



Association of  
Independent  
Museums

# AIM Bulletin

October 2023

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where paradise  
was lost and found**

# Welcome to AIM Bulletin!

www.aim-museums.co.uk

## A chance to reset and rethink

**Autumn often feels like a new year; a ‘back to school’ moment and a chance to reset and rethink after the summer.**

When planning for the future, we cannot ignore the big challenges facing museums, not least the cost-of-living crisis and impacts on budgets. Understandably, it can feel that generating income is the most pressing issue to solve and, with that, to almost detach the need to make money from the rest of museum practice. We might ask what we can do to bring in cash, without considering or focusing on other factors that create organisational resilience. In my view, a holistic approach to resilience is required to achieve stronger organisations.

One reason I love the AIM Hallmarks is that no Hallmark is given preference over another; a truly resilient museum will embrace all the Hallmarks. In my view, each Hallmark is interlinked. For example, great leadership and governance, and a clear purpose, helps create the conditions for sound financial management, innovation, strategic decision-making, and high-quality work across an organisation. Taking part in active networks and partnerships can support contemporary collecting and inspire an outward-looking approach that helps enable fresh thinking. And, importantly, tackling inequalities drives organisational resilience by ensuring museums are welcome to all through being visitor focused and relevant to audiences.

No business can achieve sustained, long-term resilience if it remains static; they must be adaptive, responsive, and agile. Museums must continually embrace new ways of working to remain relevant to audiences; this includes adopting a proactive approach to embedding inclusion and diversity

and tackling inequalities. Visitors make a choice to go to a museum; they will not visit if they feel the museum is not relevant to them, does not represent them, and – worst of all – makes them feel unwelcome or prevents them from actively participating.

So, what can museums do to tackle inequalities? You might, for example, work with a specialist to develop an access audit and strategy, take steps to diversify your workforce and Board, use your collections to highlight discrimination, or deliver a programme of contemporary collecting and co-curation to address missing perspectives and stories in your collection. Look to your purpose for direction and devise a strategy for how your museum will tackle inequalities. You don’t have to do everything at once and have all the answers right now; this work takes time and requires long-term thinking.

In my work as an independent consultant, I am in the privileged position of visiting and working with museums across the country. I see and experience brilliant, inspiring work being carried out by dedicated staff and volunteers to tackle inequalities, embed diversity and inclusion, and ensure museums remain relevant and resilient. Talk to your networks and reach out to museums that inspire you. Get in touch with AIM for support and make use of AIM’s helpful library of resources. We are all on this journey together and can support each other to learn and develop. Together, we can ensure our museums are inclusive, dynamic institutions that are open and welcome to all.

**Laura Crossley**  
AIM Trustee and consultant  
[lauracrossley.com](http://lauracrossley.com)



### Front cover

*Image of Eve rehearsing in the literary garden.* Open to the public since 1887, Milton’s Cottage is based in the Buckinghamshire village of Chalfont St Giles. It’s the place where Milton completed his epic masterpiece *Paradise Lost* and brought his fictional Satan into being (and with him the first fully realised anti-hero in Western literature). Read more on this fascinating museum in our profile on page 19.



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# First round of Re:Collections Grants awarded



www.aim-museums.co.uk

Image by Martin Gough on Unsplash

## Three museums have been awarded Re:Collections Grants totalling over £54000.

Funded from the Welsh Government Anti-Racist Wales Culture, Heritage, and Sport Fund, Re:Collections' purpose is to support Welsh museums to deliver the Culture, Heritage and Sport goals and actions from the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (ARWAP) and Programme for Government.

The programme delivers bespoke consultancy, mentoring, workshops, grants, and opportunities to share experience and learning.

AIM is working in partnership with the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre and Education Trust, a specialist library and archive focusing on the history of race and ethnicity, migration, and anti-racist activism. A recognised centre of excellence, the Trust uses its expertise to support museums and other collections-based organisations to work in more anti-racist, anti-discriminatory ways, and in particular to ensure Global Majority histories and experiences are documented and explored ethically.

AIM's Head of Programmes, Margaret Harrison said

"The Re:Collections programme has been a real team effort.

I'd like to express my thanks on behalf of AIM to our mentors, programme participants and colleagues at Ahmed Iqbal Ullah RACE Centre and Education Trust for all their hard work to date on this vital work.

I look forward to seeing these projects come to fruition over the coming months, and the possibility of being able to share learning with other museums in Wales and beyond."

### Amgueddfa Ceredigion Museum

Voices from the Edge Creative will be delivered in collaboration with members of *Llwy Gariad* – a key aim is to build mutual trust and understanding as a foundation for future projects.

£18539.17

### Conwy Culture Centre

Colwyn Bay's African Institute project will explore stories through a series of workshops led by a Cameroonian North Wales artist and TAPE Community Music and Film.

£18,010.00

### Y Gaer Museum, Art Gallery & Library

Addressing the lack of objects in the museum's collection, this project will seek to tell the story of the Gurkhas and the Nepalese community who first came to Brecon in 1974.

£17,750.00

Read more about Re:Collections at [aim-museums.co.uk/support-museums-wales/recollections](http://aim-museums.co.uk/support-museums-wales/recollections) #antiracistwalesactionplan



Conwy Archive Service

**International governments, leading AI companies and experts in research will unite at Bletchley Park for crucial talks in November.**



Image courtesy of Bletchley Park Trust

# Bletchley Park hosts Artificial Intelligence Safety Summit

The major global event will take place on the 1st and 2nd November to consider the risks of AI and discuss how they can be mitigated through internationally coordinated action. Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire, a significant location in the history of computer science development and once the home of British Enigma codebreaking provides the ideal location to host the meeting.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said:

“The UK has long been home to the transformative technologies of the future, so there is no better place to host the first ever global AI safety summit than at Bletchley Park this November.”

Bletchley Park was approached directly to host the AI Safety Summit as a site of historical importance to

technology and computer science. Its legacy in the field is unparalleled: it was the place where Colossus, the world’s first electronic computer, was used. The roots of AI can also be traced back to some of the outstanding individuals who worked at Bletchley Park during the Second World War, with codebreakers Jack Good and Donald Michie, and most famously Alan Turing, among those who went on to write extensive works on the technology. In November, it will once again take centre stage as the international community comes together to agree on important guardrails which ensure the opportunities of AI can be realised, and its risks safely managed.

Bletchley Park has hosted several events on site over the years, but the AI Safety Summit is the first event that has covered Artificial Intelligence

specifically, and the first with such global standing.

Iain Standen, CEO of the Bletchley Park Trust, said:

“Bletchley Park Trust is immensely privileged to have been chosen as the venue for the first major international summit on AI safety this November, and we look forward to welcoming the world to our historic site. It is fitting that the very spot where leading minds harnessed emerging technologies to influence the successful outcome of World War Two will, once again, be the crucible for international co-ordinated action.

“We are incredibly excited to be providing the stage for discussions on global safety standards, which will help everyone manage and monitor the risks of artificial intelligence.”

[Bletchleypark.org.uk](https://bletchleypark.org.uk)

**The SS Great Britain Trust announced recently that its long-standing Chief Executive is to step down.**

# Chief Executive steps ashore from SS Great Britain

Dr Matthew Tanner MBE led the multi-award-winning organisation through significant transformation and innovation, notably the long-term preservation strategy for the ship itself. In his role at SS Great Britain and as a previous Chair and current Honorary President of AIM, Matthew is well recognised across the sector for his multiple achievements, we spoke to him for the Bulletin following the announcement.

## What's the most significant change you have seen across the independent museums sector since you started?

Well – I really do think that independent museums are coming of age now after some 50 years or so. I think that thanks to AIM and all the good people that have been part of it, we have established the independent sector as at least an equal and significant part of the museums and cultural heritage sector. When I started, I felt a sense in which the independents were junior partners, this is no longer the case. DCMS and Arts Council England now embrace the idea that independents are a core and thriving part of our national culture. Firstly, bringing museums, especially some independents into the ACE National Portfolio has been a significant step despite the hard work that brings, and secondly AIM becoming a recognised support organisation too. Yes of course we were/are all massively hit by the pandemic and its knock on effects, but the huge Cultural Recovery Fund rescue investment was automatically applied to independents just as much as anyone else – and what a difference that made. In short – the collective grouping that AIM has given us all is how we can speak with a unified single voice to those in power – of course we must ensure that by getting closer to the powers that be we do not then find ourselves becoming part of the establishment either! Our Independence is very valuable.

## What makes you optimistic for the future of the independent museums sector?

Optimism is in shorter supply in recent times for many obvious reasons. I think there is hardly a museum in the country that doesn't feel the pressures. Visitors are clearly demanding high quality AND very good value experiences from us all, even though that costs money that is itself in short supply. However, this is just the kind of spur to action that can inspire independents to step up and deliver even better experiences and services. Agile and flexible working systems, and our



ability to listen closely to visitors, without compromising our standards or being bound up in political games or point scoring, are great assets. And good museums are needed more than ever in a time of great national turmoil.

## What's next?

It certainly feels a big step to have taken after serving one Trust for some 26 years – and it has been a great privilege to lead the teams over the years that have delivered great work and many prizes in such a wonderful setting. I am excited about working as a consultant on some different projects, both in the UK and abroad. I shall certainly be around in the sector and look forward to catching up with friends at the next AIM Conference.

## What is your favourite museum object/experience from the many you have come across?

Well of course – the SS Great Britain herself is an outstanding object of world renown, and I treasure my time looking after her very much. She is a national treasure both as a material creation and for the many stories she embodies, and I am proud to have helped establish all that in many people's minds. But in terms of some of the smaller objects in the Designated collection – one of my favourites has always been the half-eaten ship's biscuit that has survived, and which bears a paper label declaring that it was (half) eaten on board the SS Great Britain on a voyage to Australia in 1874! It is a great object – so personal in a way, while speaking of world ocean travel, and of course the extraordinary resilience of ship's biscuits – and it probably tastes as good today as it did in 1874!

# News in brief

## Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport appointed

Thangam Debbonaire has been appointed Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport in the recent Labour Party reshuffle.



She is the Labour MP for Bristol West, has lived in the constituency since 1991 and has been an MP continuously since 7 May 2015.

She started out as a professional cellist but for 25 years prior to becoming an MP her focus was working to end domestic violence working for the Women's Aid Federation of England, and Respect, an anti-domestic violence organisation.

## Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales appoints Chief Executive.

Amgueddfa Cymru – Museum Wales has announced that Jane Richardson has been appointed as its Chief Executive. Jane will take up her new position, initially on a part-time basis, on 11 September, before assuming the full-time role in November 2023.

Jane has been Chair of Cadw since 2019, supporting the organisation

through the pandemic and with the post-Covid recovery process. Until earlier this year, she was Director of Economy and Place at Conwy County Borough Council, leading on major infrastructure projects including the creation of a new culture centre within the historic town of Conwy.

Jane, who lives in Llandudno with her husband and two children, has over 20 years' experience of leadership roles within the public, private and third sectors in Wales. As a Director at Visit Wales, she led on tourism product development and oversaw significant investments in new attractions. Prior to this, she spent ten years with the National Trust directly managing historic properties and leading on the visitor experience across Wales.

On her appointment, Jane said:

“I am excited and honoured to take up this role at what is an important time both for Amgueddfa Cymru and for Wales's wider cultural sector. I look forward to working with the Board and the team to ensure we are bringing our collections to life in ways that tell the stories of all the communities of Wales.”



## National Lottery Heritage Fund shares delivery plan

The National Lottery Heritage Fund's recently announced 10-year strategy, Heritage 2033, sets out its ambitions as it invests an anticipated £3.6 billion over the next decade.

NLHF has subsequently shared how the long-term strategy will be supported by three-year delivery plans, setting out a flexible approach which can adapt to heritage sector needs and respond to external events or opportunities over the 10 years.

Read the plans at

[www.heritagefund.org.uk/about/heritage-2033-strategy/delivery-plan-2023-2026](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk/about/heritage-2033-strategy/delivery-plan-2023-2026)

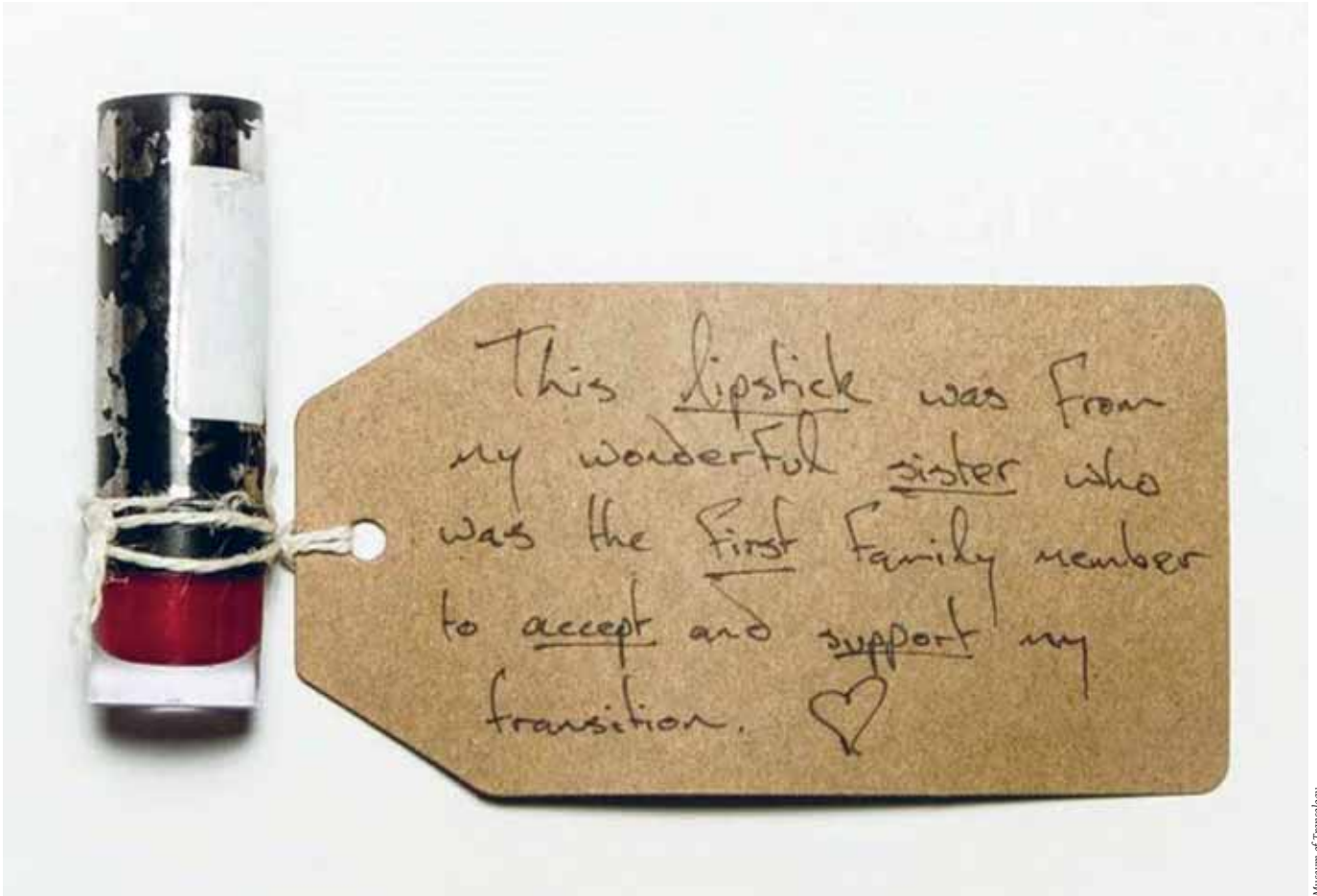
## Martyn's Law – Home Affairs Committee reports

In July, the Home Affairs Select Committee published its report into The Draft Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill, also referred to as Martyn's Law

The Bill was introduced by the Government in response to recommendations made in the inquiry into the 2017 Manchester Arena attack. It sets out how venues should assess the risk of terror attacks and take measures to mitigate their consequences, with different standards for venues above 100 and above 800 capacity.

The Committee reviewed written evidence from several interested parties as part of the scrutiny process, including AIM, the National Association of Local Councils; the Football Association; Scottish Rugby; the British Beer and Pub Association and LIVE (Live music Industry, Venues and Entertainment), alongside others.

In a press release accompanying its findings the Committee highlighted



Museum of Transology

that, in its current form, the bill would ‘place a significant and disproportionate burden on smaller venues while failing to ensure adequate safety measures at all public events at risk of terror attacks.’

Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, Dame Diana Johnson MP said:

“We must do all we can to ensure venues are equipped to react to terror threats. But the Government must ensure that the steps they need to take are based on an accurate assessment of risk and not arbitrary capacity figures. We are also concerned that this bill as currently drafted would fail to make a significant impact in preventing or mitigating the effects of terrorism.

“Also, the costs in money and time required under the Bill could place the very future of some smaller businesses and voluntary organisations at risk. With many venues already struggling with the cost of living, including energy bills, they are ill-equipped to absorb more financial pressure.”

### Guidance on advancing trans inclusion launched

The University of Leicester’s Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) – working with a team of legal scholars and experts in inclusion, equality, and ethics – has developed comprehensive guidance on advancing trans inclusion for museums, galleries, archives, and heritage organisations.

The guidance, supported by AIM and intended primarily for anyone working with or in museums, galleries, archives and heritage, sets out an ethical framework to support cultural organisations to advance trans inclusion.

It explains key components of UK law, as well as some of the limitations and complexities of the law. Drawing on over 130 responses to a survey inviting cultural organisations and those who work with them to share the challenges they were encountering in their daily work, the guidance includes a series of scenarios with practical strategies and solutions designed to build skills, knowledge,

and confidence for anyone working in this area.

Read the guidance at [le.ac.uk/rcmg/research-archive/trans-inclusive-culture](https://le.ac.uk/rcmg/research-archive/trans-inclusive-culture)

### New Report explores the navigation of ‘Culture Wars’

Thinktank British Future has released a new report: *Inclusive Histories – Narrating our shared past in polarised times*.

Produced following extensive research the report compiles insights on how the culture sector can engage in work on inclusive histories while confidently navigating ‘culture war’ polarisation about the past.

In doing so, the research seeks to draw lessons that can help practitioners to promote debate across their audiences and deepen public awareness about the origins of our diverse modern society.

Read the report at [www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/History-report.Final\\_.pdf](https://www.britishfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/History-report.Final_.pdf)



# A vital space for play

**Loretta Mordi, Museums Galleries Scotland, highlights the importance of play in Scotland's museums and galleries.**

Play is especially important for the social and cognitive development of children and young people. It helps support the development of children's brains, the development of language skills, problem solving, gaining perspective, memory, and creativity. With the right environment and conditions children can play and learn.

Milda Bredikyte, an early years development and education researcher said: "Play is the first independent activity of which the child keeps control. Play is the space where children can practise their ideas and all possible skills in an independent manner."

Museums are vital spaces for play because they can give children lots of opportunities to learn through play by involving them in everyday activities, being curious, asking "what if?" and encouraging them to explore.

*Play-based* is a focus area in the new National Strategy and in Scotland we are beginning to see museums developing their programmes for children under five as part of learning through play. In partnership with the University of Glasgow, MGS has conducted a literature review of under-fives learning provision in Scottish museums to

better understand how museums are supporting these audience categories. The results will help shape support for museum learning provision for early years, including play-based learning.

Children can play and learn anywhere if the conditions are right for them. So, it's important that museums provide appropriate conditions for them to do so either inside the venue, or outdoors, and make available playful prompts to encourage children to take the lead to play and learn in a fun and enjoyable way. There are some notable examples of play based programmes and activities taking place in Scottish museums including:

The **Clyde Maritime Trust** delivered several activities collaborating with local groups on and around the Tall Ship Glenlee (pictured), including movement posters, a brass rubbing trail, and maritime themed arts, crafts, and games. Short play prompts encouraged more thoughtful exploration of the Ship by children and their accompanying adults. All the physical activities had a component of play, allowing for learning through play for a variety of ages.

The **Scottish Maritime Museum** runs regular play-based sessions each month, these can include STEM Lego challenges, arts and crafts, and prompts through fancy dress and stories to encourage imaginative play. They have weekly interactive sessions for under-fives where children enjoy stories, toys, and snacks.

For more on work in this area contact Loretta on [LorettaM@museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk](mailto:LorettaM@museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk)



# Museum Spotlight Survey 2022 – report published

## The Welsh Government has recently published a report on the Museum Spotlight Survey 2022.

The survey collects vital data to monitor the ongoing health of the Welsh museum sector and helps inform planning, funding, and other strategic decisions. It is also an important benchmarking tool which can be used in museums across Wales. Open to accredited museums and those working towards accreditation, 111 questionnaires resulted in 77 completed responses (a 69% response rate).

The report draws on data from 2019 to provide a comparison of before and after the Covid-19 pandemic and highlights the important work Welsh museums are doing in challenging circumstances. It includes findings in multiple areas including visitor numbers, learning, Covid-19 recovery, and workforce.

Key findings include:

- In 2022, there were 3m visits to the museums in Wales that completed the survey compared to 4.3m visits in 2019.
- Museum visitor levels overall have recovered to 69% of pre Covid-19 levels.
- In 2022, there were 1,893 volunteers contributing over 180,000 hours of volunteer support.
- However, there are 32% fewer volunteers in the workforce than in 2019.
- In 2022, Welsh museums welcomed approximately 320,000 learning participants.
- 79% of participating museums provided targeted provision between 2019 and 2022 for audiences with protected characteristics.

The intention is that the survey will be run every two years to provide up to date data on and for the sector.

Read the full Spotlight Report at:  
[www.gov.wales/museum-spotlight-survey-2022](http://www.gov.wales/museum-spotlight-survey-2022)

**AIM is piloting a new series of free events – Heritage Trustees 101 – and is expanding the popular Spark! leadership programme to include Trustees.**

# AIM launches additional support for Trustees

## Heritage Trustees 101

Working with Museum Development and supported by Trustees Unlimited, AIM is introducing a series of free events scheduled across England to help prepare potential trustees to join our members and provide networking opportunities for those considering a trustee role in the independent museum sector. Sessions will also offer museums specific guidance on strengthening their trustee recruitment process.

AIM has a sector leading reputation for providing advice and guidance on good governance and will draw on a roster of members for real world case studies on trustee recruitment and succession challenges. AIM consultants will also provide expertise on a range of topics on running a successful heritage organisation. Trustees Unlimited will support with the delivery of the event and help signpost potential attendees to the events.

### What's the cost?

This event is free.

### Who is this for?

Join the AIM team and more at our pilot event, ideal for potential trustees currently working within the sector looking to better understand the role of the Trustee and the skills and the commitment required for success. The session is also ideal for those outside of the sector, looking to understand the key governance issues and realities of Board work in museums.

A successful Trustee in a heritage organisation can come from any background, from any career stage and at any age – so whatever your motivation and wherever you are in your journey to joining a Board, join us to find out more!

### When is this happening?

The first event is at the **Museum of Cambridge on 28th November 5.30-8pm** and will cover:

- Introduction and welcome – Lisa Ollerhead, Director of AIM
- Becoming an effective museum trustee – Margaret Harrison, AIM's Head of Programmes
- Lessons from the Chair – Andrew Lovett OBE, Chief Executive of the Black Country Living Museum and AIM Chair
- Lessons from the Chair – Roger Lilley, Chair of Trustees of the Museum of Cambridge
- Panel discussion with MD and Trustees Unlimited and current museum Trustees

Spring '24 events are planned at the Manchester Jewish Museum and Brunel Museum, London with more events to be confirmed across England.

### Sign up

Register your interest today at [aim-museums.co.uk/dates-for-your-diary](https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/dates-for-your-diary)

**“ AIM has a sector leading reputation for providing advice and guidance on good governance. ”**



AIM Trustees at a recent away-day in Birmingham.

## AIM develops new Spark! strand for the Trustees of volunteer run museums

Following the successful format of training for museum leaders, the fourth Spark! programme is aimed at supporting Trustees of volunteer-run museums.

### Who is this for?

This programme is designed for Trustees of volunteer-run museums, though those from museums with a small number of paid staff will also be considered. It is being developed for those who have spent some time in role, as opposed to new Trustees who should consider the AIM Trustee Induction workshop.

### Format

3 x 2-hour workshops

2 x 3-hour Action Learning Sets

2 x coaching sessions for each participant

### Dates

Tue 23rd Jan 2 to 4pm – Workshop 1

Tue 13th Feb 2 to 4pm – Workshop 2

Tue 19th March, 2 to 4pm – Workshop 3

Tue 30th January 2 to 5pm – Action Learning Set 1

Tue 26th March 2 to 5pm – Action Learning Set 2

### Provisional Content

- Understanding good governance, legal responsibilities and risk management
- Differentiating Chair, Trustee and volunteer roles
- Committees, Working Groups, and trustees holding 'lead responsibilities'

- Relationship building with funders and understanding their requirements
- Managing fundraising and shaping grant proposals
- Overseeing effective communications
- Achieving a balanced and effective Board with relevant knowledge, skills, and experience,
- Succession planning and effective Board recruitment
- Using honorary advisers in a volunteer run/small-staffed museum
- Planning ahead, personal development and self-management
- Reporting to e.g., the Charity Commission, Companies House
- Sources of support

### Programme leaders

The programme will be designed and delivered by Ruth Lesirge and Hilary Barnard of HBRL Consulting. Hilary and Ruth have designed and delivered the previous Spark! programmes, are the authors of Successful Museum Governance (AIM 2020), run the Trustee Induction workshops, and ran the Leaders and Enablers residential programmes for AIM. They are experienced in planning and developing programmes for Museum Leaders and Trustees. They have a successful track record in working with museums and heritage and the wider charity and not for profit sector.

### More information

For more information on this new programme contact Margaret Harrison, AIM Head of Programmes on [margaret@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:margaret@aim-museums.co.uk)

**AIM partnered with The Social Enterprise Academy on this National Lottery Heritage Fund project to help heritage organisations to come up with a novel income generation project.**

# A wealth of income generation ideas from Steps to Sustainability

**The five-month programme included masterclasses, webinars, good practice panels, a 9-month development period including access to coaching/business mentoring and funding of up to £10,000 to help shape the success of a business idea. Lots of AIM members took part and we caught up with a few to find out more.**

## Glencoe Folk Museum – developing the retail offer

Founded in 1967 to chronicle the history and people of the Glencoe and North Lorn area the museum is based in two C18th thatched cottages.

Initially their Steps to Sustainability idea was to expand the museum's gift shop space and develop an online shop. The project developed to focus on linking shop items with the collection, providing time, support and funding to experiment with new lines and create collection-inspired bespoke products. Catriona, curator at the museum told us more

“The programme allowed us the freedom to experiment with new lines, commission our own bespoke products based on objects from the collection, cover high “minimum spend” for new sellers, and put in much larger initial orders to keep us well stocked.”

According to Catriona visitors appreciated unique items which had a strong Glencoe connection – whether to the museum, the community who created them or to the landscape.

“Our gift shops sales and profit have increased remarkably and has continued to do well – in April 2023, we saw a huge 270% increase in gift shop income compared to April 2019, and the summer months have seen increases of 65%, 84%, 64% and 54% on their April equivalents.

I would say that aside from the money that we got, which allowed us to invest more in local products, the experience gave us the confidence to try new items in our gift shop, and to approach local sellers. It also gave us a little bit of publicity locally, which encouraged sellers to come to us as well. We have since restocked many of the original items and expanded our local items to include beautiful hand painted magnets, and cards showing local scenery based on the paintings of a local artist.”



Our most unique selling point is our museum cottages, so we decided to commission “museum bothies” – ceramic double-cottages in the style of our museum.



Image © Lee Pullen Photography/Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust.

## Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust – Increasing income through paid experiences

For their Steps to Sustainability project, the Clifton Suspension Bridge Trust team developed a ticketed public tour programme, including hard hat tours into the vaults. They increased the number of tour dates and available tickets to meet audience demand, improved the consistency of delivery and recruited additional support.

The development of better resources for guides to use with groups helped to curate a more interactive experience. Steps to Sustainability funding enabled the recruitment and training of a team of professional Learning Facilitators to deliver family-friendly tours, activities and schools programmes.

Laura Hilton, Visitor Experience Manager

“Since completing the project, we have continued to grow both our Learning Facilitator Team and our offer. We have developed and launched a second family-friendly underground experience called ‘Lates by Lamplight’ and we have been awarded ‘Stepping On’ funding which is helping us to create a new hands-on STEM workshop for schools exploring the material properties of the bridge. We are currently working with a Musicologist from the University of Bristol to investigate the sounds that the structure creates and transmits to allow children to explore it in an entirely new way. None of these things would exist without the support of the StoS scheme.

“I think what has been so wonderful about the Steps to Sustainability programme is that it has given us an opportunity to network with other people working in small teams and share our knowledge and ideas with each other. Although we came into the programme looking to develop our underground experiences for a family audience, I have been able to follow the progress of other projects exploring retail, catering, events, etc, and take some of that learning away with me and apply it to our own spaces. It has also given us an opportunity to step back and take a fresh look at our audiences and objectives, and that led to a lightbulb moment where I realised we would be able to apply the same thinking to our schools’ programme and further enhance our offer.”

## Woodchester Mansion Trust – developing Bat Experiences

Max Raven, Operations Manager, Woodchester Mansion Trust, Woodchester Mansion

“Our aim was to make improvements to the Bat Observatory and make Bat Experiences a new income stream. The plan was to refresh the room with new signage, fresh paint and a new interactive video display. We were also lucky to have a professional come and

photograph the bats, resulting in some amazing images that have been worked into the displays.

“I found several of the techniques taught useful and it helped be able to look at the charity as a whole entity. Another thing that was invaluable was a chance to network with several other organisations around the UK.”



Image by Jason Blackley on Unsplash

# AIM Energy Action Group update

## David Cooksey from the Energy Action Group shares a consultant's view on the tumultuous energy markets and what they mean for museums

In market terms, there is a sense of relief following 2023's reduction in wholesale prices from the damaging highs of 2022, a year which peaked in August 2022 and then dropped in stages from October '22 to May '23.

Since then, they have risen a little. But despite volatility the overall average for the last three and a half months has been relatively stable. Markets remain volatile, and overly sensitive to price increases driven by market uncertainty.

With the Covid legacy and current inflation rates, suppliers are carrying higher debt levels than three years ago, and global tensions remain high.

Gas stock and production levels are also sensitive to weather temperatures, unplanned production outages, industrial action, and economic recovery, all of which tend to push up prices. As a result, contracts renewing now may be significantly cheaper or indeed more expensive, depending on when the current, (expiring) contract, began.

Some suppliers are offering discounts on longer duration contract terms, but not all. Whilst fixing long term pricing may be desirable for some, others are opting for 12-month durations, in the hope that prices may soften further.

Whilst we remain hopeful, we know that increased winter demand in October to March '24 can exacerbate an already volatile market and push up prices. If combined with more exceptional and unpredictable events, we believe abnormal pricing spikes remain likely at present. In the long term we think energy prices are unlikely to fall back to pre-pandemic levels for the foreseeable future.

The pricing profile of the last two years has hit all energy users with an unprecedented financial burden, and it remains vital both for financial and for the growing sustainability agenda that museums take steps to actively manage energy use and to eliminate avoidable waste.

The Energy Action Group remains ready to assist all AIM Members in finding the best value energy prices, and to assist with energy related queries including:

- billing and metering issues
- new connections, upgrades, and disconnections
- zero carbon supply alternatives
- energy efficiency measures
- energy audits
- monitoring and reporting tools

Contact EAG [hello@eaguk.org](mailto:hello@eaguk.org)  
01256 976638

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



# Peridot

## Achieving an inclusive approach to board recruitment in arts, heritage and culture.

“10 years ago, one of the most important considerations in trustee recruitment was previous governance experience. The trouble is that this becomes a self-perpetuating cycle – an inner sanctum into which aspiring arts trustees cannot access.”

**Rebekah Abbott, Head of Arts, Heritage and Culture Appointments at Peridot Partners, explains.**



In 2020, the Arts Council released their data report on equity, diversity and inclusion. Their report cited that a lack of diversity across the sector has resulted in arts, heritage and culture organisations becoming fragile, inflexible and unable to retain people best equipped to tackle challenges.

Since its publication, leaders have stepped up their commitment to becoming diverse to their core and more inclusive. Organisations have risen to the challenge, becoming agile and responsive to attracting participants, audiences, visitors and stakeholders from wider backgrounds and across wider spaces.

Key to your heritage organisation evolving, adapting, and ultimately thriving, is a diverse board. Stakeholders must each nurture and cultivate an inclusive climate full of divergent thinkers who have a space not only in which to speak, but also to be heard. Boards must reflect the diversity of the audience that the organisation is striving to serve. The first steps to a diverse board begin with open and inclusive recruitment processes.

### **Before the process.**

- Ensure that you have an equitable, responsive and inclusive induction process.
- Are your board meetings accessible?
- What are your expenses policies?
- What is the realistic time commitment?

### **Attracting the right trustees.**

- Consider the power of simple, clear language, avoiding jargon: ensure you use open language which accounts for differences in your applicants.
- Proactively reach into a variety of different communities and organisations, going beyond the “usual suspects” and existing networks.
- Focus on personality traits, behaviours and skills over governance experience.
- Encourage an open and brave culture throughout the whole organisation.

### **Practical considerations.**

- The search process alone can take up to 80 hours – and that’s before anyone has even applied!
- Consider how many hours can really be dedicated to ensure a fruitful search.
- Consider the candidate journey – realise that the recruitment process is your prospective candidate’s first touch point and is a powerful brand building tool for your organisation.

It is incumbent upon us all to ensure that diverse voices are heard around every table. Creating a truly inclusive climate will propel your organisation to the next level, present positive challenge, offer a divergence of views and provide a true representation of your audience at Board level.

Our dedicated recruitment team have over 50 years’ combined lived experience within the arts, heritage and culture sectors at executive and non-executive level. We are true specialists, communicating with understanding, incisiveness and passion about your organisation. We are dedicated Partners for every organisation with whom we work, placing our values and your needs at the heart of everything we do.

**To find out more about what sets us apart, please contact Rebekah Abbott, Head of Arts, Heritage and Culture Appointments at Peridot Partners.**  
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Liz Power, then Director Water & Steam Museum now Director Historic Buildings & Places



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**Martin Howard at Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers on the importance to visitors of your on-street appearance.**

# Keeping up your kerb appeal

Perhaps overly used by Estate Agents, the phrase “kerb appeal” is not something one immediately relates to museums and insurance! But the phrase can be a useful umbrella term to thinking about the outside of your museum and how to protect people. As we are all aware, visitors to museums make immediate first impressions of what they see and experience.

## Signage and entrances

Are your signs clear to understand, and by that we mean if you have never been to your museum before are you clear as to where you should walk and enter? Maybe ask some visitors for feedback. Clear signs lead to a clear flow of people in and out of buildings. Likewise, any doors, are they automatic and serviced to minimise accidents, or are they manual, with clear “push/pull” or “way in/way out” signs? Again, this minimises accidents.

## Car parks and pathways

It is amazing how many claims arise from people falling over and hurting themselves on uneven car park surfaces or pathways. Have you ever walked around these areas and looked for signs of wear and tear, and if you have a car park, are bays clearly demarcated?

## Trees and plants

Every year we have reports of accidents and near misses relating to tree branches falling, or trees damaging property. This is a potentially very high-risk matter if you fail to have professional checks done on the health of your trees at intervals deemed necessary by arboriculture consultants.

## Exterior lighting

If you hire out the museum for evening events or use it yourselves, is lighting in the main areas of approach sufficient? Dark or un-lit areas always lead to insurers paying out for accidents, slips and trips, so have a think about how best to light your external approach and entrance.

## Walls and boundaries

Have you ever inspected your walls and boundaries to see if they look sturdy and in good order? It is easy to assume all

is well, but a walk around your boundary and areas that have walls or fencing could be a great way to detect problems and prevent accidents.

## Steps and rails

If you have step access near to the museum entrance, are these steps checked for stability? And do you have obvious edging to steps so that they are visible e.g., white painted edges or anti-slip protection? Likewise with rails, it is worth checking these are firmly attached, and are not jagged in any way.

Most of the factors listed above will affect not only the natural kerb appeal of your museum, but also the safety of the approach into your buildings. As with all good practise when it comes to managing property, the best thing to do is to record your checks, and where remedial actions are needed, do discuss and action these with time appropriate deadlines and then diarise to check these issues again.

## Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers

For more advice, hints, and tips, speak to dedicated expert, Martin Howard Cert CII, to help you minimise your risks, and get the best protection and support from your insurers.

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Visitors at Liz Johnson Artur:  
If you know the beginning,  
the end is no trouble . . . at the  
South London Gallery, 2019.  
Courtesy Liz Johnson Artur/South  
London Gallery. © Liz Johnson Artur.

Andy Smith

# Going Places with Art Fund

**Going Places is a new UK-wide programme made possible with support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund that will engage underrepresented audiences with museum collections through collaborative touring exhibitions.**

The project will support small to mid-sized museums and galleries to share their collections. Local communities will be involved in shaping exhibition themes and outreach programming and will bring their voices and stories to each display. The programme builds on the recommendations of a research report commissioned by Art Fund and Creative Scotland, 'Going Places: Touring and shared exhibitions in the UK', which showcased the benefits of organisations working in partnership; it also identified a number of barriers to smaller organisations entering into partnerships, including capacity, cost, the amount of time needed to develop relationships and trust, and the possible risks involved. Additionally, developing partnerships across the devolved nations can have additional costs, for example transport and translation.

This ambitious programme aims to address these barriers and facilitate partnership-working. It will establish five networks of museums, with each network producing two touring exhibitions over five years (2025-2030). Participants are invited to apply either as individual organisations or as networks (of two or more eligible partners). Networks may be based around a subject or theme, such as the climate emergency, LGBTQ+ histories, [food or sports], or any other shared interest or ambition, such as bringing together a group of objects for display, working with a priority

audience group such as refugees or SEND families, or a particular approach to lending or borrowing.

The development phase (January – October 2024) will include funded training, mentoring and research opportunities. Project consultants will support networks to develop and deliver funded community engagement that will inform the planning of network exhibitions and outreach programmes. Planning will also focus on capacity-building for participating organisations and ensure that activities meet high standards of environmental sustainability.

An application for funding for the delivery phase of the project will be submitted to The National Lottery Heritage Fund in November 2024, to support the innovative ideas for touring and outreach programmes developed by the networks.

We are looking to work with small to mid-sized museums, galleries and heritage organisations who are committed to engaging underrepresented audiences, and to collaborating with local communities to inform future displays and outreach activities. Applicants do not need to have a collection, and display spaces do not need to have GIS (Government Indemnity Scheme) approval but must be suitable for the display of touring or loaned objects.

We are holding several collaboration and network-building events in partnership with TEG (Touring Exhibitions Group) in October, and we would recommend that all applicants attend if possible. The events will introduce participants to the programme, enable attendees to build connections with organisations that share common interests and explore opportunities for working collaboratively, along with the audience benefits this brings.

**Wednesday 11 October**, 10am – 2.15pm, online  
**Thursday 26 October**, 10am – 2.15pm, online (a bilingual event – we welcome participation in Welsh)

For more information and event booking details, visit [artfund.org/going-places](https://artfund.org/going-places)

# Milton's Cottage:

## where paradise was lost and found

Open to the public since 1887, and based in the Buckinghamshire village of Chalfont St Giles, the Cottage is the place where Milton completed his epic masterpiece *Paradise Lost* and brought his fictional Satan into being (and with him the first fully realised anti-hero in Western literature).

Though other writers had conjured up minor demons, none had dared put the archfiend himself into print. To this day, the template for a devilish bad-boy who shakes up the world remains Milton's Satan – the charismatic rebel who will not bow to any authority. Without him, there might be no Frankenstein, Moriarty, Mrs Coulter, or Voldemort.

*Paradise Lost* is an incredible creation – the work of an ageing, blind poet whose books were burned by order of Charles II and who narrowly escaped execution for his role in Britain's only republican government. As Cromwell's Secretary for Foreign Tongues, and unofficial spin doctor, Milton was one of the architects of our modern parliamentary democracy.

His interrogations of liberty – and the threats to it – make him the most modern of 17th century writers. At Milton's Cottage, his only surviving home, visitors are surrounded by rare and first editions of his influential books and pamphlets, as well as an eclectic collection of paintings, prints and artefacts that bring his remarkable story to life.

We hold over 200 editions of *Paradise Lost* alone, with copies dating from 1667, in languages as diverse as Mandarin and Manx. This includes the lavish 4th edition of 1688, the first to be illustrated, which inspired artists from Blake to Turner, Gustav Dore to Salvador Dali, and made *Paradise Lost* the most illustrated poem in English literature.



You can view rare surviving editions of his political tracts, displayed alongside the Royal Proclamation of 1660 that ordered all copies to be burned. You can also enjoy our literary garden, planted with trees, flowers and fruits that are referenced in Milton's poetry. It is the perfect reading environment, with books available to borrow and quotes planted throughout.

Milton's Cottage receives no public funding, and our income comes from entrance fees, shop sales, fundraising events, individual donations and grants from trusts and foundations. In recent years, this has been supported by income from our endowment, set up in 2017 with match-funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund's *Heritage Endowments* scheme.

This proved a lifeline during Covid and, though we reached our match-funding target in 2019, we are continuing to build our endowment to help us engage audiences in new ways. Milton came here to escape an earlier pandemic, the Great Plague of 1665, and wrote the poem that transformed his life. We want to explore how Milton's Cottage can have a similarly transformational effect on the lives of others.



Through our creative writing programme, we offer everyone the opportunity to write their own words where one of the world's greatest poems was composed. And, reflecting Milton's blindness when he lived here, we are working with residents with vision impairment to create a more multi-sensory visitor experience for people living with blindness today.

With support from AIM we developed an augmented reality app for younger audiences, transforming one of the world's oldest writer's house museums through new technology. Along with other creative interpretations, from manga to shared readings, this is helping us engage new audiences with Milton's extraordinary legacy.

Nearly 350 years after his death, the impact of Milton's writing can still be seen in our literature, politics, society and even the language we speak: he is credited with bringing 630 new words into English – more than anyone, including Shakespeare. From outer space to pandemonium, satanic to self-esteem, he has made our language and our society immeasurably richer.

Milton's Cottage is the only museum in the world dedicated to his life, work, and times. At the heart of every visit is the opportunity to sit in Milton's study, see where thoughts became words, and experience where literary history was made.

**Kelly O'Reilly, Director**  
[www.miltonscottage.org](http://www.miltonscottage.org)



**CFG's Richard Sagar  
on updated investment  
guidance for charities**

# Investing charity money: guidance for trustees (CC14)

Much of the sector has been waiting with bated breath for the Charity Commission's guidance on Investing charity money: guidance for trustees. After significant consultation with the sector and relevant parties the Commission has now published the updated CC14.

At CFG we consider the guidance to be a notable improvement on the previous iteration, and it is clear the Commission has listened to concerns which CFG and other stakeholders raised.

Key elements to be aware of about the updated guidance:

## **More faithfully incorporating the principles of Butler-Sloss.**

Previous editions of the guidance had been criticised for focussing too much on financial return at expense of other factors when setting a charity investment policy. The updated guidance gives further clarity that trustees have discretion in choosing investments that align with their values, provided they also show how the investment will further their charitable purposes. Wider environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors, conflicts of interest, and the reputational risk to the charity should be considered, as long as these further an organisation's charitable purposes.

## **Removing potentially confusing terminology**

The terms 'mixed motive investment' and 'programme related investment,' which involved both financial and social returns, have been removed from the guidance. This is to be welcomed. Based on the consultation we had with our members, many found these terms potentially confusing and ambiguous. Instead, the Commission distinguishes between 'financial investment' and 'social investment.' Social investment is defined as achieving a charity's purposes directly through the investment, while also making a financial return. The examples given in this

part of the guidance will also help charities determine what this kind of investment consists of.

The guidance also helpfully removes the term 'ethical investment,' which previously focused quite narrowly on excluding certain kinds of investments, to a more complete consideration emphasising that trustees must act in the best interest of their charity when making investment decisions, with social investments furthering charitable purposes. Of course, what this looks like for any specific charity will depend on the mission, beneficiaries, and circumstances of that charity, with different charities legitimately pursuing very different investment approaches.

## **Charity Investment Principles**

The work to support charity leaders with planning, managing, and reviewing investments does not end at CC14. CFG, alongside other charity infrastructure bodies and investment experts, is in the initial stages of producing a set of investment decision-making principles to complement the Charity Commission's new guidance. It is understandable that CC14 has a regulatory focus, but we think creating a set of sector-led principles will help charity leaders and trustees to understand what best practice looks like in charity investment.

The principles will focus on investment decision-making and follow on from the work CFG and others have done in the past year, since the Butler-Sloss court ruling. As a sector, we can now build on the Butler-Sloss principles and CC14 and formalise best practice to support charities. The Charity Investment Principles will be independent of and complementary to the Charity Commission's revised guidance and we hope they will be welcomed by charities, investors, and the Commission.

[www.cfg.org.uk/aim](http://www.cfg.org.uk/aim)

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