



# Association of Independent Museums

Helping Heritage Organisations Prosper

[www.aim-museums.co.uk](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk) JUNE 2020

## Rising to the Coronavirus challenge

Our nation thanks  
those who care



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**The impact of a global pandemic has left little of what we consider to be normal life or 'business as usual' untouched. AIM Director, Emma Chaplin explores the effect of Coronavirus on the independent museum sector.**

## The Coronavirus crisis – a view from AIM

**W**hilst our focus is naturally on the wellbeing of our families and friends, on supporting public health initiatives and the staff who deliver them, professionally, everyone with a connection to independent museums faces an enormous challenge.

Independent museums pride themselves on their resilience, their entrepreneurial skills, their ability to both grasp opportunities and flex to meet challenges. Our members offer many examples of best practice: in building audiences for events; in delivering compelling educational activities, in offering attractive cafes and retail experiences, and memorable wedding and corporate hire spaces.

With the closure of UK museums, however, our members have lost their income streams overnight, irrespective of the strength of their business model or their excellent practice to date. The financial packages offered by government and sector funding bodies do offer some museums a lifeline for their continued survival, but many members remain vulnerable to financial collapse. No-one's reserves are limitless.

### So how is AIM responding?

As a small, agile organisation led by a Chair, Andrew Lovett, Chief Executive of the Black Country Living Museum and a strong set of Trustees all drawn from the sector; we have been able to quickly refocus the organisation, prioritising both advocacy and the re-development and re-purposing of services to members, developing and sharing resources that clarify and respond to the quickly moving operational and funding contexts we are all now operating in.

Our advocacy approach to date has been to work closely and collaboratively with both government and sector partners. We instigated regular calls with these key stakeholders, using those calls to share data and clearly evidence and articulate the challenge and imminent threat that our members and all independent museums face. This work is ongoing and demands on funding are considerable, but we are grateful to our members for responding to our regular requests for 'on-the-ground' information, ensuring that we have the latest and best possible evidence to base our advocacy work on, and bringing the data to life with compelling and urgent examples of the challenges members face.

Naturally many organisations are seeking to respond quickly to the changing work and

policy environment, resulting in an almost daily release of complex information for our members to navigate, understand and act upon. Such information – on available funding, tax relief, rates, staffing and more – can be daunting for museums to work through at the best of times, so in this most challenging of times our member services have been remodelled to provide rapid, clear and practical advice and support, and critically, additional access to expertise.

By agreeing a clear new delivery model, supported by a flexible communications plan, AIM has been able to quickly reallocate its resources. We've been offering free online consultancy from our network of sector experts support on matters ranging from governance to applying for an Arts Council grant within days of the team moving to remote working. In addition, we have provided 'easy to follow' guides to government support, brought in specialist advice (e.g. HR advice for the Jobs Retention Scheme) and worked with partners like Charity Finance Group for areas where members need most support. Alongside UK Government, ACE and NLHF support, we have developed resources on caring for collections in lockdown and FAQs on insurance matters.

### Where are we now?

We continue to operate in uncertain times, but attention is increasingly turning towards recovery from the crisis. For museums, that means starting to consider what reopening might look like.

We know that AIM members are starting to consider how reopening might work for them; how they might make provision for the safety of staff and volunteers, create a safe and fulfilling experience visitor experience and, of course, assess the financial viability of reopening.

We know that the earliest museums in England will be able to open is the beginning of July, but this will depend on the ongoing public health picture.

Planning is difficult and the months ahead are not going to be easy, but advice and support to assist you through this period is on its way.

### Ongoing Advocacy

A cross-sectoral working group coordinated by the National Museum Directors Council is currently developing museum reopening guidance. Given the sector's complexity the guidance will not be 'one size fits all' and when ready AIM will work with the Museum Development network to ensure it reaches and works for members. AIM is also taking part in the DCMS taskforce work, making sure that government is aware of the significant challenges that reopening presents to independent museums and heritage sites, and that the case is made for the support that you will need.

### What next?

AIM is determined to ensure that independent museums are given the best possible opportunities to weather this challenge. As an essential part of the cultural fabric and wellbeing of their communities and the nation as a whole, AIM's member museums will never have been more valuable than at the point when the UK starts to emerge, recover and look to the future.

By the time this Bulletin is issued, you are likely to have started to consider your recovery and reopening plans. However, before finalising those plans do be sure to consider the sector and further government guidance due imminently.

And be sure to continue to let us know your concerns and challenges; AIM will be here in support.

## Coronavirus resources overview

**T**he Coronavirus pages of the AIM website have been continually updated since lockdown began in March; this is the place to find the latest news on the policies that affect the museum sector, AIM's current advocacy position, as well as advice and sources of support.

Visit <https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/coronavirus-resources/>

### Advice pages:

- UK government financial support – summary of the support available from the UK government that's relevant to the museum sector; highlighting any deadlines with links for more information and next steps for museums to access the support
- Conservation and care of collections – guidance from the UK Heads of Conservation on the conservation and care of collections during the shutdown, including how to prioritise collections and make use of potentially limited resources as well as emergency planning
- Insurance FAQs from Hayes Parsons covering business interruption, the potential impact on insurance policies of empty buildings, missed maintenance schedules plus implications of Coronavirus on travel and motor insurance
- How to approach fundraising during lockdown with positive and confident communications with key stakeholders, building the foundations for proactive fundraising when your museum reopens
- Creating digital content – the closure of museums has brought a big focus onto digital content and organisations are finding



ways of giving their audiences access to the museum online. If this isn't something you've done yet, or don't know where to start, we've put together six top tips to digital content creation. These top tips will help focus your efforts so you're using your time wisely and have the best possible chance of engaging with your audience

- Good governance in a crisis – in this critical period, the director, staff and volunteers need the board to provide clear, measured and supportive oversight of the difficult actions and decisions required. In return, the board needs the director to share regular updates about the challenges being faced and the changing situation.

### Coronavirus related support available exclusively for AIM members:

- HR helpline from The HR Dept covering issues such as the Job Retention Scheme, updates to HR policies draft letters and settlement agreements
- Online advice surgeries provided by the Prospering Boards Consultants, giving members one-to-one advice on queries ranging from leadership, people, finance and business planning
- Hallmarks at Home – taking the existing principles of the AIM Hallmarks of Prospering Museums, the Hallmarks at Home programme is a series of webinars intended to help AIM members prosper and thrive in the long term. Topics covered so far include good governance in a time of crisis, fundraising, understanding your audience and insurance. To find out about forthcoming sessions and book a place, visit the website.

## In brief

### The Museum of East Anglian Life introduce bookable green space

Given the positive impact green space can have, the Museum of East Anglian Life have introduced a fantastic new initiative for those without a safe, outdoor space of their own. Whilst the rest of the museum is out of bounds, the team have made a limited number of slots available to book the back lawn of the museum's Abbot's Hall for one hour, completely free. This socially distanced opportunity is prioritised for those in greatest need e.g. those supported by carers or Stowmarket residents without gardens.

[eastanglianlife.org.uk/book-a-garden](http://eastanglianlife.org.uk/book-a-garden)

### AIM AGM 2020

This year AIM's Annual General Meeting will take place online on Thursday June 18 2020. Given the importance of holding an AGM and as a 'physical' meeting is not possible due to the Coronavirus outbreak, an online meeting has been deemed the most appropriate way forward following detailed discussion by AIM's board. Further details, including the agenda and how AIM members can join the meeting are available at [www.aim-museums.co.uk/aim-notice-agm-2020](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/aim-notice-agm-2020)

### New AIM Members

We're delighted to welcome a range of new members including Bradford Police Museum, Bramall Hall, Colnbrook Museum, Michael Whitworth Heritage Commercial Consultants, Red House Heritage Group, Showtown, South Wales Miners Museum, Statfold Narrow Gauge Museum Trust, VIDAR Media Ltd

### Museums Galleries Scotland awards emergency grants to support sector resilience

Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) has awarded emergency funding to support over thirty museums and galleries across Scotland during this challenging time. MGS has initiated a three-phased approach of 'Emergency, Recovery and Resilience' to support museums and galleries in 2020/21. To immediately address the situation the Scottish Government provided £700,000 of funding for MGS to distribute through an Urgent Response Fund for independent museums and galleries. MGS has also created a Digital Resilience Fund to help museums to purchase the necessary equipment to work from home and to provide digital access to museum collections and activity.

Currently MGS has awarded the Urgent Response Fund to six museums to cover core running costs. Thirty museums have been awarded the Digital Resilience Fund.

## Front cover

With fantastic projections on both St Thomas' Hospital and the Houses of Parliament, AIM member The Florence Nightingale Museum kicked off its 2020 celebrations in May to honour 200 years of Florence Nightingale and International Nurses Day. A fitting thank you to all those who care in these difficult times. Read about the museum in our profile on page 19.



## AIM Team welcomes new member

**T**he AIM team has welcomed Catrin Bell as the new Marketing Officer. Catrin brings over 16 years' experience from marketing roles in a range of sectors, including 11 years in the marketing team at intu Trafford Centre in Manchester and most recently as the Marketing Manager for Well, the national pharmacy chain.

Catrin has a strong focus on understanding audience needs and planning and delivering integrated campaigns across all channels and

will work with Matt Smith to deliver AIM's communications strategy.

Catrin commented, "I wanted to work for AIM because I've always loved visits to museums, and I'm thrilled to be able to support the great work that our members do. I'm new to the museum sector, but already impressed by the passion and enthusiasm of the AIM team and our members."



**We contacted a range of sector bodies from across the UK to get their take on the current coronavirus crisis and their organisation's response.**

## Responding to the Coronavirus crisis – a sector round up

### Arts Council England

Our current priority is to help the cultural sector survive the next few months. We have now launched all three elements of our Emergency Response Package, which we put in place to help protect as much of our cultural ecology as possible, in the immediate term. Just under 14,000 applications were received to both rounds of the first two elements of this package – for individual artists and creative practitioners, and organisations outside our National Portfolio.

Applications to the third element, for our National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) and Creative People and Places (CPP), were due by 19 May. Once we have made all decisions for the first two funds, we will be sharing aggregated information on how this money was spent, breaking the data down by discipline and area for instance. We will also be releasing data on the NPO and CPP fund once those decisions have been made. To provide additional help to individuals and organisations, we have collated information on the available support from government and other sources on our website [www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid-19](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid-19)

We are working closely with the National Lottery Heritage Fund, who have launched a £50 million emergency fund which museums can apply to, with a closing date of 30 June.

While the focus of our Emergency Responses funding is on the immediate term, once those decisions have been made, we will take stock and, in light of government decisions regarding the lockdown, furloughing and other support, assess what additional measures might be needed.

We understand that for many, significant challenges will come when the work of reopening, rebuilding and rethinking begins and anticipate that further investment will be needed down the line.

We are working closely with government on what measures will be required for the cultural sector to recover and for concert halls, museums and theatres to reopen, making the case to government for the critical need to support our sector through the next stage.

These are unprecedented circumstances, with difficulties ahead, and anxiety around what the future holds. However, in the face of this, the museum's sector has shown incredible resilience and innovation – finding new ways to support and connect with their communities during the crisis. Including the Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums redeploying their staff to support the Newcastle West End food bank!

The BBC has also launched a new programme, Museums in Quarantine, showcasing some of the country's most loved collections. Nottingham's National Justice Museum and the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery are also giving people access to their exhibitions through virtual tours, Cambridge's Kettle's Yard is engaging people directly through a podcast on their exhibition *Artist: Unknown*, Archive+ in Manchester is publishing a digital memory box about each neighbourhood in the city, with worksheets to go alongside, and the London Transport Museum is keeping kids entertained with a range of downloadable activities based around the cartoon character 'Billy Brown of London Town'.

**Sharon Joinson, Head of Advocacy and Communications, Midlands**  
[www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid-19](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid-19)

### Museum Galleries Scotland

Museums and galleries across Scotland are continuing to be active participants in their communities, providing access to digital collections and a wide range of activities. However, many in the sector are working or have been furloughed whilst facing financial and organisational uncertainty.

Museums Galleries Scotland (MGS) are in daily contact with the sector and are highly aware of the challenges faced by them, especially independent museums, who have been particularly hard-hit through loss of income. To support the sector through this challenging time MGS has initiated a three-phased approach of 'Emergency, Recovery and Resilience' for museums and galleries during 2020/21.

To immediately address the precarious financial situation of independent museums the Scottish Government provided £700,000 of funding for MGS to distribute through an Urgent Response Fund. We have also created a fund to help museums to purchase the necessary equipment to work from home and to provide digital access to museum collections and activity.

We are in regular contact with the Scottish Government, Visit Scotland and other tourism, heritage, and funding bodies to inform them of the sector's situation. It is vital that museums and galleries keep us regularly updated, so that we can best address their needs as circumstances change.

We have developed guidance, knowledge exchange events, free health and wellbeing sessions and twice weekly stand ups. We are looking at what guidance and resources museums will need for re-opening post-lockdown.

**Rosie King, Marketing and PR Officer**  
[www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/advice/coronavirus-guidance-for-museums](http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/advice/coronavirus-guidance-for-museums)

partnerships with heritage bodies and governments across the UK, we can ensure an effective, joined-up response. To make the best use of National Lottery funding in England, we are building on the close relationships we developed with Arts Council England following the Mendoza Review to steer museums to the most appropriate funding package. The intelligence and insider knowledge we get from AIM and Museum Development enhances this.

We're starting to look at our recovery support and we expect this to be our focus in the months ahead. Museums may have to look at different ways of working and collaborating to build resilience back up. We may see the unfortunate closures of some museums and our support may be needed to rescue collections or broker mergers. On a positive note, I hope that the collaboration and flexibility across agencies which developed over the past weeks will continue in the post-lockdown recovery phase. It has been really rewarding to feel that sense of everyone working for the common good of museums.

**Fiona Talbott, Head of Museums Libraries Archives Policy**  
[www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/heritage-emergency-fund](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/heritage-emergency-fund)

### Museum Development Network

Since lockdown began, Museum Development Network (MDN) has continued to support museums across the UK. As venues closed to the public and many have had to furlough staff, an early challenge has been sustaining communication with individual museums.

Since mid-March, MDN committee leads in England have had frequent virtual meetings to share intelligence with Arts Council England and colleagues at AIM to identify museums at risk. MDN has provided support to museums to navigate and secure the emergency funding available to the sector. MDN is also developing proposals to collaborate with cultural trusts and foundations to support museums that might not secure mainstream emergency grants and to fund their recovery phase.

Covid-19 has exacerbated inequalities in society but also generated an outpouring of compassion from communities. It is worth reflecting on these two points as museums prepare scenarios to reopen. We are all witnessing the adverse impact Covid-19 is having on the elderly, people

with disabilities and complex needs, low income families, vulnerable children and adults, the socially isolated, BAME and communities in low socio-economic areas. These are very same groups that museums have struggled to attract to their venues.

Museums can respond to what lockdown measures have shone a spotlight on: the importance of digital connectivity, good mental and physical wellbeing, access to learning resources (and tech) for home-schooling, caring for neighbours, friends and family.

The Covid-19 crisis has equally highlighted some sector weaknesses including fragile business models, poor digital infrastructure and low engagement with socio-economic and geographic groups. Crucially, it provides museums with an opportunity to refocus their core purpose, values and operating models to create visitor experiences that truly meet the needs of audiences and exclude no one.

**Jennie Pitceathly, freelance coordinator,**  
**Museum Development Network**  
[www.museumdevelopmentnetwork.org](http://www.museumdevelopmentnetwork.org)

### Industrial Museums Scotland

Industrial Museums Scotland (IMS), a partnership of museums holding almost a quarter of Scotland's collections recognised as being of National Significance, has called for an urgent intervention by major funders if closures and redundancies are to be avoided, actions that will destroy public trust and be felt keenly by the communities around each museum.

In Scotland, support – both grants and advice – has been forthcoming from our national development body, Museums Galleries Scotland. Its website has an advice page ([www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/advice/coronavirus-guidance-for-museums/](http://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/advice/coronavirus-guidance-for-museums/)) and the team has been running online events on a variety of issues, including wellbeing.

The Museums Association has been putting out a series of great messages that we feel reflect our concerns, recently about what reopening might look like. Our members have also been very grateful to AIM for putting out great advice and support. The National Lottery Heritage Fund has been incredibly supportive to the sector in Scotland and are providing important financial support for independent museums. And the Scottish Government has been taking on board feedback from independent museum and the heritage and wider tourism sectors, and have developed a good understanding of the complex and changing situation.

But, at the end of the day, independent museums need more than advice and grant funding. Industrial Museums Scotland believe a financial relief package would be minimal in terms of the wider crisis funding but would be hugely beneficial to Scotland's heritage and its communities. It would enable museums to help support Scotland's recovery from the public health crisis, as they are well placed to do, as key employers, educators, and contributors to the communities in which they operate.

Industrial Museums Scotland museums collectively engage 900,000 visitors a year and contribute over £9m to the Scottish economy. Independent museums are a significant part of Scotland's culture and heritage offer, a key draw for visitors to Scotland. At local level, independent museums can also help rebuild communities post Covid-19 by continuing with the countless health and well-being community initiatives they support, from men's sheds, creative projects and youth councils through to expansive volunteer programmes that are the backbone of community-based museums.

**Emma Halford-Forbes, Industrial Museums Scotland Coordinator**  
[www.goindustrial.co.uk](http://www.goindustrial.co.uk)

## In brief

### AIM Photography request

A piece of work is underway to refresh the AIM website making it easier for members to find the range of resources available. One of the points mentioned in our website survey with members late last year was that you would like to see more imagery on the site, particularly from smaller museums. The revised site design will allow us to use more photography – but we need your help to source these images.

Ideally, we want hi-res landscape images, you must own the copyright, be able to share and have the relevant permissions of any individuals featured for us to use the photo for marketing purposes. Please could you send [catrin@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:catrin@aim-museums.co.uk) images of your museum you'd be happy for us to use on the AIM website, and in other marketing material.



### #CollectionsUnited explores the stories and histories that connect our national collections

Earlier this year the Arts and Humanities Research Council began a five-year programme called 'Towards a National Collection' to bring collections together digitally in new and exciting ways.

When the national lockdown began that ambition became even more urgent – unlocking the power of collections not only as a vital resource for research, but to bring beauty, education, inspiration and solace into all of our lives, to bring our treasures together in fresh and surprising ways, and to shine a spotlight on some of the little known wonders of our shared national collection.

A social media campaign launched mid-May to bring the programme to life. #CollectionsUnited seeks to engage the UK heritage sector to explore the stories and histories that connect collections, and it hopes the campaign will encourage the public to do the same.

Look out for the hashtag for a regular moment of delight or inspiration – and get involved yourself, by exploring our digitised collections and making and sharing your own connections and discoveries.

Happy connecting!

# AIM Hallmarks at Home

The AIM Hallmarks of Prospering Museums framework has been developed to help museums and heritage organisations throughout the UK. It identifies characteristics – or Hallmarks – that are typical of successful heritage organisations and enable them to prosper and thrive. Hallmarks at Home takes the existing

principles and applies them to the recovery and reopening of the museum sector post-coronavirus through a programme of online events. These events have been running since mid March and a new run of web events has just been launched.

Read more and register at [www.aim-museums.co.uk/aim-hallmarks-home](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/aim-hallmarks-home)



## Some feedback to date:

### Fundraising Forum

*"It more than met my expectations – Judy gave some brilliant advice that I hadn't thought about. It was clever to be asked to submit our query/issue in advance so that it felt as though an answer had been prepared and thought through. I thought the size of the group was good too. I've followed up by writing to potential funders for our capital project with an update about the Society and that as an independent organisation we are in good financial health and ready to go with the project when life comes back to normal."*

Caroline Worthington, Director  
Royal Society of Sculptors

*"It is always good to hear Judy's take on things and she always drops in the odd gently challenging question to ask yourself. It was really helpful to hear other people's situations. There were one or two things that others were doing that we have put in our mix and being able to communicate to my team/trustees about what others are doing is very empowering for us all."*

Glynis Powell, General Manager  
Castle Bromwich Hall and Gardens

### Online 1-1 surgeries

*"Just wanted to say a massive thank you and share our good news. We found out today that we were successful with our ACE funding, being awarded all that we applied for. This pays mine and my learning team members wages for 6 months, meaning that we can come off furlough and start bringing the Museum back to life. We are not out of the woods by a long shot, but this gives us a fighting chance. Thank you so much for your help, we would not have got this without Aim's and Marilyn's advice and support."*

Liz Power, Museum Director  
London Museum of Water and Steam

### Good governance in a time of crisis

*"I found the Good Governance presentation informative and have forwarded this to the Chair to share where appropriate with other Board members. I have also quoted it in a discussion document I have just prepared for the Board on the challenges, financial and otherwise, our museum is facing – particularly the emphasis that the Trustees' primary legal responsibilities, in terms of resources, includes staff and the charity's reputation, both of which should be considered alongside financial responsibilities."*

Caroline Frances-King, Museum Manager  
Museum of East Asian Art

*"It was really useful, both in a general governance sense but also specifically relating to adapting to the lockdown. As a direct action we have started minuting our fortnightly zoom board meetings as this was flagged up as essential to ensure a clear audit trail of decisions was continued during lockdown."*

Ben Whittaker, Museum Manager  
Fleetwood Museum

## AIM and its members have been the focus of a number of news stories exploring the impact of the Coronavirus crisis.

# AIM in the news

### BBC London – 15 April 2020

In this BBC London article, AIM Chair Andrew Lovett explained that it is their success as individual businesses that has left many independent museums most exposed during the pandemic, a situation illustrated in the piece by AIM members the Charles Dickens Museum and Florence Nightingale Museum.

Andrew was quoted as saying it was inevitable some museums would "just run out of cash and go to the wall", with collections potentially lost. "Their incomes have collapsed straightaway... They also don't have huge cash reserves or working capital."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-52215097>

### The Times – 30 April 2020

AIM Director, Emma Chaplin, contributed to an article in The Times about the risk to our heritage following the loss of visitor numbers.

Emma highlighted how the sector is showing realism, resilience and determination in the face of extraordinary challenges.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/loss-of-visitor-cash-could-leave-heritage-in-ruins-2gcmwv5ph>

### Evening Standard – 7 May 2020

There was good coverage for independent museums in London from the Evening Standard with insightful contributions on the challenges ahead from AIM Chair Andrew Lovett and Vice Chair Caroline Worthington.

Andrew closes the article with this summation of the mission of independent museums: "Museums provide you with an opportunity to have a better understanding of yourself and your place in the world. You can only live your life forwards but only understand it by looking backwards to see patterns of behaviour. The best museums are social places — experiences are better when they are shared. They must endure."

<https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/arts/independent-museums-london-coronavirus-a4433886.html>

### The Times – 23 May 2020

A comprehensive piece in the Saturday Review on the challenges faced by independent museums.

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/british-museums-and-the-coronavirus-our-heritage-is-at-risk-but-we-cant-save-everybody-2pxf5cxc5>



## Steve Gardam, Director of the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre shares his perspective on the challenges of museum life in lockdown

# A Director's view

The Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre opened in 2005, in Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire, Roald's home village for 40 years and where he wrote all his most famous children's books. Visitors can see the preserved interior of Roald's famous Writing Hut, and items from his remarkable archive of notes, ideas, drafts and letters: a peek into the creative process of a storytelling genius.

As Director, concern at losing income held me back from rushing to prepare for the Coronavirus threat, not sure how serious it would be. In practice, our last visitor day was 15 March: staff began to work from home, and prepared to shutter the Museum. Lockdown was confirmed on 23 March; we quickly bought some laptops for those staff without home computers. However, the advent of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) made it obvious that we had to furlough almost all our staff, and place the Museum into a kind of hibernation. At present, CJRS grants are the only income we have, slowing the drain on our reserves.

We looked carefully at the emergency funding schemes from ACE and NLHF, and decided that – with decent reserves, built over years for an intended capital project – it was not

right to compete with other organisations in more immediate need.

Of course, this simply means our financial crux lies further ahead, and that longer-term Government help will be needed for many museum charities. I have found myself tweeting far more than before, trying to support AIM's advocacy for the independent sector; to remind people in power that not all museums are publicly-funded cathedrals. AIM's voice has been and will continue to be vital.

Doing the right thing in difficult times, we also decided to keep our staff at 100% pay for as long as we can afford it. Unfortunately, we have not been eligible for the local authority grants as our site's rateable value is too high. However, the moral and informational support from our local stakeholders – especially our local councilor, local Destination Marketing Organisation and business growth hub – has been remarkable, and with their help we hope to bring in small grants to offset some costs of recovery.

For my own sanity, filtering out much of the flood of coronavirus-provoked information (all these webinars!), has been one of my biggest tasks, with the concern that I might miss something crucial. After daily emails at the start of lockdown, we have kept up weekly team meetings, on Zoom, to share our interpretation

of the latest information from Government, and acknowledge where we simply don't yet have an answer. These calls can be a bit painful (asking 'how is everyone doing?' feels polite but weird) yet are clearly necessary. Staff teams are keeping up with each other less formally, I'm speaking with my direct reports weekly and our trustees are on call.

Our eventual reopening depends on changes to lockdown, and the CJRS grants. For as long as those grants last, they likely mean more reliable income than we could expect from visitors. However, with any kind of social distancing rules in place, we anticipate offering personalised guided tours per family, as the only way we can provide a great, safe experience. Much detail needs to be worked out how we do this 'COVID-secure', and we already know it will not make enough money, as it limits capacity. But developing this new approach will give us focus as a team, and – with luck – buy us more time in which public health and confidence can rise before our reserves run dry.

Our lasting challenge comes – ironically – from those qualities that have been our strengths. We are a small site around a cosy courtyard. We are a place enjoyed by children. We are a highly interactive, communal and hands-on visitor experience for an audience of families and schools. Those qualities now feel... different.

We have great name recognition, and this gives us hope that we can find a way to move our work with schools online, if we can find funding to undertake that development work. We know that we can still give future visitors a great experience, if we can persuade them to come. For the entire sector, that is the uncertainty we all face.

## Recovery

**We spoke to colleagues from AIM Board and beyond to assess current thinking around reopening.**

# Recovery Round up

### Black Country Living Museum

"As an open-air site, we have a few more options available to us than a traditional museum might. Now that the Government has set out a timetable, albeit a conditional one, we will accelerate planning, including when we will unfurlough certain staff to prepare for re-opening. We're planning to re-open no later than July 4th, but anticipate the reality could be after this date as the situation is so fluid, so we'll continue to monitor Government guidance. Ahead of this, it will be important to have effective public and media communications about why the Museum is open (or why

it isn't) especially if we appear out of step with other more traditional museums or what are perceived as similar public venues/spaces.

We'll open in a simple way to begin with, with limited staff. Undertaking large-scale events is a different matter and will be even further down the track, perhaps later in the year. We're obviously concerned about staff safety and I do wonder how easy it will be to get PPE; we won't and can't be a priority over the NHS. We are also mindful of expected changes to the job retention scheme and any access to emergency support from sector



funders, and how this might impact our thinking. For example whilst we welcome the recent extension of the job retention scheme, if it, or other support is withdrawn before recovery and growth has matured it will be highly problematic. A financially viable opening is not easy and the lean winter months of 20/21, with limited working capital will be a challenge.

That said, and as ever; we are immensely grateful for the continued loyalty and ongoing support of our visitors".

**Andrew Lovett, Chief Executive  
Black Country Living Museum**

### Sir Ian Blatchford, Chair of The National Museum Directors' Council and Director and Chief Executive of the Science Museum Group

The major museums I represent receive a staggering 85m visits each year, and I know from the huge increase in digital traffic right now that legions of children and families want us back in their lives. And the museum teams long for that too. We thrive on social gathering, inclusion and the excitement of some of the greatest art and science collections in the whole world. Visiting the Science Museum recently, it felt as silent and forlorn as Miss Haversham's mansion in Great Expectations.

The Government has trailed the possibility of museums re-opening from 4 July, but do not expect many of our national and regional museums to be racing towards it with undue haste. Our sector is not looking at the date in the Government's conditional plan as a target, nor is it intended as one. Our path to re-opening will be guided by two things: the safety of our visitors and staff, and financial sustainability. Museums have a vast and vital role to play in the UK's recovery, but first they must survive. For some museums,

re-opening too soon could be financially ruinous, for others not opening before the summer is over could prove problematic. My own group has museums in London, Manchester, York, Bradford and Shildon, in County Durham, and so local contexts will be vital. That means considering public transport, regional infection rates, the status of major university complexes, and the planning and tourism plans of each city and town.

Museums come in many shapes and sizes, with diverse objects and display styles that range from the traditional to the interactive. Some can offer set routes for a visit, yet it is harder for others. That is why there will certainly not be one grand opening date, but a series of considered stages, reflecting joint thinking and planning, and also learning from our sister institutions around the world, some of whom are a little further along the track. You can expect the opening process to begin in July and run into autumn and beyond.

The serious work being undertaken now by all museums is looking at how we need to adapt our buildings to ensure safety – and of course we are engaging with Government, good practice in industry and will be consulting unions too.

So visitors returning can expect a slightly different experience. Some museums are exploring free, timed ticketing that would ensure the right number of visitors to allow for a relaxed visit while creating confidence that social distancing is in place. It would be quite a shift to our business models that would need to be tested with smaller numbers of public visitors.

Then there's the question of where to place screens and where not to, once you've overcome the challenge of getting hold of them. It's not just about ticket desks and catering outlets, museums are needing to consider how we ensure people can deal with the call of nature in a safe way.

The pandemic has underscored the importance of wellbeing and community – and our museums have an enormous role to play in promoting both when it is safe for people to share once more in our nation's thriving, vibrant and diverse cultural life. It is a fact recognised by Boris Johnson in one of his first speeches as Prime Minister; at the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester, when he named culture as one of his four priorities and described cultural venues as 'the gathering places that give a community its life'.



### The Lightbox, Woking

"All the discussions I have been having this week have been focussing on when is it financially sensible to re-open, given that we will have costs to make our museums safe for visitors but have much reduced visitor numbers and therefore reduced income.

Obviously, outdoor attractions will be really keen to make the most of the Summer season and so the 4 July date will be so welcome for them all. Those of us operating indoor sites will, I think, be taking that leap a little more slowly and we are ourselves looking at September as perhaps the optimum time to re-open.

That will give us the time for public confidence to build about coming into public buildings where social distancing is harder to achieve. One of the difficulties for all of us operating museums where cashflow is critical is that we are almost on version 25b of the latest cashflow forecast – it changes every single day and new, and very welcome initiatives, like the extension of furlough this week meant that everything has to be re done and of course different versions for different reopening scenarios. Those who are efficient with Excel spreadsheets have been worth their weight in gold to every organisation! "

Museums will also be vital in the wider economic recovery of the UK as the lifeblood of a tourism industry that generated over £150 billion to our GDP last year and supports 3.3 million jobs. Culture is the number one driver for inbound tourism to the UK – and museums are at the top of the list of cultural experiences visitors are coming for.

But for the time being our doors must remain closed as we continue to care for the nation's heritage, and to collect the objects which will help future generations to understand this extraordinary period. My own museums are researching the stories and objects that will help us to explore the medical and scientific responses to the outbreak and to chronicle its wider impacts on our society and culture. Our most recent acquisition, from Number 10, is the 'Stay home. Protect the NHS. Save lives.' lectern message that was beamed into homes nightly for many weeks.

But rest assured our time to re-open will come, and we will be relying on centuries of experience of caring for our visitors to ensure our museums remain as welcoming as ever when that moment arrives.

## Research

**AIM spoke to Bernard Donoghue, Director of the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) about the Attractions Recovery Tracker.**

# Research seeks to help build trust and confidence in reopening

Commissioned by ALVA and led by Decision House, the Attractions Recovery Tracker seeks to understand how organisations can build the visiting public's trust and confidence during the coronavirus crisis. The research is conducted online using representative samples of the attractions-visiting public and looks to answer two practical questions: how should visitor attractions physically present themselves on re-opening to build public trust and confidence, and what communications messages should be put out to build that confidence and capture the public mood.

The first of a series of waves of the research was published on 30 April, with the second released on 22 May, timed to follow on from recent UK Government announcements around relaxing the lockdown.

Whilst the research necessarily covers a broad range of attractions, there are some strong and consistent messages that are of importance to all, according to Bernard.

"Our members are all very different. Those likely to open first, such as parks, gardens, zoos and safari parks, have their reopening strategies in place, but they want to make sure that they are very visibly demonstrating their commitment to safety and best practice.

One of the strong things that came through in the first wave of the research is that visitors want front of house staff to be actively policing social distancing measures. They are very confident about staff at visitor attractions doing the right thing and behaving in the right way, but less confident of their fellow members of the public doing that. So there's a real onus on that first wave of visitor attractions that open to get it right. If they don't, that may well effect how all visitor attractions are perceived."

As ever, front of house is of critical importance, a challenge made greater by the fact many teams may have been furloughed for some time.

"Many front of house teams have been furloughed for the last six or seven weeks and are coming back to that really vital role. Getting it right, behaving professionally and warmly and doing all the things they normally do, but also that policing aspect, that's a big responsibility."

ALVA are also drawing on lessons from abroad, where lockdowns have already eased.

"One of the things we're doing with our webinars is to get directors of museums, galleries and visitor attractions in parts of the world where they have already re-opened to talk us through how they managed that, what the effect has been and what they've learnt. Regardless of the size of the visitor attraction, big or small, everybody is facing very similar things. For example in terms of staff morale, many have been forced to be away from buildings and collections that they desperately care about, it has a mental health impact – it doesn't matter if you are the V&A or a small museum."

Whilst acknowledging the challenges, Bernard remains positive about the future.

"I see this as an opportunity to create our own more perfect 'normal' – abandoning inherited practices to engage with our staff and visitors in more authentic, honest ways. Stressing the importance of what we do and the value that has. The public are saying we are the places they want to come back to first and that they miss most and that is a huge responsibility but also a great privilege."

[Read the Attractions Recovery Tracker online at www.alva.org.uk](http://www.alva.org.uk)

# Join us for an AIM Virtual Conference

## Roads to Recovery – 18th and 19th June

**A**IM's first ever virtual conference draws practitioners, professionals, experts and policymakers together from across the cultural spectrum.

Earlier this year, AIM, like many, had to cancel a planned conference – we were due to meet in the beautiful surrounds of Port Sunlight in mid June. Whilst that conference has been pushed back to 2021, the fact remains that at this most difficult of times, it is more important than ever to bring our community together.

In response, AIM has drawn together practitioners, professionals, experts and policymakers from across the cultural spectrum to deliver a virtual conference.

*Roads to Recovery* will consider the challenges and impact of the coronavirus outbreak on our members and on the wider museum and cultural sector.

The programme splits across two days, with day one – Thursday June 18th – focused on the future and day two – Friday June 19th – considering the tools that will help us respond to that future.

Given the financial pressures both our members and our sector are currently operating under this conference will be free to attend.

Given the importance and wider relevance of the discussions we will have, all sessions apart from the workshops on day two will be open to non-AIM members.

Opening the conference on Thursday 18 June Tate Director Maria Balshaw will be in conversation with AIM Chair Andrew Lovett, exploring the impact of the Coronavirus crisis and where we go from here. We'll consider the latest research findings on how visitors are feeling about returning to visitor attractions with ALVA Director Bernard Donoghue; Hilary Carty, Director of the Clore Leadership Programme will discuss the importance of leadership during a crisis, and the day will close with a panel

discussion on the potential new ways of working we are likely to face. Panel members include Neil Mendoza, Kate Bellamy, John Orna-Ornstein and Lucy Casot.

Day two starts with a panel session on the practical considerations of preparing to re-open. Following this, AIM's network of consultants will lead a number of inspiring and practical sessions on business planning, legal and strategic advice.

We'll also be launching the second phase of the popular *Hallmarks at Home* programme.

This programme launched in March following the Coronavirus outbreak. Whilst it re-purposes AIM's existing Hallmarks support, a range of new topics have been introduced that directly respond to the current context we are all operating in. Delivered wholly on-line, topics covered to date include Good Governance in a Time of Crisis, Fundraising, Understanding your Audience and Insurance.

The AIM Hallmarks of Prospering Museums is a framework to help museums and heritage organisations throughout the UK. The Hallmarks identify important characteristics that are typical of successful heritage organisations and enable them to prosper and thrive.

Hallmarks at Home takes these existing principles and applies them to the recovery and reopening of the museum sector post-lockdown.

### Confirmed speakers

**Maria Balshaw**, Director, Tate; Chair, NMDC Planning and Remobilisation Group

**Bernard Donoghue**, Director, ALVA

**Hilary Carty**, Director, Clore Leadership Programme

**Neil Mendoza**, DCMS Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal

**Kate Bellamy**, Director, Museums and Cultural Property, Arts Council England

**Lucy Casot**, Director, Museums Galleries Scotland

**John Orna-Ornstein**, Director of Culture and Engagement, National Trust

**Andrew Lovett**, AIM Chair and Chief Executive, Black Country Living Museum

**Sarah Thomas**, Chair, Ilkley Manor House

**Steve Gardam**, Director, Roald Dahl Museum

**Mhairi Cross**, CEO, National Mining Museum for Scotland

**Laetitia Ransley**, Farrer & Co

**Hilary Barnard**, Consultant

**Ruth Lesirge**, Consultant

**Heather Lomas**, Consultant

**Rosalind Johnson**, A Different View

**Nick Winterbotham**, Resilience Network

You can read more and register for the conference at  
[www.aim-museums.co.uk/virtualconference](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/virtualconference)  
[#AIMRoads2Recovery](https://twitter.com/#!/AIMRoads2Recovery)



Association of  
Independent  
Museums  
Helping Heritage  
Organisations Prosper

# ROADS TO RECOVERY

A free online conference exploring the future of museums.  
Thursday 18 and Friday 19 June 2020

Join us for a range of plenaries, discussions and practical workshops. Speakers include:

**Maria Balshaw**, Director, Tate; Chair, NMDC Planning and Remobilisation Group

**Bernard Donoghue**, Director, ALVA

**Hilary Carty**, Director, Clore Leadership Programme

**Neil Mendoza**, DCMS Commissioner for Cultural Recovery and Renewal

**Kate Bellamy**, Director, Museums and Cultural Property, Arts Council England

**Lucy Casot**, Director, Museums Galleries Scotland

**John Orna-Ornstein**, Director of Culture and Engagement, National Trust

For more information and to reserve your place visit

[www.aim-museums.co.uk/virtualconference](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/virtualconference)  
[#AIMRoads2Recovery](https://twitter.com/#!/AIMRoads2Recovery)



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Photo by Luke Stackpoole on Unsplash

# New Marketing Success Guide launched

AIM's latest Success Guide on Marketing seeks to demystify the discipline for small and medium-sized museums, providing an overview of what marketing is and a helpful framework for developing a strategy and action plan.

Marketing is much more than simply selling or publicity. It involves:

- Understanding who your competitors are, the context you operate in and trends and developments that may affect this
- Identifying and understanding who your current audiences and potential audiences are
- Understanding their needs and preferences
- Providing a service or product that they want and value – at the right price, place and time
- Reaching and communicating with them
- Engaging them and retaining their custom.

In museums, marketing involves identifying and satisfying audiences' needs, ensuring there is demand for the museum's products and services. Marketing is an exchange process, meaning a museum aims to offer its audiences something that they value (e.g. a day out, a learning experience, information, entertainment) in exchange for the audiences' money, time and/or attention.

Many small and medium-sized museums do not have any dedicated marketing staff so

marketing will often be a shared responsibility or part of one person's broader remit. Whilst the lack of marketing staff and budgets can make marketing more challenging, it can make decision-making more focussed and the planning process principles are the same, regardless of budget.

Today there are also many opportunities open to museums that don't require any budget, from social media marketing to e-newsletters and partnership cross-referrals. And in an era of fake news, climate crisis, vast political and societal changes, there are huge opportunities for museums. Museums can play a hugely pivotal role as places of reflection and sanctuary as well as wonder and escapism; as trusted and safe spaces; helping people to understand big issues and navigate change; and connecting audiences to their local community and heritage.

The Marketing Success Guide gives museums a clear marketing strategy framework that can be used and adapted to your specific requirements. It offers a practical approach to marketing, along with suggestions, advice, and case studies to illustrate marketing in practice.

## Understanding Your Audiences Success Guide

The recently published Understanding Your Audiences Success Guide is a companion



guide to Marketing and is best read first if you haven't already done so.

Understanding who your audiences are forms the basis for effective marketing as it allows museums to be targeted and deliver the right message to the right groups of people.

## About the author

Christina Lister is a marketing and audience development consultant, trainer and facilitator working in the cultural sector. She has worked in marketing and communications for 17 years including for a global skincare brand, PR agency and heritage charity. As a consultant she specialises in strategy development and is passionate about empowering organisations and teams to undertake effective marketing.

Read the guide at [www.aim-museums.co.uk/resources](http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/resources)

**Brokers Hayes Parsons share their thoughts on the insurance implications museums may wish to consider when planning their future reopening strategy, highlighting some practical steps which will assist in your decision-making process.**

## Re-opening – Insurance Considerations

Whilst museums have been closed due to the lockdown many insurers have not applied any additional terms to their existing policies, or restricted the cover provided. This stance will change imminently. As lockdown gets eased, we expect the normal terms and conditions of any policy to apply again, although we would also expect insurers to provide notice of when this will happen.

A key consideration for a museum moving towards or thinking about re-opening is, as ever, to ensure reasonable precautions have been undertaken to minimise risk. As part of these precautions, there is an expectation that the museum will be visited by staff and that such visits are logged, along with checking of the services, plant and machinery, building fabric and general maintenance.

If you think the museum could remain unoccupied for a longer period, speak with your insurance provider so you are aware of any related duties on you and any cover implications.

In terms of re-opening, we would expect liability insurance to respond should there be an allegation of someone contracting coronavirus on the premises, whether that be staff, volunteers, or visitors, although do check your own policy cover.

In addition, trustees have a duty of care to all when re-opening the museum and there are some pointers below to assist in putting some of the necessary documentation in place.

Without legal precedent, coupled with the nature of an invisible disease, it is difficult to see how a museum could be held legally liable for any illness as a result of the disease at the premises, but there are measures to be carried out to assist with defending any potential claims.

Firstly, there needs to be a recorded document of the decision-making rationale to re-open by the trustees, and you must ensure the museum is not contravening any government guidance.

The next pointer, and an extension to this, relates to updating risk assessments to ensure you have thought not only about how the museum operates and how that impacts your staff and volunteers, but also how the safety and wellbeing of visitors can be maintained, all whilst not impacting too greatly upon the visitor experience.

These risk assessments could be broken down into *premises, people, social distancing and hygiene*, for example. We would recommend checklists be put together to cover off each of these themes, which would in turn form part of updated risk assessments.

It is also highly likely that you will need to provide staff and volunteers with updated training. Ensure this happens; record the time, date and attendees when training updates are provided. Documentation is paramount. If you need assistance, contact your insurance provider, as they should be able to provide guidance notes and templates. The HSE website is always a good source of information in relation to this.

**Ben Leah, Director  
Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers**

*With the assistance of AIM, Hayes Parsons Insurance Brokers are working with Ecclesiastical Insurance to provide a bespoke product for small to medium sized museums. This will be launched shortly; keep a look out for further details.*

## AIM GRANTS CASE STUDIES

To help AIM members with a variety of needs, including training, conservation, development and exhibitions, AIM administers a range of grants. These include AIM Hallmarks Awards, supported by Arts Council England; AIM's Sustainability Scheme, supported by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation; and AIM's Conservation and Collections Care Schemes, supported by the Pilgrim Trust. AIM Bulletin regularly publishes case studies of some of the successful applications.

## AIM CONSERVATION & COLLECTIONS CARE

### The Holst Birthplace Museum, Cheltenham

£4228.58

### Addressing and resourcing collections care at the Holst Birthplace Museum

The Holst Birthplace Museum shows what life was like for the composer Gustav Holst growing up in 1870s and 1880s Cheltenham and contains a music room displaying the piano on which Holst composed *The Planets*. This period house illustrates the middle-class 'upstairs-downstairs' way of life, with a selection of items on open display in a series of rooms.

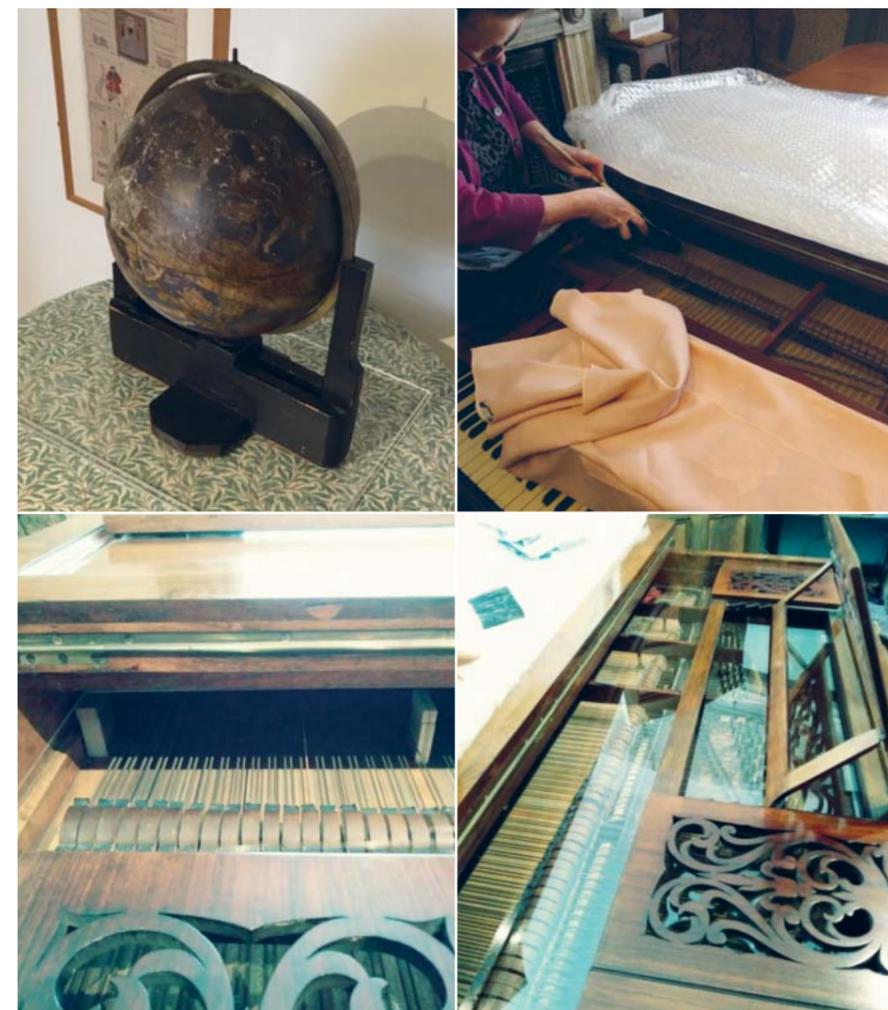
The museum, which is a charitable trust, has two part-time members of staff: a Curator and a Learning and Administration Assistant. The museum requires 20 volunteers a week to manage the reception, as well as help with other activities.

### The Project

In 2014/15, as part of our Accreditation process, the museum employed a freelance conservator to assess our collections care. A number of things were highlighted as requiring action such as supports and cases for vulnerable items, as well as dealing with the light levels in some of the rooms. It was also apparent that the two part-time members of staff needed more support from volunteers to ensure the long-term care of the collections. However, it was also clear that not all volunteers were aware of collections care, therefore the project encompassed not just work undertaken by a professional conservator, but also training for volunteers.

The project began in February 2019 with a conservation clean of Holst's piano. The conservator sourced and fitted a Perspex cover for the piano's soundboard – the section of the instrument most susceptible to dust and dirt. It is hoped that by covering the piano in this way it will lessen the need to clean inside and therefore reduce the chance of damaging this significant object.

Many of the items in the house are on open display, but this increases the chance of damage to the object, as highlighted with Holst's piano. Displayed next to the piano is Holst's music chest, which has suffered from bumps from visitors' feet over the years. Following the conservator's advice, a plinth was built and fitted by a technician. Similarly, a celestial globe on open display in the



Pictured top: the celestial globe, the piano being cleaned; bottom; the new perspex cover on the piano.

Nursery, vulnerable to touching by visitors, was fitted with a bespoke Perspex case.

As part of the project four two-hour workshops (with cake of course!) were arranged for volunteers on four different subjects: pests, light and humidity, emergency planning and object handling. All workshops were very well received by volunteers with the result that one of the volunteers, Jenny, is now responsible for all of the pest traps. Jenny decided to get involved after attending the conservator's workshop on pests:

"I became aware that my knowledge of the insects which could damage a museum collection is very inadequate. Another volunteer wondered whether it

would be better to have one person responsible for checking the blunder traps, and I thought that this was an excellent suggestion. I was happy to volunteer to do this as I knew that I could get support from the conservator if I needed it. It has been very interesting to get to know more about the conservation of the items in the museum."

Ultimately the project has enabled us to approach our next Accreditation Return with confidence, knowing that issues which were flagged up in 2014 have now been resolved and significant objects have been preserved for visitors to continue to enjoy.

**Laura Kinnear**  
[www.holstmuseum.org.uk](http://www.holstmuseum.org.uk)

## Herschel Museum of Astronomy Collections Care Audit

£1,287.12

Conservator ACR: Beth Baker

The Herschel Museum of Astronomy opened in 1981 and was taken over by Bath Preservation Trust in 2017. There is an administrator for the property and curatorial staff from Bath Preservation Trust are working on the redevelopment project. The museum is volunteer run in terms of visitor services and daily presence.

The museum has a varied collection on display including scientific equipment, musical instruments, furniture, notebooks, works of art on paper and costume. Much of the current display is composed of items on loan, but the aim in the future is to reduce the precarious nature of this situation through agreement of long-term loans and new acquisitions to replace loans. We wish to improve display conditions reaching GIS levels, already attained for Science Museum and National Maritime Museum loans, in additional areas allowing more flexibility in display.

The Collections Care Audit was envisaged as the first stage in a larger project to re-present the museum. We already had concerns with

the environmental conditions, in particular light and relative humidity. A review of the display conditions was required to facilitate a refresh of the displays and greater flexibility in the use of the space. There were concerns about the condition of the items on display and with some of the support materials previously utilised.

The audit has confirmed our original needs, as well as alerting us to other issues e.g. hazards in the collection and has identified specific priority projects for:

- Improving environmental conditions e.g. light conditions, and display and storage methods
- Implementing interventive conservation treatment
- Carrying out certain documentation procedures
- And, improving emergency procedures

The findings of this audit have allowed us to establish a sustainable 3-year conservation plan (2020-2023) to be used as part of our Conservation Management Framework and alongside the Herschel Museum Forward Plan (2020-2023). The above needs have been prioritised from high to low and funding allocated accordingly from our core budget to cover costs of work, or sought through external funding. Several of the areas for improvement will form part of a larger long-term desire to re-present the museum



Herschel family object showing damage.

and exploring the feasibility of these areas has been added to the 3 year plan.

We particularly wish to prioritise one key area of need, that has concerned us the most since taking over the museum and highlighted in the audit – environmental conditions (light/UV levels). But given the anticipated scale of the project needed to address these conditions, including the need to commission and install bespoke equipment, implement new procedures and a training programme, this will require external funding. We'll be applying for an AIM Collections Care Grant Scheme for this work.

The audit achieved our expectations by highlighting our existing areas of concern, and the audit's recommendations provided us with a clear action plan and the confidence to progress forward. The audit also revealed previously unknown areas of risk, namely the existence of mercury in areas of our collection, e.g. a barometer; and recommended we acquire a spill kit following a risk assessment. This is something that is in immediate action in our Conservation Plan and will be covered by our core budget.

Amy Frost, Senior Curator  
www.herschelmuseum.org.uk



Pictured left: Herschel Music Room window without a blind and right; Drawing Room display cases with artificial light.

## Malton Museum Collection Care Audit

£1,260.00

ACR: Margrethe Felzer

Malton Museum's main collections come from excavations that took place between 1925 and 1970. The Museum also holds archaeological material from subsequent, smaller excavations. These collections have been augmented by generous donations from members of the public of a wide variety of objects, of all historical periods, from Malton, Norton and the surrounding area of Ryedale.

Malton Museum had applied for and received a grant to carry out a collections care audit in order to formalise conservation and collections care needs and identify key care issues and priorities.

The application identified a number of areas of concern to the Museum:

- Stores: the audit provided useful advice on dehumidifiers and on improving storage conditions through, for example, the use of Tyvek sheeting. It also highlighted the shortcomings of the rooms currently in use and the difficulties of trying to improve the conditions within them significantly. In so doing it has confirmed that the main priority needs to be to find a better storage location for the archaeological collections.
- Paper archive: between the submission of the application and the audit taking place, the Museum was obliged to move its paper archive and social history collection to a different location. However, this move has provided more space, and hence the audit was able to recommend the procurement of suitable equipment (i.e. a plan chest) that can be accommodated in the new location.

- Exhibition rooms: the audit was able to advise on changing the emphasis from monitoring environmental conditions in the room to monitoring those inside the cases; it also allayed some concerns that the older display cases might not be appropriate to continue using.

The Museum was looking to the audit to help it identify the issues which most urgently need to be addressed (aside from finding new premises); not only has it done that, but it has also indicated those areas in which grant funding could be applied for. And the audit identified other areas of need: specifically, the need to monitor for pests, and also the need to measure light levels in the exhibition rooms.

The Museum has benefitted not only from the content of the written report, but also from the helpful advice and information that was

## Jane Austen's House, Chawton

£4,750.00

Conservation of a portrait of Lady Knatchbull, Jane Austen's niece

Jane Austen's House is an independent museum sited in the house where Jane Austen lived from 1809 until just before her death in 1817. An accredited Museum and registered charity, the Museum preserves Jane Austen's last home and celebrates her life and work. We hold an important collection of objects related to Jane Austen, including letters written by her and personal effects belonging to her and her close family circle.

This portrait is of Jane Austen's niece Lady Knatchbull (nee Fanny Knight), 1793-1882, daughter of Jane's brother Edward Knight. Painted in the mid-19th Century English School, it was presented to the Museum in the 1950s by Lord Brabourne, Lady Knatchbull's great, great grandson, and was on open display for the following 60 years. In early 2017 it was removed from display due to conservation concerns. In 2019 the Museum received a grant from the AIM Pilgrim Trust Conservation Scheme to conserve the painting and the frame, in order to make them fit for display.

Restoration of the painting and frame were completed in March 2020. As always, conservation revealed more about the painting. In this case, two areas of blanching in the sitter's dark garment revealed themselves as blistering in the surface of the paint, which may have been caused by heat from nearby candles. An unexplained division in colour in the background remained a mystery, even after cleaning.

Alexandra Walker FBAPCR, an independent paintings conservator and restorer, advised on



Pictured left; Lady Knatchbull (nee Fanny Knight), right; the painting after cleaning.

treatment and undertook the majority of conservation work. Trevor Cumine re-lined the painting and supplied a new oval stretcher as the original strainer, although in good condition, did not allow for essential adjustment in tension of the canvas. Finally The Southbank Art Company restored, lined and built up the frame.

The outcomes of conservation work to both painting and frame are stunning. The painting is revealed as bright and smooth, with a fresh lining and strong, bright frame.

"Our collection explores and celebrates Jane Austen's work, life and immediate family circle, of which Lady Knatchbull (nee Fanny Knight), her favourite niece, was a key member. Portraits like this help us to 'fill in the gaps' and give our visitors a glimpse into Jane Austen's world. Painted when Lady Knatchbull was in later life, this portrait provides a link to an important person in Jane Austen's life – and allows us to see her as Jane Austen was never able to.

After conservation, this portrait will be returned to permanent display in The Family Room – a space dedicated to the history of Jane Austen's family and friends, using portraits, silhouettes and miniatures to help our visitors picture the family members that Jane Austen describes so vividly in her letters."

Sophie Reynolds, Collections and Interpretation Manager

To coincide with the portrait's return to the House, it will be added to the online collections' gallery – a first step towards digitization and an effective tool to reach the House's international audience.

This project was led by the Collections and Interpretation Manager with assistance from the Director, Chair of Trustees and Marketing and Communications Manager.

Sophie Reynolds  
Collections and Interpretation Manager  
www.jane-austens-house-museum.org.uk

offered by the conservator whilst the audit was in progress; for example, how to devise a suitable housekeeping schedule for the stores, and how to implement the systematic condition checking of the material stored there.

The audit has met the Museum's expectations by acknowledging the things it is currently doing well, advising on things it could do better, and highlighting things it is not currently doing but should be. Furthermore, it has provided an expert assessment of the current archaeology stores, their shortcomings and the difficulties in trying to address those, hence providing confirmation that conditions in the current stores are the major concern in terms of collections care and that it is important to seek out new premises that can offer more suitable conditions.

David Snowden,  
Deputy Voluntary Collections Manager  
www.maltonmuseum.co.uk



Pictured; the audit in progress at Malton Museum.

## The Cromwell Museum, Huntingdon

£4,728.00

### Conserving Cromwell

The Cromwell Museum tells the story of the life and times of the soldier and statesman Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) through the best collection of items relating to him. Founded in 1962 we are an independent charity with one member of staff (our curator) and a team of some 50 volunteers. We are located in a small medieval building (the former grammar school which Cromwell attended) in the heart of his hometown of Huntingdon.

Through the winter of 2019/20 the Museum underwent a major refurbishment (the first in over 30 years), with a grant from the AIM/BIFFA 'History Makers' Scheme as part of its core funding. One of the aims of this project was to highlight key objects from our internationally important collection, and we wanted to take the opportunity to conserve three of our most significant portraits.

We asked Polly Saltmarsh, conservator, to do an appraisal of the state of our portraits and identify those that would most benefit from conservation. From these we selected three portraits to conserve:

- Portrait of Oliver Cromwell by Robert Walker, Oil on canvas, c.1649. This is the largest and most valuable portrait in our collection and is a unique full length, life sized study of Cromwell in flamboyant garb. Prior to refurbishment this was mounted high up where it was difficult to see and had gathered dust. We wanted instead to have it as a statement object as visitors enter the Museum.
- Portrait of Sir Oliver Cromwell by Hieronimo Custodis, oil on board, c.1580. This is the oldest portrait in our collection, depicting Cromwell's uncle and namesake. This portrait was of most concern and is very dark for the visitor to distinguish detail.
- Equestrian portrait of Oliver Cromwell, English School, c.1657. A rare portrait of Cromwell on horseback, depicting him in a silk suit with pre-Great Fire London in the background, which is a favourite item for visitors.

The large portrait of Cromwell received the most extensive treatment, in light of the significance to be placed on it as part of the refurbished displays. It was carefully cleaned, later layers of darkened varnish and overpaint removed, retouching applied where required and the framing adjusted as needed. This work has not only 'lifted' the painting, it has revealed many more unseen details of Cromwell's clothing and the background landscape.

The portrait of Cromwell's uncle has been stabilised to reduce the buckling that was taking place between its panels, providing better support; treatments were applied to reduce the reflectiveness of the varnish, making the painting easier to read, and retouching applied. Long term it may need further conservation, but it has improved the painting significantly and stabilised its condition.

The equestrian portrait of Cromwell was gently cleaned, stabilised and retouched as required.

All three items now form a significant part of the Museum's newly refurbished displays, which were reopened to the public on 1st March 2020. The life sized portrait by Walker forms a particular impact point being opposite the entrance, protected by a large case which is inscribed with various descriptions of Cromwell (positive and negative) and creates a real 'wow' factor for visitors as they arrive and are confronted by him. Interestingly (and although we have had to close for the Coronavirus outbreak like everyone else) already visitors seem to like using this as a point for selfies too – although whether they are all 'warts and all' is open to debate!

Stuart Orme, Curator  
www.cromwellmuseum.org



The museum tells the story of the life and times of the soldier and statesman Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658)

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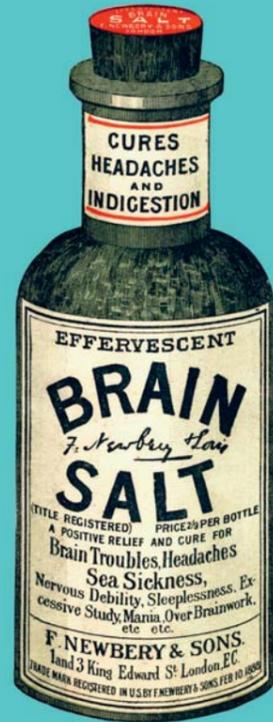
Find helpful advice on a range of subjects on the AIM website –

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food for thought

## Museum profile

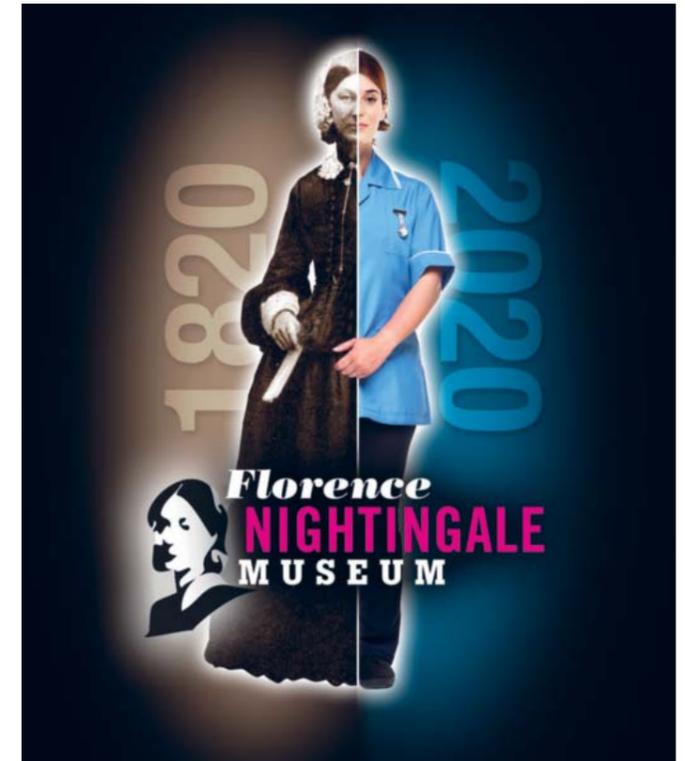
# The Florence Nightingale Museum

With the high-profile implementation of NHS Nightingale hospitals across the country, it is doubtful whether anyone in the UK has now not heard of the Victorian woman who is arguably the world's most famous nurse, but did you know there is a Florence Nightingale Museum? The museum is an independent charity, operating as a tenant at St Thomas' Hospital, on the site of Nightingale's first nursing school.

The collection of 'Nightingalia', approximately 3000 objects, is cared for and interpreted by a team of just ten staff, supplemented by a small but growing number of volunteers. 2020 promised to be a big year for the museum, who have additionally taken on responsibility for co-ordinating global celebrations of the iconic nurse, social-reformer and statistician's bicentenary, but the COVID19 pandemic has very much changed plans, potentially leaving the museum facing the threat of closure, as core income sources of admissions, school visits and site-based retail have abruptly stopped, with no indication yet of when they may resume. This is certainly unexpected given February 2020 saw the museum's busiest ever day and a business plan which realistically predicted 65,000 visitors for the year. Indeed, the museum has seen impressive visitor growth since the current management team took charge under three years ago, doubling attendance to 60,000, whilst the museum has also seen success at the 2019 Museum & Heritage awards, taking the titles for 'Best Temporary Exhibition' and 'Best Museum Retail'.

Some would say the pandemic has struck at the most ironic and cruel of times and particularly so given the museum had invested approximately £100,000 in a new exhibition, guidebook and events programme to celebrate 'Nightingale 200'; this sum complementing a Heritage Fund grant of similar size. This is probably true, but the team are determined not to be wholly pessimistic and be bound by their frustration at seeing so many plans for events now forcibly scrapped. Instead they recognise that the interest in Nightingale can be capitalised upon with a flexible and high-energy approach. Rather than waiting for support the team are instead looking to be creative, whilst lobbying central and local government and the usual grant giving bodies for support.

A donations page has been established on 'Go Fund Me' and has already reached £15,000. The museum has worked hard to promote its online retail offer and encouraged visitors to 'buy a ticket' for future use, recognising the value of cash-flow and people wanting value for money. The team have also been determined to keep media attention as high



The museum is a tenant at St Thomas' Hospital, on the site of Nightingale's first nursing school

as possible, securing numerous articles about Nightingale in local, national and international press – a tactic that has recruited celebrity auctioneer Charles Hanson to champion the museum's survival with a fundraising auction. The museum recognises the value of publicity and raising profile is a priority, the most ambitious way of achieving this so far being via two large projection events on hospitals in London and Rome, and then the Houses of Parliament. These events were secured and produced in a matter of days and will probably never be repeated by a small museum who had to apply the principle of 'seizing the day' and expressing the mood of the nation.

The museum recognises the need to try and supplement its very limited reserves with a 'fighting fund' and expects to face significant challenges going forward, particularly at a city-based venue that cannot be visited easily without using public transport, and where there may be an added stigma due to entering hospital premises. The museum also recognises that social distancing measures may prove to be challenging to the visitor experience previously enjoyed, where the 'Family Corner' and performances by character actors was an integral part of success and customer satisfaction. The museum are therefore contemplating different operating patterns and activities, but in the meantime encouraging engagement with their online exhibition at [www.florence-nightingale.co.uk/200exhibits/](http://www.florence-nightingale.co.uk/200exhibits/) and online learning resources at [www.florence-nightingale.co.uk/learning-during-lockdown/](http://www.florence-nightingale.co.uk/learning-during-lockdown/)

David Green, Director  
[www.florence-nightingale.co.uk](http://www.florence-nightingale.co.uk)

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**Author of the AIM Guide to Successfully Negotiating Business Rates, Lambert Smith Hampton's Colin Hunter explains recent changes to the valuation timeline following the coronavirus outbreak.**

## COVID 19 Business rates: All change

Following the rapid spread of COVID-19 across the globe since early March, the UK Government has announced a number of interventions in respect to business rates in an attempt to keep businesses afloat and reduce uncertainty. The first being the introduction of various reliefs and grant schemes for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure properties.

### Revaluation postponed

Most recently however, the Government announced the postponement of the 2021 Revaluation for England. It was expected that all Rateable Values would be replaced next year with a Revaluation effective from 1 April 2021 and a valuation date of 1 April 2019. This more frequent Revaluation required a change to the current legislation which set the date at 1 April 2022. The Bill that was introduced to effect that change was first put before Parliament in 2019 but fell by the wayside when the General Election was announced. It has been re-introduced but has been in limbo since the lockdown.

The Valuation Office Agency (VOA) has been working for the last two or more years on the 2021 Revaluation drawing precious resources away from dealing with the appeal process. Apparently they are more than 95% of the way towards completing the 2021 draft Rating Lists.

### Blessing in disguise

Rather fortuitously, the delay means that we (ratepayers and their advisors) have more

time to test and challenge the 2017 Rating List and ensure fair and reasonable levels of value, backdated to 1 April 2017.

We have been patiently waiting to see how the appeal for Royal Albert Memorial Museum in Exeter is finally resolved in the expectation that this will allow a wider discussion with the VOA on the valuation of museums and galleries with a view to Rateable Values that are linked to the real world ability of the museums to pay the notional rents that the Rateable Values should reflect. The delay of the Revaluation by one year means that there is a much greater chance that this will happen before the new List starts.

There is another promised/threatened review of business rates and the funding of local authorities. Another year may allow time for that to take place before the new Rating List comes into force.

### Delayed benefit

On the negative side a number of property sectors, especially retail, but also hospitality and leisure, have been expecting some reduction in the relative burden of business rates at the Revaluation but this will now be delayed.

All in all there have been a lot of changes to the world of business rates for England and, to a lesser extent, Wales and Scotland since the beginning of March 2020. If you are unsure how this will impact on your rates liability advice is available. Please visit [www.lsh.co.uk](http://www.lsh.co.uk) or email [chunter@lsh.co.uk](mailto:chunter@lsh.co.uk) for assistance.

## Introducing the AIM Reopening and Recovery Training Grant

AIM is launching a new grant to support member museums looking to train and develop their staff to deal with new challenges associated with reopening following the Coronavirus crisis. The *AIM Reopening and Recovery Training Grant* is available now and members can apply for up to £300 to cover related expenses.

Applications will be considered on a rolling basis; further details and an application form are available on the AIM website.

If you have any queries contact AIM Programmes and Finance Officer, Justeen Stone [justeen@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:justeen@aim-museums.co.uk)

## Latest update from Charity Finance Group

### Your tax questions answered – virtual VAT, Tax and Gift Aid conference

For many charities, raising income through trading activities and Gift Aid has become an increasingly important source of revenue. However, there are certain restrictions that can apply and charities need to be aware of what they can and can't claim depending on the nature and level of activity. This online conference will offer updates for those already working with VAT and Gift Aid, as well as providing introductory information, offering tips for optimising your tax recovery, plus registering and administration of VAT and Gift Aid schemes. Our speakers will bring you their expert updates through webinar sessions throughout the day, and delegates will have the opportunity to ask questions in live Q&As at the end of each session. Ensure you're optimising tax reliefs available to your organisation and receive all the latest tax updates you need to know through this event, Charity Finance Group's first fully online conference on Tuesday 16 June 2020. More information and booking can be found at [cfg.org.uk/VTG](http://cfg.org.uk/VTG)

### New date for CFG Annual Conference 2020

The CFG Annual Conference will now be taking place on Tuesday 13 October, bringing together charity finance professionals across the country with an inspiring programme of experts and sector leaders sharing their insights on the theme *Creating a better future*. See the full programme and book with member discount at [cfg.org.uk/ac20](http://cfg.org.uk/ac20)



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