



Association of
Independent
Museums

AIM Bulletin

April 2023

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All life is here!

Mixing science and whimsy at Crab Museum

Welcome to AIM Bulletin!

In the first of our guest comments, **Liz Johnson, Director of Museums and Collections Development, Arts Council England** reflects on how ACE can help museums facing strong headwinds.

Championing the role of museums

The variety and ingenuity of museums across the country never ceases to inspire me – from small rural community sites through to civic museums in city centres; from museums which tell stories of domestic life to those which conserve our industrial heritage, to new museums exploring issues of homelessness, migration, and gender identity; from art to natural science to archaeology and everything in between.

Speaking to people running and working in museums, and looking at what the data tells us, it's clear that regardless of location, size or collections type, most museums are facing into the same strong headwinds. After a global pandemic and on the back of a long period of austerity and now a cost-of-living crisis, we're seeing a challenging mix of reduced visitor demand, cost inflation and workforce pressures, all of which combine to make the situation tough for many museums.

I have been reflecting on how we at Arts Council England can help. Our strategy, Let's Create (www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create) strongly champions the role of museums as a vital part of our creative and cultural life in communities and as a nation. The strategy's three outcomes: Creative People; Cultural Communities and a Creative & Cultural Country, and the development framework of the four Investment Principles: Quality & Ambition; Inclusivity & Relevance; Environmental Responsibility and Dynamism (which covers business models, fundraising, audience focus, workforce development, use of data and digital) – together provide a strong route map to help steer museums towards a successful and sustainable future.

Our Delivery plan (www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create/delivery-plan-2021-2024) affirms that commitment to our role as the

national development agency for museums, and we have made good progress: for example, we're proud to be investing more money and working with a wider range of museums through our National Portfolio (www.artscouncil.org.uk/how-we-invest-public-money-0/national-portfolio-2023-26), we're also investing in a range of Investment Principle Support Organisations (IPSO) and we are reaffirming our commitment to the Museum Development programme (www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/supporting-museums/museum-development-programme/museum-0).

At the moment, together with our partners, we're involved in helping to make the case for extending the Museums and Galleries Exhibitions Tax Relief (www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-arts-museums-and-libraries/supporting-collections-and-cultural-property/museums-and) and delivering the Museum Estates and Development Fund (MEND), now in its third round with a budget of £22.6m in 23/24 focussed on supporting vital repairs and maintenance backlogs in museum buildings (www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-open-funds/cultural-investment-fund/museum-estate-and-development-fund-mend-round-3).

We're delighted to be investing in the Association of Independent Museums as an IPSO for 2023-26 with a focus on Dynamism – particularly on good governance. We see AIM as an important strategic partner. I'll be speaking at the AIM conference in Edinburgh on the second day about Arts Council and our role and how we have funds and programmes available to support your museum. I hope to catch up with many of you in person there.

Liz Johnson
Director of Museums and Collections Development
Arts Council England

Front cover

'Crabs can teach us about biology, climate change, evolutionary history and much, much more. But, with the right frame of mind, they can also teach us about ourselves.' Read more on how Margate's unique, and intriguing Crab Museum is using humour and creativity to tackle complex contemporary issues in our profile on page 19.

Image by Chandler Cruttenden on Unsplash

Business Rates rethink – a sector success



The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has finally accepted the use of the Receipts and Expenditure (R&E) method to calculate business rates for all types of museums in England and Wales, saving hundreds of thousands of pounds across the sector.

The VOA change in policy means that many museums will now be valued using the R&E method – based on a museum’s activity and financial position – rather than being penalised for occupying the large spaces, often expensive to operate and maintain, needed to care for and display collections and to welcome communities.

Responding to the news, AIM Director Lisa Ollerhead said:

“After years of lobbying by AIM, NMDC and other sector bodies it’s an enormous pleasure to see this change in approach from the VOA which recognises that museums are special places and more than just the bricks

and mortar of the buildings. This should free up a significant amount of money across the sector for years to come.

Particularly I want to thank ratings agent Colin Hunter who acted for museums in several of the key tribunal cases and has supported AIM members for many years.”

However, the change in the VOA’s policy will not be retrospectively or automatically applied to the 2017 ratings list. This means that any museum wishing to challenge their current valuation, which could result in a significantly reduced and backdated rates bill, needs to lodge an appeal via the ‘Check, Challenge, Appeal’ process.

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 underassessed. 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 chunter@lsh.co.uk.

To help navigate Business Rates and the appeal process AIM has produced a related Success Guide available at aim-museums.co.uk/helping-organisations/resources



One month until Early Bird Conference ticket sales close!

The AIM Annual Conference in Edinburgh is fast approaching, with early bird ticket sales closing at the end of April.

This year's event will take place at the Surgeon's Quarter Museum and is expected to draw representatives from across the sector for two days of lively debates, updates and sharing of ideas and best practice. Do check out the full programme and speakers on the AIM website.

For those new to conference support is available from a dedicated session on the morning of day one, and throughout the conference from the AIM Board and staff team, easily identified by their distinct lanyards! Stop them and ask questions, share challenges and your input on how AIM can best help you and your organization.

And if you can't attend the venue in person, you can join in online – this year all our Plenary sessions are available online via our hybrid ticket

'Being independent'

If you've been before you'll know that AIM conference isn't just for independents, we welcome museums of all kinds and sizes and all those with an independent spirit. This year, as well as considering the innovations, challenges and issues facing museums across the UK we are exploring exactly what it means to 'be independent' and the opportunities this affords.

Why not join the conversation? Tell us your thoughts on what being independent means to you on info@aim-museums.co.uk and we'll share these for consideration by our panel of AIM Trustees on the opening morning of the event.

Plentiful networking opportunities

Conference networking is also an important part of the event. Social events include Thursday's relaxed buffet-style Conference Dinner and there's also an additional event on Friday evening when you can join us as we round off the conference with a social event at Edinburgh Castle hosted by the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards Museum and the Royal Regiment of Scotland Museum. There'll be an opportunity to tour the museum, a welcome drink on arrival and a cold vegetarian and vegan buffet. Places are limited so do book early to guarantee your place.

So if you're yet to secure your early bird ticket, don't hesitate. AIM Conference is for you and it's a great opportunity to learn, share ideas and build your network. But don't just take our word for it, check out these comments from last year's event:

"I hadn't been before and wasn't sure what to expect, but the sessions provided me with lots of useful information and ideas, which I could take back in to my every day work."

"The sessions I attended were all really well put together, well presented and really interesting and useful. Sometimes conferences can be boring but not this one!"

"Good range of speakers from a good range of museums, with lots of practical takeaways, which is what I always come to expect from the AIM Conference."

"Great networking, inspirational speakers and the chance to feel connected to other small independent museums."

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

John Campbell, Senior Skills Development Manager explores Fair Work and how it relates to Scotland's museums and galleries.

Museums Galleries Scotland update

MGS supports museums and galleries in Scotland to deliver better recruitment and employment practice through resources, training, advice, and the Scottish Government guidance for Fair Work. It's one of the priority areas in the recently launched strategy for Scotland's museums and galleries. When we talk about Fair Work, we are referring to all aspects of working for your organisation, from creating a job spec., to the day-to-day experience of working and progressing, to developing a positive organisational culture.

Fair Work is central to achieving the Scottish Government's priority for sustainable and inclusive growth. To help employers achieve this, the Scottish Government have created a useful framework, focusing on five dimensions of Fair Work: *Effective voice, Security, Opportunity, Fulfilment, and Respect.*

There are many ways museums can begin to implement Fair Work into their organisations and the MGS website has advice guides, blogs, and training programmes to support this work. However, I want to highlight two key areas of work that museums can get involved with.

Career entry and progression routes in the sector

In the strategy for Scotland's museums and galleries, an action for the sector is to value and embed a range of career entry and progression routes, including vocational learning, to provide opportunities for all. A vocational learning qualification that can support this action is the Modern Apprenticeship.



Alan Gardiner, Museum Assistant at the Smith Art Gallery and Museum in Stirling and Museums and Galleries Practice Modern Apprentice.

A Modern Apprenticeship is a job which enables people in Scotland to earn a wage and gain an industry-recognised qualification through work-based learning. It's an opportunity open to both new hires and existing employees who are between the ages of 16 to 29 years old. There is no cost to the employer for the training opportunity, beyond the existing cost of the employees' wages/salary. As an SQA Training Centre, MGS delivers two different Modern Apprenticeship qualifications: *Museums & Galleries Technician Modern Apprenticeship* and *Digital Marketing Modern Apprenticeship*.

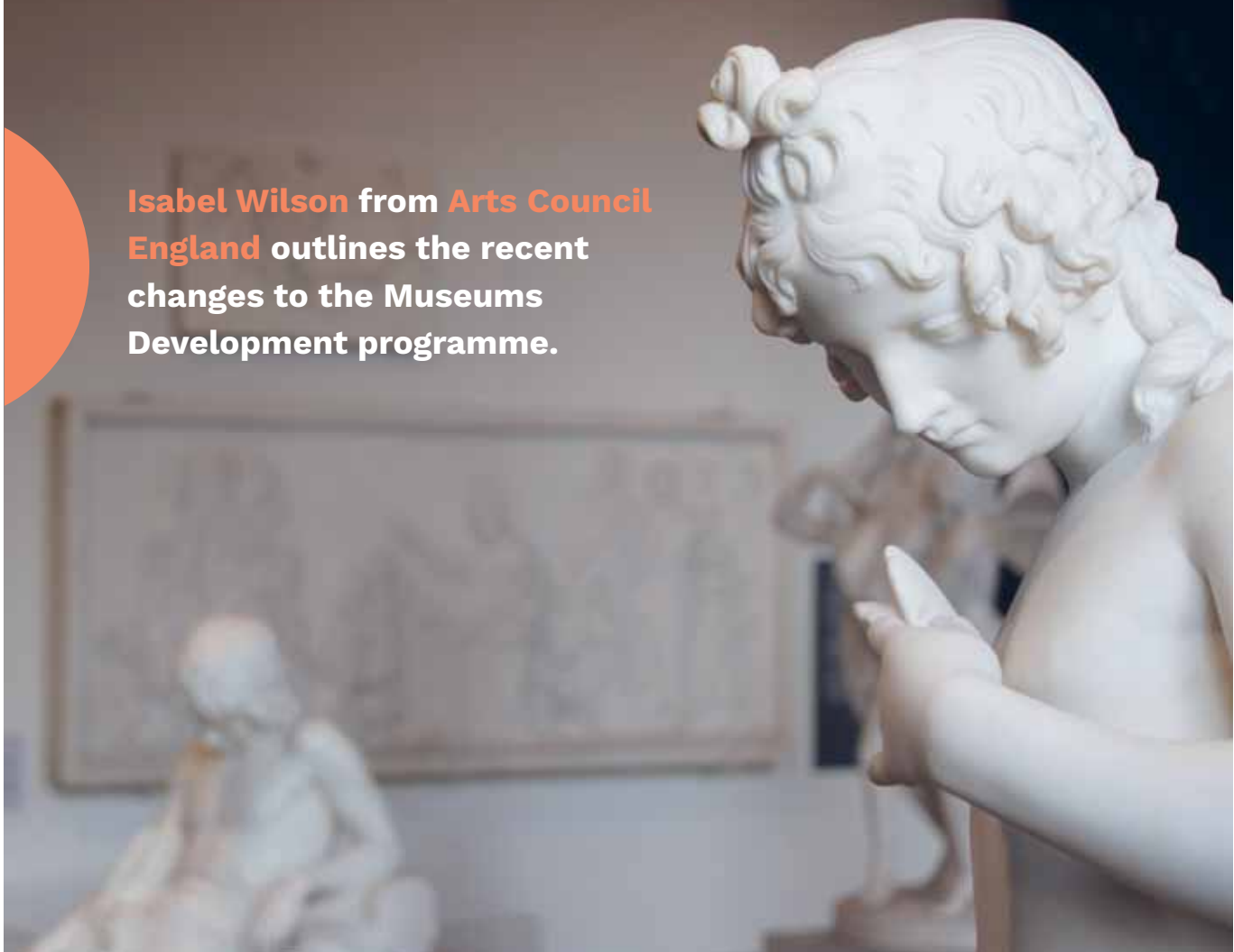
The recent Scottish Apprenticeship Week was a great chance to highlight the fantastic work that Modern Apprentices and their host museums have been doing, such as an exhibition undertaken by Alan Gardiner, Museum Assistant at the Smith Art Gallery and Museum in Stirling and a Museums and Galleries Practice Modern Apprentice.

As part of the apprenticeship Alan created an exhibit from the Smith's collection of Japanese objects. This included inspecting and monitoring conservation needs, interpretation, and exhibition design.

Recruitment

I also want to highlight the importance of recruitment for implementing Fair Work and creating a more diverse workforce. On the MGS website we have a free-to-use Jobs and Opportunities page, where we advertise Fair Work approved opportunities within the Scottish museum and galleries sector. To advertise with us, museums must go through our Fair Work recruitment checklist and submit a form, checked by our Skills Development team. If museums don't meet the Fair Work recruitment criteria, then one of the team will be in touch with feedback to help improve their recruitment practice.

Contact us via inform@museums.galleriescotland.org.uk



Isabel Wilson from Arts Council England outlines the recent changes to the Museums Development programme.

How and why is the Museum Development programme evolving?

Shifts over time

The Museum Development (MD) programme has always evolved, but over the past six years, and particularly since Covid hit, the MD regional programmes across England have worked increasingly collaboratively together. They've been using some consistent surveys to gain and share insights – like the Annual Museums Survey, led by the team in the South West; they've scaled up development programmes, like the environmentally-driven collaboration, *Roots and Branches*, led by the team in the North West and

rolled out England-wide and they've established a fruitful and ongoing UK partnership with Art Fund, helping to direct their resources to museums that need them most.

National programme with local relationships and responsiveness

More and more, it's started to feel like a national programme with regional teams and regional flex, rather than nine discrete programmes. It's been good to meet much more regularly online, with a greater sense of shared purpose – to feel part of a

bigger and more-connected team, bouncing round ideas and insights and sharing practice to help museums better meet the needs of their communities.

Museums are rooted in their locality, and that's vital. Some of our planned changes to the MD programme are about how Arts Council England is changing the way it works – particularly in towns, cities, and rural locations up and down the country – to advocate for culture and creativity and for museums to be central to people's

lives, to broker partnerships and to invest. We want to work more closely alongside Museum Development in support of museums. We invest in the programme as an important part of our development arm. We want to learn more from MD's understanding of context and relationships to offer joined-up opportunities for museums.

What will the reframed model look like?

There will be a lot that will be recognisable in the new model. MD will continue to provide training – online and in-person; programmes; small grants; fundraising and bid writing support; Accreditation advice; business diagnostics; collections care advice; communications and signposting; networks, partnerships and brokering; data collection, sharing intelligence, advocacy and sharing learning and good practice and celebrations of museums' achievements.

There will still be people available who understand the specific circumstances, context, and relationships of your museum.

The changes we are making are about a broader frame in terms of who can access MD support – freelancers and museums which are not yet Accredited will be eligible for example. There will be five rather than nine MD programmes being delivered across

Accreditation or getting support from our Digital Culture Network.

We can see ways to strengthen the delivery model by having some new specialist posts within Arts Council England, in support of the programme. There will be a national

of investment overall will remain the same at £3,202,869 per year, but with some resource spent on the new roles within Arts Council England in direct support of the programme – so a reduction in the grants available to deliver MD.

“ It’s been good to meet much more regularly online, with a greater sense of shared purpose – to feel part of a bigger and more-connected team, bouncing round ideas and insights and sharing practice to help museums better meet the needs of their communities. ”

programme manager role, helping with coordination, relationship management, national communications, and programme development; a data insights role and an e-learning role supporting the MD teams on the ground in their direct delivery to museums.

There will still be opportunities for regional flex and focussed programmes – but we are keen to share learning and reduce any duplication where we can, so that as much resource as possible is made available to museums. A key aim is to see more Arts Council investment reaching more museums.

The priority constituency will continue to be museums that are neither Nationals nor funded regularly by Arts Council England as NPO museums. Sole trader freelancers will be welcome to join training sessions and museums that are not within the Accreditation fold will be eligible for some support.

We are very mindful that the change from nine to five strategic delivery partners for 2024 onwards does have an impact on people within the current programmes and that there is also an impact for museums who are used to the current model. Change is unsettling and difficult, but as all of you who run an enterprising museum or heritage organisation know – adapting to current challenges and opportunities is critical.

“ There will still be people available who understand the specific circumstances, context, and relationships of your museum. ”

the country and there will be closer join-up with Arts Council England as the national development agency – whether that’s for working in particular localities with our Area teams, accessing some of our national Museums & Cultural Property programmes – like Government Indemnity or

The 2024-26 MD programme will include more consistency of offer for museums and closer alignment with Arts Council England while retaining on-the-ground relationships and understanding of context for place-based solutions.

The reframing of the programme is not a cost-cutting exercise. The level

When is all this happening?

For the 2024-26 Museum Development programme, applications will open in May 2023 with decisions made by October for delivery to start in April 2024. The guidance was published in January and is on our website, along with some FAQs and a blog by Emmie Kell, Director of Museums & Cultural Property.

[www.artscouncil.org.uk/blog/
our-renewed-commitment-museum-development-programme](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/blog/our-renewed-commitment-museum-development-programme)

News in brief

Stuart Davies – in memoriam

AIM was saddened to hear of the death of Stuart Davies, project leader on the *Renaissance in the Regions* Task Force and author of the publication of the same name in 2001. Educated at Westfield College and LSE, Stuart was Museums and Access Policy Adviser at the (then) Heritage Lottery Fund before taking up the role of Director of Strategy and Planning at the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council in 2000. Former colleague on the Renaissance Task Force, Sir Nicholas Serota writes:

In late 2000 Chris Smith (now Lord Smith of Finsbury), the Secretary of State for Culture, agreed to respond to a plea for significant additional funding for non-national museums. He set up an Enquiry under the leadership of Matthew Evans, Chair of Faber and Faber, and he reached into his department to appoint a Secretary whose sympathy for museums and determination were already well known within the museum sector.

Stuart Davies was the engine who drove forward the Enquiry, a perfect foil to Matthew whose ambition was to recognise the importance of the non-national museums and to increase central government support for their work. Matthew had a helpful and irreverent disregard for the hierarchies of national and non-national and some national directors lobbied against the direction that the Enquiry was taking, but Stuart was calm and painstaking in encouraging them to see the value to the whole ecology rather than taking a partisan line.

Stuart wrote much of the final report and, although Matthew was responsible for some of the bolder flourishes, the overall wisdom and conviction of the report owed much to his understanding of what would win support in the sector and in government. ‘Renaissance in the Regions,’ as it became, was the trigger for a significant increase in funding for museums across the country. It was also the catalyst for a transformation

of the sector over the past two decades, even though funding was reduced in the austerity years after 2010. Even today, museums and audiences in every part of England today still owe much to the work of Stuart Davies more than twenty years ago.

Nicholas Serota
Chair, Arts Council England

The National Tramway Museum, Crich, Derbyshire

The restoration of a rare surviving Victorian horse cabmen’s shelter from Bradford has recently been completed at the National Tramway Museum in Crich, Derbyshire, thanks to funding from The Pilgrim Trust, an Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grant, and the Association for Industrial Archaeology.



‘Albert Vick’ the horse tram driver welcomed visitors as part of a special event in 2022.

Cabmen’s shelters were built across Britain from the early 1870s to provide the drivers of hackney carriages and hansom cabs with somewhere warm and dry to wait between passenger fares. They also provided a place for refreshments, away from the public houses. The RSPCA also supported the Bradford shelters as part of their mission to improve the welfare of working horses, as they provided drivers with a supply of water for them.

The shelter at Crich was installed in Bradford in 1877 and remained in use outside the Exchange Railway station

until moving to The National Tramway Museum in 1973. Having deteriorated over the years, work commenced in 2020 to restore the shelter to how it looked when it was built in 1877. Following the first phase of work by Dorothea Restorations, staff from the Tramway Museum’s conservation workshop team used the original architect’s drawings to fit out the interior to recreate the 1877 appearance. Features include bench seating with storage ‘locker’ space below, a table, coal locker, hand basin and stove. Visitors can now experience the inside of the shelter as it might have felt in Victorian Bradford, complete with sounds and smells!

www.tramway.co.uk

Arts Marketing Association appoints new board members

Head of Digital Innovation at Museum of London, Trish Thomas and Head of Marketing and Audience Development at Brixton House, Monique Baptiste-Brown have been elected by AMA’s community of over 3500 members. Trish has a background in journalism and has an extensive career in digital with previous roles including Head of Digital Engagement at Southbank Centre, as well as taking in commercial digital agencies, Royal Museums Greenwich, Kew Gardens and Arts Council England.



Trish Thomas.



Monique Baptiste-Brown.

Monique's experience spans roles as an arts marketer, strategist and researcher across the arts and cultural sector including at the Black Cultural Archives, National Theatre, and Bernie Grant Arts Centre. Her work takes in the #CultureNeedsDiversity campaign, while she is the co-founder of the #BlackWomxnInTheatre movement and sits on the steering committee for What Next?

Beamish Museum appoints Chair and Trustees

Beamish, The Living Museum of the North has announced the appointment of a Chair and trustees to its board. Chris Loughran has been appointed as Chair and took up his role on 1st March, along with 10 new board members: David Alexander, Mauricio Armellini, Daniel Jackson, Stephen King, Rachael Lennon, Dr Elouise Leonard-Cross, Conan McKinley, Bridget Stratford, and Ian Thomas. The museum's host

local authority, Durham County Council, will retain one nomination to the board, who will be Councillor Elizabeth Scott.

New Chair Chris grew up in County Durham and has a background in senior leadership, operations, and policy. He is Co-Founder and Director of Symbio Impact Ltd, a sustainable financing and strategy consultancy. Chris is also a Senior Advisor at The HALO Trust, a leading international NGO (non-governmental organisation) and an Honorary Fellow at Manchester University.

www.beamish.org.uk

NAM Annual Conference – 19 April 2023, National Army Museum (London)

The 6th annual NAM Regimental & Corps Museums Conference takes place on 19 April and will be packed with presentations on museum best practice, relevant projects and initiatives and Army Museum sector updates. This event also provides an excellent opportunity to network with UK Regimental and Corps Museum professionals.

www.nam.ac.uk

Young Cartoonist of the Year competition

The winners of the 27th Young Cartoonist of the Year competition were announced recently. Over 100 entries were received from all over

the UK, with winners decided by a panel of judges comprised of luminaries of British newspaper and comic cartooning. The 2022 winners are:

Harriet Bourhill (18-30 winner)

Corb Calow Davies (U18 winner)

George Whitehead, 10 (Woodcock Prize winner, pictured)



The competition awards two age categories – U18 and U30, plus a special prize given to the most surreal cartoon, the 'Woodcock Prize', which is given in memory of the late surrealist cartoonist Kevin Woodcock. Each of the winners receives prize money and a certificate. The certificates were presented to the winners at an event at The Cartoon Museum in March, alongside a display of the artwork winners and runners-up. The 2022 competition was sponsored by Léonie-Wykes Mahood in memory of Ken Mahood.

Director of The Cartoon Museum, Joe Sullivan said:

"A huge congratulations to Harriet, Corb and George! This competition has a habit of unearthing the 'next big thing', and it is wonderful to see young artists picking up a pencil and drawing cartoons that make their way to the museum walls to sit alongside the titans of the art form. They are a true inspiration for the many young people that come through our doors to see talented and creative people their own age celebrated."



Chris Loughran, who has been appointed Chair of Beamish Museum, with Rhiannon Hiles, Beamish's Chief Executive.

Meet us at the Museums and Heritage Show!

If you are coming to this year's Museum and Heritage Show (London Olympia, 10-11 May) do stop by and say hello! The Association of Independent Museums is on stand X1 both days and we would be delighted to chat about all things museums and AIM.

As well as the stand, we will be at the 'Ambience Lounge' for a dedicated AIM networking session on Weds 10 May at 11am.



AIM Trustee Recruitment

Can you help AIM and its members reach their full potential and face the challenges of the future with confidence? Can you support us in building our reputation, strengthening our voice and fostering a supportive and successful community for all our members?

We're seeking up to three trustees to join a dynamic, friendly and accomplished Board that will help set and oversee AIM's strategy for the coming years.

We have a growing membership, a strong, well respected advocacy role and a wide range of programmes and resources that are designed to help independent museums and heritage organisations stay relevant, be successful and deliver meaningful impact.

Through this recruitment round, we are keen to ensure that the Board is well placed to help AIM and its members meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. If you would like to have a confidential chat with either AIM Chair Andrew Lovett or AIM Director Lisa Ollerhead regarding this opportunity, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

[See the AIM website Trustee vacancies for the application pack.](#)

Sam Mullins OBE stepping down from London Transport Museum

Former AIM Chair and the Chief Executive and Director of London Transport Museum, Sam Mullins OBE, has announced his intention to step down from the position later this year. Sam, who has been with the museum since 1994, will remain in his post until a successor is appointed to oversee the Museum's new five-year strategy. Following his departure, Sam will

continue his career as a historian, writer, presenter, mentor, and consultant. He will also complete the first-ever history of Transport for London.

New Stories New Audiences Residential success

New Stories New Audiences (NSNA) grant recipients met last month at an in person residential designed to share experiences and ideas from across the first cohort of the programme.

Over two busy days at Hillscourt, representatives from Judges Lodgings Museum, Provan Hall, UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, Bradford Police Museum, National Paralympic Heritage Trust, Sturminster Heritage Trust, and Castle Bromwich Heritage Gardens outlined their projects, highlighted what their organisations had learnt from their work to date, and made suggestions and recommendations for future participants.

Margaret Harrison, AIM Head of Programmes said

"This was a really fruitful two days; it was great to bring recipients and mentors together in person to share, as well as have the time to unpack the many lessons learned.

There was so much useful feedback and many insights that will not only help with future rounds of the New Stories New Audiences programme, but also inform new AIM initiatives and the work we do with members."



New Stories New Audiences residential in Hillscourt.

Training Grants available for Conference

Thinking of attending AIM Conference in Edinburgh in June? Hear from some of the delegates who benefited from a Training Grant bursary to attend last year's event in Port Sunlight.

Elaine Edwards, Manager/Curator, Biggar Museum

In addition to a wonderful location, the programme of speakers and topics were excellent, enjoyable, entertaining, and most certainly informative. I came away with copious notes, ideas, contacts, and inspiration.

Visiting the Expo was a really useful exercise too and I'm already in contact with potential new suppliers – including the sponsors of the conference.

One of the best aspects for me was to be amongst museum professionals, what a joy it was just to sit and chat with them, to share and learn from experiences. A small number of delegates I had met before, others I've only seen via Zoom and even more, I met for the first time. As we all know networking is never wasted.

Susannah Jarvis, Curator, Royal Hampshire Regiment Museum

The conference was fantastic – lots of variety of speakers and a wealth of ideas, tasks to do, and items to change

to ensure we are moving forward into the future in the best possible manner. It was also a good chance to meet with staff from other museums and hear about their challenges and ideas over the breaks and in the break-out sessions.

I returned full of enthusiasm and ideas to take forward, and re-energised to talk to the Board about changes we need to make moving forward.

**Elena Trimarchi
David Livingstone Birthplace Trust**

The conference sessions were all about relationship-building, overcoming challenges, challenging the accepted way of doing things and of seeing things – looking ahead to what museums can do to support their communities and sustain two-way relationships with the public, all while centering equalities-based values in museums' work. Having had the opportunity to share some of the engagement work we have been undertaking at DLB provided me with the platform to have insightful conversations and be asked challenging questions.

Jules Wooding, Museum Manager, Cumbria's Museum of Military Life

It was such a joy to be in a room with other museum folk and the energy in the room was wonderful. The chance to meet people, share experiences, chat and network was invaluable.

This was my first AIM conference, and it will certainly not be my last.

Applications for Training Grant bursaries to attend AIM Conference 2023 are now open – find out more here:
aim-museums.co.uk/for-aim-members/grants/aim-training-grants



Silk Museum, Macclesfield.

Camera Obscura, CC BY-NC 2.0

AIM and Pilgrim Trust partnership continues

Pilgrim Trust is continuing its long-term partnership with AIM and recently awarded a three-year grant (2023-25) of £414,000 to support collections care and conservation grant programmes.

AIM is one of a range of specialist, expert organisations the Trust works with within the heritage sector to improve the reach and impact of its preservation and conservation work. The Pilgrim Trust has been working with AIM and offering conservation grants since 2007. Back then, AIM recognised that there was a need for conservation grants that were accessible to small and medium sized museums, which may not have the expertise in-house to develop funding bids. These first grants covered the costs of a conservator to work on specific objects within a collection. The objects conserved were diverse and drawn from local history collections, fine art collections, transport collections and industrial history collections.

Today, the programme has expanded to provide three types of grants – Collection Care Audits, the Collections Care Scheme, and the Remedial Conservation Scheme. All three grants provide museums with access to accredited conservation expertise and can help with auditing a collection, caring for specific items, or developing a more sustainable approach to the conservation and management of collections. There is a growing desire to upskill staff and volunteers with collections care practice, so the Collections Care grants scheme also offers museums grants to train staff and volunteers to deliver projects that meet the benchmarks for collections care and accreditation.

An insider's view

Fiona Woolley, Grants Administrator at AIM works closely with grantees daily to share insights into the impact of these grants and examples of her favourite projects.

What has been the impact of the AIM and Pilgrim Trust Collection and Conservation grants?

Fiona: "Over the past 15 years over 500 AIM Pilgrim Trust Collection and Conservation grants have been awarded. The impact that this has had on improving collections care across the independent museum sector cannot be underestimated. The access to a conservator who can help a museum to understand how to best manage the collections in their care is invaluable. The best practice advice provided is cascaded through small museums from staff to volunteers to Trustees, ensuring that the advice provided is understood and acted upon by all.

The grant scheme is unique in offering a set of complementary grants for conservation. They fill a gap in the sector and provide small to medium museums with access to funding with wraparound support throughout their funding journey. The grants have always been popular with members and the bid amounts at each round outstrip the available funds by 50-100%.

In our 2022 grantee survey, 59% of recipients said that access to their collection had improved because of receiving the grant, 75% said that the care of their collection had improved, and 90% said they would not have been able to do this work without AIM and Pilgrim Trust funding. In 2023 details of the organisations funded through the Pilgrim Trust collections and conservation grants will be added to the open grant data platform 360Giving.

What are some of your favourite grants from the schemes?

Fiona: "It is hard to pick projects from the 500 plus projects

funded to date! But I am pleased to share a couple of projects that show the impact of these grants.

The Silk Museum in Macclesfield was awarded an Audit grant in Autumn 2017. The museum works to champion the history of Macclesfield and the surrounding areas. They wanted help to audit their collection of 900+ pattern books dating from the late 18th century to 1980s, as well as three other collections. The audit was a great success and it provided staff, volunteers, and students with the training they needed to look after this archive. This Audit grant was one of the first of its kind and really shows how a small injection of funding can provide a step change in collections care which is cascaded through the staff and volunteers.

Petersfield Museum in Surrey was awarded a Collections Care grant in Autumn 2020. This local history museum works to showcase over 10,000 years of history. The museum was fortunate enough to acquire the life's work of the local freelance photographer Don Eades and they needed help to catalogue, digitise and organise the 106,000 negatives in the collection. During the project, twenty volunteers were trained in handling and packing the negatives and worked hard to organise the collection.

I picked this project as it demonstrates how a hidden archive, of which there are many in museums, has been brought back to life through the dedication of the volunteers and small staff team. I had the pleasure of visiting the museum and it was great to see in person the impact of the grant in upgrading the management of the archive."

Lisa Ollerhead, Director of AIM said "We're thrilled to continue to offer the AIM Pilgrim Trust conservation grants to our members. The ongoing popularity of the scheme demonstrates the need in the sector for specialist conservation support and we're grateful to Pilgrim Trust for recognising the valuable nature of this scheme."

This article first appeared on the Pilgrim Trust website in March 2023.



Don Eades Collection at Petersfield Museum. Left: Archive box of photographic edits. Right: Welcome walk of final exhibition.

Can real-time pricing help counter the Cost-of-Living crisis?



Image by Mezhi Lany on Unsplash

Associate Supplier Convious explains how real-time pricing can help museums remain competitive and provide visitors with an accessible world-class cultural experience in these challenging times.

The cost-of-living crisis has significantly impacted the museum sector, particularly in visitor attendance and revenue. Cultural organisations are facing the challenge of finding sources of income to support their operations while staying true to their mission and expanding audience reach. Real-time pricing is the next

Amazing Grace 250

This year marks 250 years since the world-famous hymn, *Amazing Grace*, was written in the market town of Olney, Buckinghamshire.

Amazing Grace is sung all around the world in times of joy and times of sadness. It is thought to be one of the most recorded songs of all time, with over 3,000 copies stored in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. For many, the hymn encapsulates feelings of hope and provides an opportunity for one to look towards the future, as well as back at all that has happened. It for this reason, perhaps, that *Amazing Grace* has endured for so long.

The hymn was written by curate in charge – and former slave trader – the Reverend John Newton to accompany his sermon for his New Year's Day morning service at St Peter and St Paul Church on 1st January 1773.

In 2019, a steering group which included the Cowper & Newton Museum, Olney Town Council and residents, Open University, Friends of the Caribbean, the Stables music venue, African Diaspora Federation, African and Caribbean Arts & Heritage Union, Milton Keynes Sierra Leone Community, the parish church of St Peter & St Paul, Olney and Milton Keynes City Council came together to develop ideas around the 250th anniversary.

From these discussions, a yearlong programme of exhibitions, talks, walks, and cultural and community events was identified. This included a New Year's Day morning service at St Peter and St Paul on 1st January 2023.

generation of dynamic pricing and is the process of setting prices based on up-to-the-minute demand to deliver a truly customer-centric approach. The real-time pricing algorithm considers many different factors when calculating ticket prices for the date the visitor chooses. These include:

- Your own preferences and business model: What are the highest and lowest ticket prices you want to offer? Do you want to offer lower ticket prices during the school holidays?
- Seasonality: Is the date during peak season or off-peak?
- Historical data: How many tickets did you sell on this date in past years?
- Weather: Is there a chance of poor weather which might result in you selling fewer last-minute tickets that day?
- Traffic on your online ticket shop: Are you currently experiencing higher levels of traffic?

By switching to real-time pricing, venues generally experience a major boost in revenue. They are also able to control the number of people visiting much more effectively. By booking in advance, visitors secure better deals.

They also enjoy a more pleasant experience at the museum — without the overcrowding.

Benefits

As the cost of living continues to rise, museums face the challenge of maintaining accessibility while covering their operating expenses. Real-time pricing offers a solution that can help museums by optimising ticket prices based on demand and availability. This can help maximise income during peak periods and encourage visitors to attend during off-peak times, all while providing valuable insights into visitor behaviour and preferences. Real-time pricing strategies have many benefits including helping museums:

Diversify their audiences

- Reduce economic barriers to attendance
- Respond in real-time to changes in demand and market conditions

Increase income

- Improve Conversion rates
- Have full control over the pricing strategy

Enhance the visitor experience

- Enable more even distribution of visitors

- Allow better use of resources
- Encourage early bookings

What's in it for the visitor?

Attraction management platform innovator Convivous and market research experts Baker Richards unveiled the results of research carried out in 2022 into consumer attitudes towards real-time pricing. A major outcome from the research is that clear communication is essential to help people make a good choice and understand how to benefit from the variations in pricing.

“The research highlights something many attractions will recognise – there is intrinsic price sensitivity in the market because of the economic conditions,” Robin Cantrill-Fenwick, Chief Executive, Baker Richards explains.

The first and crucial step is understanding your visitors. With the continued development of innovative solutions such as real-time pricing and mobile apps, museums can continue to evolve and adapt to the changing needs and expectations of their visitors and economical challenges, ensuring that they remain relevant and attractive in today's fast-paced digital age.

www.convivous.com

Milton Keynes City Council then supported the Museum to apply to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England for what became the Amazing Grace 250 project and programme.

A successful application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund enabled the Museum to lead a diverse heritage activity programme and work with Catherine Ross and Lynda-Louise Burrell from Museumand, the National Caribbean Heritage Museum, to redevelop the existing displays about John Newton, including his life as a slave trader.

Catherine explained why she wanted to be a part of the project:

“The hymn is a firm favourite of many Africans and Caribbeans, much valued as an emotion-stirrer yet balm for the soul, despite having been composed by a man who had been involved in the Transatlantic Slave Trade for many years, before publicly declaring slavery an evil practice. John Newton's life provides some great stories and lessons about the path to faith and belief, particularly that it is rarely a straightforward one, but often a gradual process. John Newton's life and his hymn, *Amazing Grace*, has had a

profound and long-lasting effect, playing a part in the lives of many people down the centuries.”

Heritage consultant, Carla Markland, worked with Museum trustees and volunteers to redisplay three of the Museum rooms, depicting Newton's life in the transatlantic slave trade, as Minister for Olney, and hymnwriter.

A further project is a free to enter exhibition co-created with the Milton Keynes Sierra Leone Community and the Olney-Newton Link. This showcases the life and vibrant culture of the country where Newton once worked as a slave trader and spent a short period himself in chains. After the exhibition closes, the Sierra Leone Community will use the additional resources themselves. The Sierra Leone High Commission is also interested in a John Newton and *Amazing Grace* display for Sierra Leone.

Collaboration, shared values, and communication have been key to Amazing Grace 250. By actively listening to each other and shaping the project together, interest in and positive outcomes from the programme have exceeded our expectations.

Find out more about the AG250 project at: www.cowperandnewtonmuseum.org.uk

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Considering Mergers or Closures

Martin Howard from Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers outlines some key considerations for organisations thinking about mergers or even closure.

The museum sector has many things to celebrate and shout about in 2023, and most of us like to deal with positive news and updates. But it is a sad fact that right now there are challenges for many. For some, the issues centre around finance. For others it is visitor numbers slipping, or the need for new investment to freshen things up. And further still others face a shortage of staff, volunteers and sometimes trustees. These facts often lead to mergers or closures, so we will address each issue separately, but note quite a few common themes along the way.

Mergers

When two or more organisations merge, it is worth asking whether there is in fact just one entity that is taking over the other organisations, or whether all the entities merging will in some sense cease completely allowing for a brand-new organisation to emerge.

Either way, the commercial insurances in place for all the organisations concerned will need to be looked at carefully. Any organisation planning

to merge with another may well be tempted to cancel insurances down quickly. That should be cautioned against in the short term in case legally the organisation exists for a further period, and remains liable for any activities, continues to own property or assets, or where staff remain employed by the organisation in question until a future date.

Of course, once staff and activities can be covered by another organisation's insurance policy, then that is the time to cancel down old insurances and potentially receive some refund. This message comes with one important caveat, namely *Trustee and Officer Liability insurances*. It is possible to purchase what is called "run-off" cover for several years to protect claims that may arise in years to come, where people claim against a former trustee or officer. This cover is essential and should be purchased before any main insurance policy has been cancelled down.

Similarly, before any insurance is cancelled, if you have *Legal Expenses* or *Employment Practises* cover in place, ensure you maximise the advice and cover afforded if you plan to make any staff redundant or have a major shake-up of roles going forwards. These discussions with insurers need to happen before any staff are employed by the new organisation.

And we must not forget the new organisation (or the remaining organisation) after the mergers have

taken place. That new organisation needs to make a full disclosure of what new activities it undertakes, what it owns, and make sure the business description (a technical insurance term) on the policy schedule is accurate going forwards.

Closures

Turning now to museum closures – there are two types: temporary and permanent. Temporary closures are in one sense easier, though things like un-used museums or spaces need to be declared so that insurers can advise on what needs to be done to protect property. Likewise, there will be questions around where collections or contents are stored, and what security and checks are in place. Revised income and wage roll figures will need to be declared.

If the museum closure is permanent then all the above points under 'Mergers' about *Legal Expenses* and *Employment Practises* covers are truly relevant, as well as the need to purchase the run-off cover for Trustees and Officers before any main museum policies are finally cancelled. And the disposal of property and collections should also be done before any insurances are cancelled.

Hayes Parsons has many years of experience in sourcing bespoke insurance cover for museums. For further news and insurance advice please do get in touch with museums expert, Martin Howard 0117 930 1668/07719 023 194 m.howard@hayesparsons.co.uk

James Akers from The Digital Culture Network explains the upcoming changes to Google Analytics and how to prepare for the switchover.

Google Analytics is changing, are you ready?

If you want to understand how users found your website, what content they find most interesting, and whether they are doing the things you'd like them to do, you can use a web analytics tool to capture data and explore reports. A popular free tool, used on an estimated 86% of websites, is Google Analytics. You may already have an existing Google Analytics account set up on your website, if it is older than 12 months it is most likely Universal Analytics, which will stop working later this year.

What is happening and why?

The current version of Google Analytics (Universal Analytics or UA) will stop collecting data on 1 July 2023. Universal Analytics is built on technology that is becoming outdated and cannot keep up with changes to technology and online privacy expectations. If your museum uses UA to track user behaviour and website performance, you should begin the switch to an alternative now. To plan for the decommissioning of Google Universal Analytics, here are the key dates:

- **1 July 2023** – UA will stop collecting any new data (historical data is still available).
- **1 January 2024** – UA will be fully shut down (no historical data or access to the interface).

Why is it important to act soon?

When Universal Analytics is shut down at the end of the year you will no longer have access to any historical data from past months or years. Although you can export data from Universal Analytics before then, you won't be able to import it into most other platforms. The earlier you install an alternative web analytics platform the better. It can run parallel to your existing analytics and start capturing its own set of data.

Google Analytics 4

In 2021, Google released a brand-new version, completely rewritten from the ground up, called Google Analytics 4 (GA4). This updated version approaches its data collection in

a completely different way which makes it highly flexible and customisable. Additionally, GA4 will automatically track user actions such as file downloads, video plays, and links to other websites.

Seize the opportunity

This is a fantastic opportunity to review what your organisation is measuring, and why. Would it be beneficial to see how users are interacting with your online collections? Are they watching the video content you are creating? Do they show intent to visit your café by downloading a menu? You can learn more in Digital Culture Network's *Introduction to Google Analytics 4* article:

digitalculturenetwork.org.uk/knowledge/introduction-to-google-analytics-4/

Google is prompting users to "migrate" Universal Analytics to GA4 using its automated process, we recommend doing it manually to prevent any misconfiguration and messy data. We recently ran a webinar outlining the steps to setup and configure a new GA4 account *Getting started with Google Analytics 4*

digitalculturenetwork.org.uk/knowledge/webinar-recording-getting-started-with-google-analytics-4/

Support from the Digital Culture Network

Approaching GA4 for the first time can be daunting, please remember you are not alone, and we are here to help. We have a range of upcoming webinars and articles to support you're in your digital journey. You can find out more on our website and by signing up to the Digital Culture Network Newsletter

digitalculturenetwork.org.uk/newsletter-sign-up

If you work in a non-profit cultural organisation in England, you can also access free 1-2-1 support from our specialist Tech Champions.

Request a free 1-2-1 at

digitalculturenetwork.org.uk/ask-a-tech-champion

Crab Museum

Crab Museum is an independent free-to-enter science museum based in Margate. It uses crabs as a lens through which to explore the interconnectedness of life on Earth in all its bizarre, vast, and complicated weirdness.

Crab Museum exists as a place for children and adults to come together and explore the sciences in an accessible way. While our focus is on crabs and decapod crustacea more generally, we use these animals to scaffold engagement with other, seemingly disparate disciplines, as we believe in the entanglement of all knowledge – history doesn't end when you leave the history classroom and enter the English one.

The museum aims to bewilder, bemuse, and inspire a generation of children with our own brand of extreme whimsy that seeks to demonstrate that science is for everyone, and that through knowledge comes hope for the future. The museum regularly receives between 100 – 200 visitors each day and in 2022 we welcomed 22,000 people through our doors.

Crab Museum is entirely independently funded by our gift shop, online shop sales and director personal investment.

The museum's core staff are the three directors and a small cohort of

brilliant volunteers who help run the shop and our digital microscope displays. We opened to the public in late 2021, born from a desire to present science, and crucially the climate crisis, in a way that was neither tokenistic nor apocalyptic. Our founding principle was that you can use anything to talk about anything else, the museum is intended as physical proof of that. We built the museum over Covid, conducting the refit of the building ourselves.

Margate as a town has a wide variety of art galleries and cultural institutions that have directly benefited the town's regeneration, however, there has always been a lack of educational destinations for local children or visitors to the town. Two of the three directors are from Margate, the other is from just over the estuary in Canvey Island and the museum attempts to redress the uninspiring science communication we received during our own schooling.

Highlights of the museum include our diorama of Crabton-On-Tyne, a model village scene set during the 1926 general strike. This exhibit demonstrates the flexibility of memory and nationhood, depicting forgotten and

remembered histories and how they exist as reflections of dominant power structures. It is populated by Hornby trains and taxidied crabs wearing hats.

However, the main highlight of the museum is our digital microscope at

the counter 'The Crustacean

Identification and Magnification Station'. This is where museum staff go through various specimens that we've collected from the beach and that have been donated by the public. It is in the conversations with visitors that they can further join topics as diverse as anatomy to the reclassification of snow crabs as seabed resources by the Norwegian and Russian governments. We believe museums exist for people's ideas, not just to be an archive for disassociated, decontextualised objects.

www.crabmuseum.org



Richard Sagar, Head of Policy, Charity Finance Group,
highlights key elements of the Spring Budget for museums.

Museums and Galleries Exhibitions Tax Relief extended

Against a better-than-expected economic backdrop from the Office of Budget Responsibility the Chancellor referenced the “brilliant work” that third sector organisations are doing to “help people struggling in tough times.” Specific announcements for the museums and culture sector included:

‘Support for charities and community organisations – The government will provide over £100m of support for charities and community organisations in England . . . targeted towards those organisations most at risk, due to increased demand from vulnerable groups and higher delivery costs, as well as providing investment in energy efficiency measures to reduce future operating costs.’

‘Charity Taxes – The government will restrict charitable tax reliefs to UK charities and CASCs only from April 2023 - protecting the Exchequer and focusing UK taxpayer money on UK charities. European Union (EU) and European Economic Area (EEA) charities that HMRC has previously accepted as qualifying for charity tax reliefs before 15 March 2023, will have a transitional period until April 2024.’

‘Extending the higher rates of Theatre Tax Relief (TTR), Orchestra Tax Relief (OTR) and Museums and Galleries Exhibitions Tax Relief (MGETR) for 2 years – The temporary higher headline rates of relief for TTR, OTR and MGETR will be extended so that from 1 April 2023, the headline rates of relief for the TTR and the MGETR will remain at 45% (for non-touring productions) and 50% (for touring productions). OTR rates will remain at 50%. From 1 April 2025, the rates will be 30% and 35%, and on 1 April 2026 the headline rates of relief for TTR and MGETR will return to 20% and 25%. The headline rates of relief for OTR will return to 25%.’

‘Extension of the MGETR sunset clause – MGETR will be extended for a further two years until 31 March 2026.’

‘Qualifying expenditure in theatre, orchestra and museums and galleries exhibitions tax reliefs – Qualifying expenditure for theatre, orchestra, and museums and galleries exhibition tax reliefs will be changed to ‘expenditure on goods and services that are used or consumed in the UK.’ This will align the cultural reliefs with the audio-visual reliefs and ensure these reliefs remain compliant with the UK’s international obligations. Productions that have not concluded by 1 April 2024 may continue to claim EEA expenditure until 31 March 2025.’

Rachelle Rowbottom of CFG’s corporate partners, BHP, commented:

“The museum and galleries tax relief previously had a sunset clause within the legislation meaning that it was available until 31 March 2024, thankfully this has been extended to 31 March 2026. It is important that qualifying organisations claim these reliefs as and when they are eligible, to demonstrate their importance to the sector. There will also be changes to the definition of qualifying expenditure which will be amended to ‘expenditure on goods and services that are used or consumed in the UK.’”

AIM Chair, Andrew Lovett OBE said

“AIM very much welcomes the announcement in yesterday’s Budget that Museums and Galleries Tax Relief will continue for a further two years. It’s an expression of Treasury support for the sector and it can often make the difference between doing an exhibition or not. It’s also a good result for cross-sector advocacy efforts, work that continues as we press for it to be made permanent.”

AIM members can join CFG free – visit aim-museums.co.uk/charity-finance-group

AIM Bulletin

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Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Registered in England No. 1350939

Charity No: 1082215

VAT Registration No: 355372196

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Page layout by Dorchester Typesetting

Group Ltd, Dorchester, Dorset

Printed by Lavenham Press

AIM Bulletin is printed on Edixion offset, uncoated paper with ISO 14001 environmental certification and covered by the European EMAS standard. This product is made of material from well-managed, FSC®-certified forests and other controlled sources.

