

Developing an online signposting resource for climate and environmental sustainability

1. Overview

AIM and the National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC) are seeking a consultant(s) to develop an online resource to help museums and heritage organisations identify practical environmental sustainability guidance, and thus climate action, that best suits their situation.

Whilst there is an overwhelming amount of existing high-quality guidance in this field, and more being published all the time, research has highlighted that organisations still lack confidence and understanding as to where to start with it. This resource will address this issue.

The project scope covers content research / curation (including developing categorisations or navigation through different existing resources), user journey recommendations, and engaging design elements.

AIM and NMDC have been working with a consortium of sector organisations, including Arts Council England, Museum Development England and Historic England, on a potential resource and envisage this work as a pilot for a potential larger project for a standalone resource in due course. There may alternatively be a future commission to update the initial resource to ensure it is still capturing live and appropriate guidance.

Budget: £10,000 (incl. VAT)

Deadline: Dec 31 2025

2. Background

About AIM and AIM Hallmarks

Established in 1977, AIM is a UK wide museum membership association whose purpose is, broadly, to 'Help heritage organisations prosper'.

It currently has 1,100 members, around 1000 of which are institutional members; two-thirds of that being 'small museums' (fewer than 20,000 visitors annually.) AIM is renowned for offering approachable, practical and relevant guidance. In a recent membership survey, nearly 80% of our members said the Hallmarks were essential or very important to them as part of AIM's offer.

The [Hallmarks of Prospering Museums](#) is AIM's framework for what makes a successful independent museum. They act as a tool for museums to reflect on their own business and consider where they are doing well and where they can improve. We have been working on a new Hallmark for climate and this resource will be part of supporting organisations towards best practice in this area.

While many museums recognise the urgency of climate action, AIM's members—especially smaller institutions—struggle with fragmented resources, lack of expertise, and uncertainty on where to start. This resource will bridge that gap.

About NMDC and UK Museum COP

NMDC represents the leaders of the UK's national collections and major regional museums. In 2023/24 NMDC's member institutions welcomed over 72 million visitors. NMDC acts as an advocate on behalf of members and their collective priorities, and provides them with a valuable forum for discussion and debate and an opportunity to share information and work collaboratively. While its members are funded by government, NMDC is an independent, non-governmental organisation.

In late 2023 NMDC held a 'UK Museum COP' event which brought together museum leaders with sector bodies and funders to agree a joint commitment to collective action in responding to the climate crisis. A set of recommendations developed by thematic sub-groups were presented and agreed on the day, one of which was to address the widely recognised difficulty in finding suitable resources on climate and environmental sustainability amongst the proliferation of online information. This resource will fulfil the UK Museum COP recommendation for NMDC to 'work with other sector bodies to develop signposting to existing resources for museums, including clear guidance on the most relevant resources for different types of organisations'.

3. Brief

Develop a new online resource

We are seeking to develop and pilot a new online resource (hosted on the AIM website) to help AIM and NMDC members, and other museums and heritage organisations, navigate the complex space around climate crisis, environmental sustainability, and net zero and understand the related actions they can take, whatever their starting point and whatever their heritage assets and organisational position.

There are many existing resources within the cultural heritage sector and beyond. We do not wish to duplicate existing work, moreover, help users **find**, **review** and **act** on what is most relevant and appropriate for their organisation. The resource will curate and signpost—not duplicate—e.g. key tools, funding, and training, tailored to size and capacity. It should help museums set themselves concrete goals and find the appropriate frameworks and tools to work towards them.

Context

We are seeking a resource that acknowledges the complexity of this field but is practical, jargon-free and optimistic in tone. It should help users understand what practical steps they can take wherever they are starting from.

Many organisations are at varying starting points in what they know about climate action, so the resource audience will include those who have undertaken carbon-literacy training, ranging from those working in an urban, modern building setting to those who volunteer in rural, listed buildings in varying states of repair. AIM's members include some of the smallest non-Accredited volunteer-run heritage organisations in the country, while NMDC's membership covers the UK's biggest government-funded museums. Staff and volunteers at both ends of the spectrum should be able to use this resource to find guidance, reports, and ideas that can help them.

The resource should therefore enable museums and heritage organisations to find a useful first or next step, whatever their context.

Content scope

The resource might cover e.g. reducing carbon emissions for operations; building improvements; developing the workforce knowledge and skills; biodiversity; sustainable local development; procurement; environment and retail; funding opportunities; environment and climate crisis themes in exhibitions, displays and programming; guidance on decarbonisation, retro-fitting historic buildings; any relevant current positions from public culture funders and support bodies from around the UK (e.g. Museums Galleries Scotland, Arts Council England, Welsh Government, National Lottery Heritage Fund.)

(This list should not be considered exhaustive, and proposals should set out recommendations of areas to be covered).

Structure and design

We are keen to ensure users can quickly identify routes through existing guidance most relevant to their needs and their level of expertise. We are open to ideas and will look for proposals that make clear how best to organise content and ensure engagement through e.g. proposed user journeys, connections between content and so on.

The resource will be housed on aim-museums.co.uk (developed by methree.co.uk built in WordPress and managed by a small, busy team.) There is potential for the resource to incorporate design elements to facilitate use and drive engagement; however, whilst the AIM team can carry out text edits and basic page design (adding images, links etc) there is no coding skill in the team, or additional budget for design development work. Any design elements would thus need to be provided 'good to go' and work within existing plugins / templates.

4. Timings

Go live by 31 December 2025.

Launch webinar

In addition to the production of the resource, we wish to commission the development and delivery of an AIM Hallmarks at Home Zoom workshop session to support its launch early 2026. This requires a pre-session consultation with AIM, developing and running an hour-long session and any follow up as needed. There is the potential for repeat sessions to be commissioned separately by AIM, in response to demand, and even a possible session at AIM's annual conference.

5. Maintenance and future developments

As the site will be hosted on AIM's www, the AIM team will do basic housekeeping on e.g. broken links, text amends and so on.

As set out above, this work is seen as a pilot of a possible larger resource. We recognise the speed with which this field moves and the regular release of new reports, guidance and toolkits on environment and sustainability.

While any further substantial commission is likely to be dependent on the requirements of an external funder, we may seek advice and support from the original supplier on next steps.

6. Budget

£10,000 including VAT

We will agree payment schedule with the successful supplier but anticipate an upfront payment and a further payment on delivery of the product and scheduling of the Hallmarks at Home session.

7. Response process

Deadline for responses to tender: **1 August 2025**

Requirements: Please provide your response to this brief and any relevant work examples to AIM Director Lisa Ollerhead on lisa.ollerhead@aim-museums.co.uk covering

1. *Methodology* (This might include how you will identify and organise content. User journeys you suggest incorporating)
2. *Relevant examples and expertise* (e.g., past climate/sustainability resources you have developed)
3. *Your estimated timeline*

If a conversation would be helpful before submission, please contact Lisa directly to arrange.

Useful background

Scoping work, including on user needs, was undertaken in 2024 by a sector consortium co-ordinated by Historic England, and is available to the appointed consultant. The consortium will continue to provide a useful network and sounding board for this ongoing work.

UK Museum COP Executive Summary, Full Report and briefing notes are available at www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/what-we-do/climate-crisis/uk-museum-cop-report