



**Aysha Afridi**

**Director Museums**

**Museums and Cultural**

**Properties, Arts Council England**



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# The Importance of Museums

Aysha Afridi, Interim Director (Museums)

Arts Council England

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©Ryedale Folk Museum, 2026



©Visit Lancashire (Whitaker Museum and Art Gallery), 2026

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©Grosvenor Museum Chester, 2025

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**Michael Turnpenny**

**Head of MD North**

**Museum Development Update**



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# Major Results and Significant Challenge



A museum for nearly every day of the year?

- From Berwick to Nantwich – Withernsea to Whitehaven

## Highlights

- Bradford City of Culture
- Beamish – Art Fund Museum of the Year
- NLHF Investment into Future Preparedness Programme
- ICOM Sustainable Museums Practice Award 2025 – Shortlist

## Challenges

- A mixed recovery
- Lowest and highest engagement in museums outside London and SE 32% - 45%
- Large multi-site LA reliant museums AND small independents in popular destinations
- Income growth AND surging costs



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# A Snapshot of the North

## Museums Overview

- 55% Museums that charge for admission
- 16% Wholly volunteer run museums
- 53% Wholly owned or reliant on a local authority
- 58% Feel positive about the year ahead

## Audiences

- 63% Museums open all year round
- 30% Less than 10k annual visits
- 23% Visitor numbers have increased in the past year
- 83% Museums providing on-site education sessions

## Workforce and Volunteering

- 38% Museums hiring staff or contracts
- 6.4 Volunteers to every one staff member
- 39% Increased volunteers in the past year
- 34% Volunteer hours increased in past year

## Finance

- 15% Museums with less than £25k turnover
- 50% Museums reporting increased income
- 60% Museums reporting increased expenditure
- 70% Museums receiving project grant income

# Investment Impacts

This year:

- 283 Museums supported (80%)
- 170 Museums taken part in intensive projects (48%)
- 103 Training events delivered with 912 participants
- 73 Grants Awarded to 109 Museums (31%) worth £280,000

# Delivery On Our Purpose



- Supporting Organisational Development
- Developing our Workforce and Skills
- Enabling Collaboration and Networks
- Delivering Intensive Projects with Impact for your Museum



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# Preparing for the Future

- Annual Museum Survey
- Skills Needs Survey
- Consulting and Listening



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# Find Out More



- Visit our website [www.museumdevelopmentnorth.org.uk](http://www.museumdevelopmentnorth.org.uk)
- Follow us on LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/company/museum-development-north/>
- Sign up to our weekly newsletter <http://eepurl.com/iMx1pl>



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# Celebrating Museums 2026



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**Poppy Garrett**

**Curator, West Cheshire Museums**

**Rachel Moan**

**Housing Project Manager,**

**Cheshire West and Chester Council**

***Carbon Literacy as a Local Authority***



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West Cheshire  
Museums



# Carbon Literacy as a Local Authority Museum

Poppy Garrett, Assistant Curator, West Cheshire  
Museums

Rachel Moan, Housing Project Manager, Cheshire West  
and Chester Council

Carbon Literacy  
Project



# WHY NOT MUSEUMS?



## LEADERSHIP

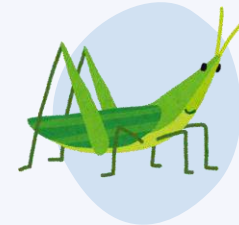
Museums identified as leaders and changemakers.

We are a place-based museum and represent so much more than our buildings and collections – we play an important role in shaping the present and future of the place, too



## ENGAGEMENT

Opportunity to bring Carbon Literacy to as many people as possible, whilst also engaging new audiences and raising awareness of our museums



## ADVOCACY

Importance of museums and the work that we do, both within the Council and within our communities, and the importance of museum sites and collections



## INFLUENCE

Museums can (and do!) inspire real, meaningful change within communities and at a higher level

# ADAPTING THE TOOLKIT

## Local climate change impacts



- Frequent storms, causing flooding
- Farmers affected by unpredictable weather patterns
- Two dozen deaths during heatwaves in Cheshire during summer 2024, despite only yellow weather warnings issued

**Communities-  
focused**

**Local examples**

**Varied case  
studies**

**CWAC insights**



# CO-BENEFITS

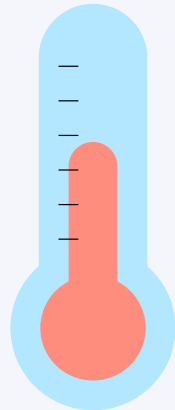
## Productive conversations



Blended cohort brought different insights and areas of expertise

Conversations led to problem solving as a result of having the right people in a room together

## Practical solutions



Decades-long issues with museum heating issue solved!

Both teams worked together to create their carbon reduction actions

## Support and understanding



Awareness of the complex needs and challenges of heritage buildings

Museums now exempt from Council energy restrictions

## Co-working relationships



Both teams have a greater understanding of what the other does

Supportive working relationships established and maintained

# WHAT'S NEXT?

We hope to...



Continue to deliver Carbon Literacy training within museums and the Local Authority, using the Museums toolkit

Train other Carbon Literacy trainers

Recognise limitations of the Museums toolkit and explore learnings from the Carbon Literacy for Local Authorities course

In the longer term, consider developing our own Cheshire West and Chester Carbon Literacy course



**Thank you  
for  
listening!**

... any  
questions?



**Gill Crawshaw**

**Independent Curator**

*Connecting Past and Present*

*Multisensory Exhibitions at*

*Keswick Museum*



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# Multi-sensory projects at Keswick Museum, 25 years apart

Gill Crawshaw  
freelance curator

[gill.crawshaw@gmail.com](mailto:gill.crawshaw@gmail.com)



BRITISH ART  
subject specialist  
NETWORK

 PAUL MELLON CENTRE  
*for Studies in British Art*

Yale



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TATE

A yellow exhibition poster with blue vertical borders. At the top, the title "ART: AN ILLUSION" is written in large, bold, black letters, followed by the subtitle "An exhibition about sight" in a smaller font. Below the text is a large, stylized black and white illustration of a human eye with a gear-like iris. Underneath the eye, the names of the artists "Audrey Melville Barker, Alan Foley, Ian Hinde." are listed in bold black text. Further down, the location and contact information are provided: "The Art Store" at Keswick Museum, Fitz Park, with the telephone number 017687 773263. The exhibition dates are "Wednesday to Sunday, 10am - 4pm. 18 July - 3 September 2000." At the bottom, a note states: "Organised group visits can be booked in September and October. An Allerdale Borough Council Project." The poster has a vertical crease down the center, suggesting it was folded.

**ART: AN ILLUSION**  
An exhibition about sight



**Audrey Melville Barker,  
Alan Foley, Ian Hinde.**

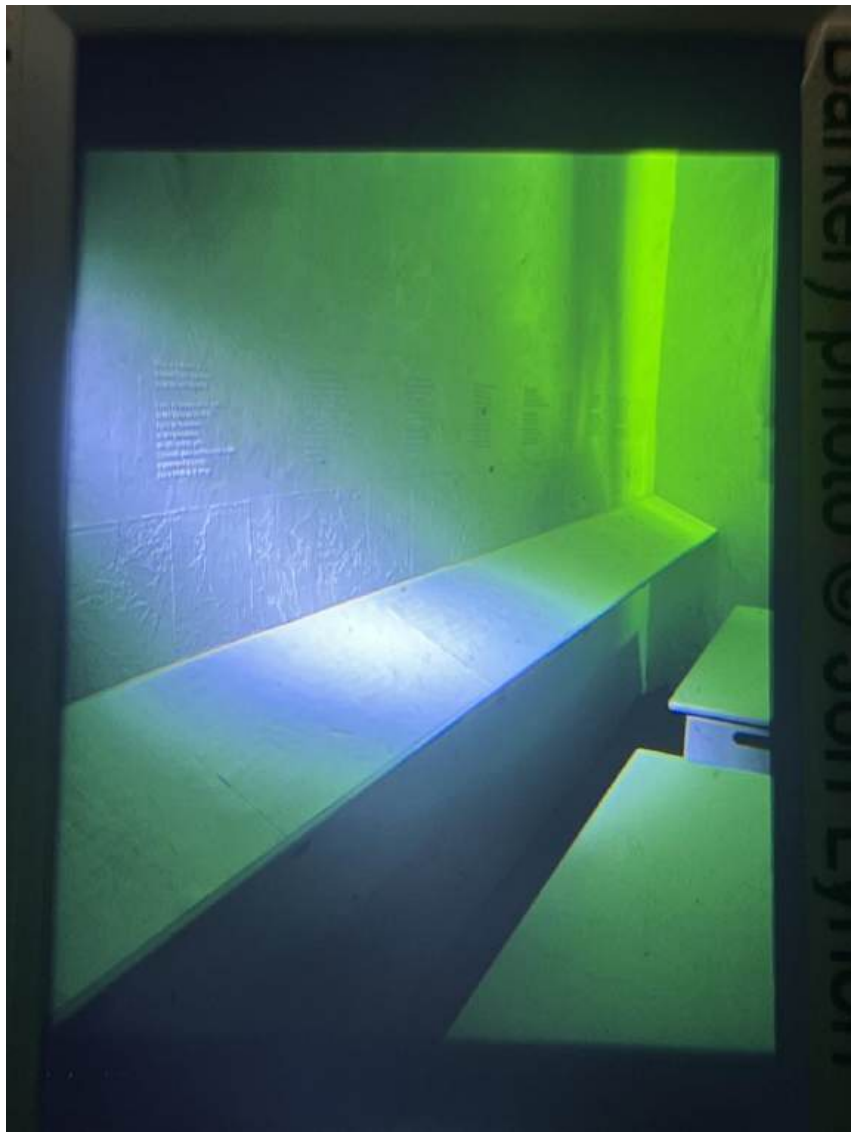
"The Art Store" at Keswick Museum, Fitz Park.  
Tel: 017687 773263

Wednesday to Sunday, 10am - 4pm.  
18 July - 3 September 2000.

Organised group visits can be booked in September and October.  
An Allerdale Borough Council Project.



Audrey Barker's installation at Keswick Museum (Detail), 2000. Photo: Jon Lynch. Courtesy NDACA, the National Disability Arts Collection and Archive



Audrey Barker's installation at Keswick Museum (details), 2000.  
Photos: Jon Lynch. Courtesy NDACA, the National Disability Arts Collection and Archive



*Crafting the Landscape* multi-sensory display, with two of the co-creators, Keswick Museum, 2025. Photo courtesy Keswick Museum & Art Gallery



**Alison Grange**

**Collections Engagement Manager**

**Hopetown Darlington**

***A Year of The Space – A Year of  
Community***



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# A Year of The Space



# A Year of Community

# St. Aidan's CofE Academy

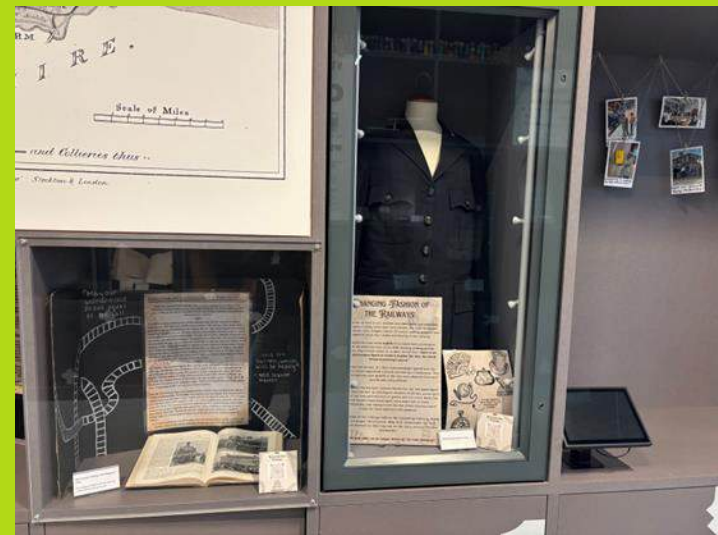
 Hopetown Darlington



# S&DR 26 Miles Team



# S&DR Young Producers



# St. Andrew' Church, Haughton





# Q&A



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# Break



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