comments about the clarity of interpretation and how much children have enjoyed being at the museum, it makes all the hard work worthwhile."

Suryiah Evans, Museum Project Manager
www.penmaenmawrmuseum.co.uk

Energy Bills Discount Scheme

The Government recently announced the outcome of the review of the Energy Bill Relief Scheme and published guidance.

Welcoming the news, AIM Director Lisa Ollerhead said

“It is great news museums are eligible for another year of energy support, particularly at the higher rate of support. Alongside industry, culture is recognised as especially vulnerable to the current high bills. This support will help keep museums open and delivering activities for struggling communities.

AIM is grateful to DCMS for working with BEIS and communicating AIM advocacy on this, working hard with colleagues at NMDC, ACE, University Museums Group, MA, the Local Government Association and the English Civic Museums Network.”

The scheme comprises two elements – support for all businesses, charities, and public sector organisations, and support at a higher level for energy and trade intensive industries.

Critically, museums are included in this latter group of eligible sectors, as are libraries and archives, historical sites and buildings, and zoos, so will be eligible for an increased level of support.

Support for all non-domestic customers

As per the current scheme the government will provide a discount on gas and electricity unit prices. Eligible non-domestic consumers will now receive a per-unit discount to their energy bills during the 12-month period from April 2023 to March 2024, subject to a maximum discount. The relative discount will be applied if wholesale prices are above a certain price threshold. For most non-domestic energy users in Great Britain and Northern Ireland these maximum discounts have been set at:

electricity – £19.61 per megawatt hour (MWh) with a price threshold of £302 per MWh.

gas – £6.97 per MWh with a price threshold of £107 per MWh

The discount is calculated as the difference between the wholesale price associated with an energy contract and the price threshold. The discount is phased in when the

contract's wholesale price exceeds the floor price, until the total discount per MWh reaches the maximum discount for that fuel. Customers do not need to apply for their discount. As with the current scheme, suppliers will automatically apply reductions to the bills of all eligible non-domestic customers.

Support at a higher level

Recognising that some non-domestic energy users in Great Britain and Northern Ireland are particularly vulnerable to high energy prices due to their energy intensive and trade exposure, (referred to as Energy and Trade Intensive Industries or ETIIs), these sectors will receive a higher level of support, subject to a maximum discount. The maximum discounts and price threshold for these sectors are:

electricity – £89 per MWh with a price threshold of £185 per MWh

gas – £40 per MWh with a price threshold of £99 per MWh

Museums and other eligible organisations will need to apply for the higher level of support. Once the mechanics of the scheme have been finalised, we will share details.

www.gov.uk/guidance/energy-bills-discount-scheme

AIM Bulletin

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