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Museums
Federation
Cymru

Y Mag



Hello and welcome!

In this Summer edition of YMag we look at the fantastic work being done across Welsh museums to improve access and engagement, from improving physical access at Llanerchaeron, to creating inclusive engagement with LGBTQIA at Ceredigion Museum and adults with learning disabilities at the Rhondda Heritage Park Museum. More great work is being done to increase access to art collections at Cyfarthfa Castle Museum, as well as new acquisitions at Storiell.

These projects have been supported through the grants provided by the Welsh Government and administered by Museums Federation Cymru such as Small Grant Scheme, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scheme and the Acquisition Grant.

There is lots to offer in Wales and even more to be learned from one another!

What's New

Improving physical access at Llanerchareon, National Trust

Shani Rhys James and Stephen West Acquisition for Storiell

Rhondda Heritage Park Museum: Collections engagement with Cwm Taf People First

Pockets of Pride: Celebrating LGBTQIA+ Creativity and Community at Ceredigion Museum

Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery: Penry Williams Framing Project

Training Opportunity: Introduction to Fundraising

Museums Federation Cymru Conference 2026

Improving Access at Llanerchaeron: National Trust

We have upgraded physical access at Llanerchaeron by replacing the existing ramps at the front of the Villa and Billiard Room with new foldable mobility ramps featuring high contrast edging. In addition, we introduced rollout rubber trackways to lay over cobbles or deep gravel paths where needed, allowing those who are wheelchair users, living with mobility impairment, or partially sighted to use the site more easily.

The project has brought meaningful benefits to Llanerchaeron. By introducing stronger, more adaptable ramps and removable trackway, we have enhanced protection for the fabric of the villa, Billiard Room, and surrounding grounds while making them easier to enter and enjoy. The foldable design combines minimal visual intrusion on the Georgian setting with easy removal when needed, reducing wear to historic surfaces. Improved access also strengthens our role as a pilot site for the National Trust's Wellbeing Access Pass, enabling more community groups to feel confident using Llanerchaeron as a space for wellbeing, connection, and cultural engagement.

Several lessons emerged through the project, such as consulting early with users through our community focus group ensured the chosen equipment met people's needs. We also learned the value of selecting durable, flexible products that can be used across multiple parts of the site. Most importantly, the project reinforced that reducing barriers to heritage access requires ongoing, thoughtful investment — aligning with both National Trust and Welsh Government priorities on equality and inclusion.

The project involved the installation of two new foldable mobility ramps with visual contrast edging at the front of Llanerchaeron villa and Billiard room, to improve access for wheelchair users and those living with mobility or visual impairments.



Adaptable ramps at Llanerchaeron.

Also, where needed, the installation of 10 metres of rubber trackways over cobbled and deeply gravelled surfaces to provide safer, more accessible routes for visitors and wellbeing/community group members with a variety of access needs. Currently we are using them for the mixed surfaces to the rear of the house to provide a better walkway for these users during the early spring.

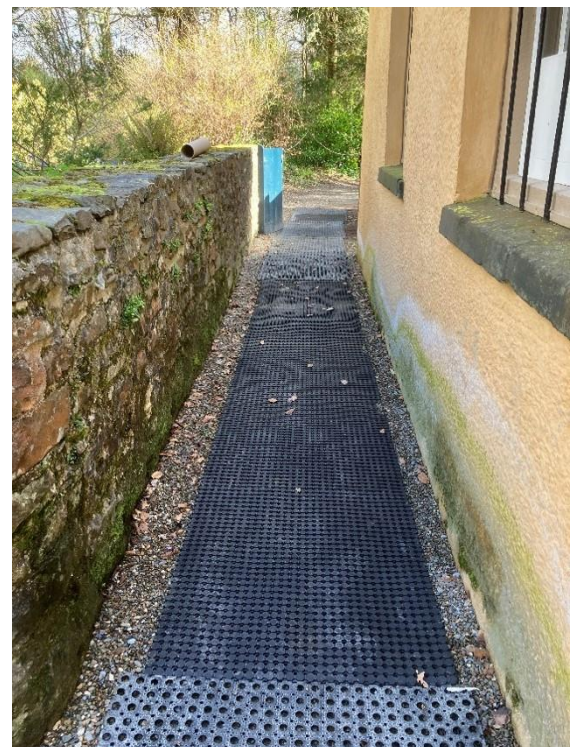
The purchase of replacement ramps and rollout trackway at Llanerchaeron has strengthened inclusive access across the villa and associated buildings, ensuring culture is welcoming to all. By removing physical barriers, the project supports cultural rights and enables wider participation, reflecting the principles of cultural democracy. Improved access allows a broader range of visitors to engage with the heritage of Llanerchaeron, encouraging balanced interpretation and connection with the site's past. The enhancements contribute to place-making by creating a more inviting, wellbeing-focused visitor experience for the local community and visitors alike.

Children and young people can now explore more of the estate safely and confidently, inspiring curiosity and cultural engagement across generations. By enabling families and mixed-age groups to experience the site together, the upgrades strengthen intergenerational connection and shared cultural understanding.

The new ramps and rollout trackway at Llanerchaeron have also enhanced safe, independent access across the villa and associated buildings, enabling more people to engage with the site and supporting individual and community well-being through fuller cultural participation. By increasing the accessibility of historic areas, the improvements ensure that the historic estate can be enjoyed more widely and used to support learning, creativity and a deeper connection to place.

Enhancing physical access also contributes to the long-term care and sustainable use of Llanerchaeron's historic assets, ensuring they remain relevant, resilient and valuable to present and future generations.

This grant scheme is made possible with funding from the Welsh Government through the Culture Division, and with support from Museums Federation Cymru.



Removable trackway at Llanerchaeron.

Storiel: Shani Rhys James and Stephen West Acquisition

In April 2025, Storiel held its first exhibition through the CELF project – a joint exhibition by Shani Rhys James and Stephen West which included historical works loaned from Amgueddfa Cymru and the National Library of Wales. Following a number of preparatory visits, both wanted to create new work that would be shown alongside their historical works. Shani responded to the textile collection, and Stephen responded to the building's ecclesiastical history. The Federation's acquisition fund enabled us to purchase one work by each of the two artists to enhance our collection here at Storiel. Neither artist is represented in our collection, and both are nationally significant artists. The details of the two works are:

Shani Rhys James, Dressing, 2024, oil on linen, 160 x 160cms.

Stephen West, Night Owl, 2025, charcoal on paper, 152 x 122cms.

We knew we wanted to acquire works by both, as soon as we saw them. We also had a number of visitors as well as the Friends of Storiel encouraging us to seek the acquisition of the two works. We undertook a bit of research about which funders might be possible to acquire the works. The acquisition fit into our Collections Development Policy which specifically commits to proactively collect Fine Art; "by local artists or works produced locally by international artists". We also used the Acquisition Significance prompts within the Collections Significance Toolkit to establish their significance and appropriateness for acquisition.

Shani writes about the work, and what drew her to the Victorian dress in Storiel's collection;

"It was a particular dress in the collection at Storiel that intrigued me. There were vertical stripes on this Victorian dress comprised of tiny heads, instead of flowers, on a cobalt blue background. What was it about this motif? I have spent years painting heads and also costumes which relate to my childhood around the theatre. The heads on this dress were symbolic to me of all the women who had worn constraining costumes throughout the centuries, confined and impeded by corsets and dragging their long skirts through the mud, unable to run but weighed down by layers of fabric."



Shani Rhys James, Dressing, 2024, oil on linen.

The nitrile gloves in my painting replace the compulsory kid skin gloves of that Victorian period and nitrile gloves are worn in the studio by artists and conservators. In the earlier paintings the gloves are white, sent to me by my surgeon father in Australia."

Stephen writes about what inspired him to create 'Night Owl';

"Thinking about showing at Storiell in Bangor I was most struck by the thought of the bishop in the bishop's palace, the architecture of the building and its original use with the status and staff and rules a bishop might need a break from. So the original gothic arched window in my drawing 'Night Owl' became a means of escape - a portal between the clerical and secular worlds."

Now the payment of the works has been processed, we will be arranging delivery of the works to us here in Storiell. Shani's 'Dressing' will be hung immediately, in one of our circulation spaces between the museum galleries within Storiell; a juxtaposition which captures Storiell's strength of combining museum collections and artistic programming.



Stephen West, Night Owl, 2025, charcoal on paper.

Stephen's work on paper will need to be rolled and stored until we can exhibit it again – this year hopefully, as we celebrate Storiell's 10th year throughout 2026. Details of both works will be added to the Art Uk website and Storiell's own online searchable collections. Shani's art work responds to a dress in the museum's textile collection and plays on themes of restriction, display and identity – themes that are might be relevant to women in particular. 'Dressing' uses inspiration from a Victorian paisley dress and as an internationally known artist, Shani has interpreted them within her own narrative and international outlook. There is great potential to exhibit this work in future contemporary art exhibitions and projects, as well as social and cultural projects looking at costumes within our collections, women's roles and visibility within the historical record as well as a more anthropological approach to how clothing continues to be important in shaping and defining personal identities to the world.

As part of our research into various funding streams that we could approach, we looked at the ArtFund acquisition fund, as well as the V&A purchase grant fund. As we had recently acquired an early sampler of the Menai Suspension Bridge with V&A support, so I was unsure if we would be eligible but they were very responsive and positive to our enquiries and reassured us we would be eligible. In preparing detailed information for potential match funding, one of the requirements of the V&A purchase grant scheme was to undertake an independent valuation of the two works. We were able to get a named expert at short notice through colleagues at Glynn Vivian who was able to undertake the work in the short time frame we had for application. The sharing of practical information like this through other CELF partners was really valuable. This consultant will be a valued specialist for when we will look to acquire further contemporary works for our collection here at Storiell. An important part of the work was ensuring they did not know the values of the artworks negotiated with the respective artists.

Another first for us was negotiating prices for acquisition with an artist – we had previously bought art through auction or for a set fee as a commission but negotiating was an interesting experience – trying to get a balance with recognising artist's work and usual prices and ensuring best value for money for Storiell (and the public purse). As they are new works, and we had recently viewed the works, condition reports were not required as part of the grant requirement. It also helped that we had high resolution images of the works, that we had commissioned for the exhibition, so again, these were available for our application to the Federation. We'd like to thank the Federation of Museums Wales for their support in this acquisition.

Rhondda Heritage Park Museum: Collections engagement with Cwm Taf People First

This project allowed us to engage and collaborate with a local adult community group, Cwm Taf People First; run by and for adults with learning disabilities. The main aims were to increase their access and understanding of the collection, and to empower the group to feel more represented at the museum. We delivered object engagement and handling workshops across the Rhondda Heritage Park Museum (RHPM) and Treorchy Library with members from Cwm Taf People First; a self-advocacy organisation for adults with a learning disabilities.

Another output that benefited the museum and collection was working with Vision Fountain to record the sessions and add as content to our collection and digital exhibition stations at RHPM.

Each session focused on different topics relating to exhibition content at RHPM: sport, women's history, ecology and wildlife, and music. Participants were encouraged to handle the objects and discuss the composition, materials, purpose, and their perceived use and value. These sessions created deep, organic discussions about the Rhondda in the past and present, allowing us to cover a multitude of topics about the local area, and significant changes from the 19th century to now.

The sessions encouraged the group to discuss not only local history but their place in society and contemporary events. They discussed their family links to the mining industry, their members choir performance at National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd 2024, and their involvement in local sports clubs and races. This project allowed the participants to understand local heritage and feel like their stories were represented in the collection.



Cwm Taf People First participants.



Collections - This project allowed us to:

- Increase public access to / engagement of the collection – the group
- Increase our understanding of the collection – how it can or should be used
- Improve interpretative value of objects used in sessions/discussions
- Items from the collection photographed / digitised – to be used in digital exhibitions and online archives
- Some of the group discussions resulted in acquisitions to the collection. We accessioned the oral history recordings from each session and also some of the group members sporting medals.

User and user experience - This project allowed us to:

- Work closely with a group that does not regularly engage with the museum or the collection, and create a relationship built on co-operation and collaboration, providing space for future opportunities and projects
- Increase the sense of ownership of the collection for the group by allowing greater access to the collection. We gave the group a behind the scenes at the museum experience and the opportunity to handle and discuss each item in detail, the majority of the group had not experienced this before.
- By creating video and photograph content of the sessions and sharing them on interactive digital exhibition screens we have involved a new perspective and narrative of the collection, and highlighted the group to other users / audiences.



Project photographs and exhibition content.

Community engagement with the museum's collection

Cwm Taf People First, a charity driven by adults with learning disabilities.

Funded by Museum's Federation Cymru as part of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion grant, this project was designed to democratise the collection and to engage more diverse groups with our collection.

These videos and images capture People First participants looking at various objects from the museum's sporting collection, and discussing the local history and their stories related the items.

ENGAGING ADULT DISABILITY GROUPS WITH THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION

as iwn eddfeydd Museums Federation Cymru

Introduction to the Project - English

ENGAGING ADULT DISABILITY GROUPS IN THE MUSEUM'S COLLECTION

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Video: Sporting Heritage

English

AMRIBS GRWPIAU I GEDDION AN ABLEDDAU I YMGYSYLLTU A CHASGLIAD YR AMGUEDDFA

as iwn eddfeydd Museums Federation Cymru

Introduction to the Project - Welsh

YMGYSYLLTU GRWPIAU ANABLEDDAU I EDGION YNG NGHASGLIAD YR AMGUEDDFA

as iwn eddfeydd Museums Federation Cymru

Fideo: Treftadaeth Chwaraeon

Pockets of Pride: Celebrating LGBTQI+ Creativity and Community at Ceredigion Museum

Working in partnership with Aberration, Pockets of Pride, funded by the Federation Cymru, was a creative Ceredigion Museum project bringing together LGBTQI+ participants to reimagine one of Wales' most cherished cultural traditions – the Eisteddfod.

During a series of three workshops participants explored the museum's historic collection of Eisteddfod purses—small, often intricately decorated prize bags once awarded to competition winners. Guided by textile artist Rose Thorn, the group created their own contemporary interpretations, infusing these traditional objects with personal stories, identity, and queer experience. The resulting artworks reflect a powerful blend of heritage and individuality, inspired by participants' lives, relationships, and sense of belonging.

Participants described the project as “exciting and inspiring,” highlighting the importance of having space to share stories, connect across generations, and see LGBTQI+ experiences represented within a museum context. One contributor reflected: “A display in the museum about us lot – never in my day would I have thought this could happen.”

The newly created purses were displayed during Aberystwyth Pride 2026 and will become part of a permanent LGBTQI+ display when the museum reopens in 2027. The display will sit within a wider reinterpretation of the museum's Eisteddfod display, which includes digital storytelling and archival material documenting LGBTQI+ presence at the Eisteddfod—from early activism to present-day inclusivity.

Ceredigion Museum extends sincere thanks to the Museums Federation Wales, project partners Aberration, Rose Thorn, and all participants who generously shared their creativity and lived experience:

Avi Allen, Jane Hoy, Abid Hussain, Fran Jackson, Simon Robson, Mila Slettebø, Miles Rolf, Elaine Turnbull, and Rose Awen Brindle.



Eisteddfod purses from the collection.



Eisteddfod purse made by project participant.

Charms, charming, I'm not sure what I'll make
as the sea roars outside on Aberystwyth beach,
pink triangles, joy, flowers and nature.

Thinking about all my old girlfriends
and wondering why they're all butch.

God I love being queer!
To be part of a community,
a family I was not born from but born into,
like living in Wales.

I'm excited to see the experience of people like me
reflected and preserved in a museum.

I produce the work I like
when people are not curating me
subconsciously.

Culture and art preserve the Welsh language
and queer people are active in that.

I've been thinking about fabric and thread
in human history –
how we're connected and
how much effort it takes to create
just a little piece of fabric
and we need community to do that.

The original purses were created
in the community of the chapel,
the sea roars outside and
this will ripple out,
it will ripple through the queer chapel.

Exciting and inspiring, lots to think about.
What shaped me inside and out.
My heritage. Wow.

The variety of stories and starting points.
Chats about life stories and perspectives.
Amazing. Making, making, together making.
Love, art, and powerful, sensitive sharing.

I've got to know you all through the making,
the way that you make, your ideas, the layers.
The inside of your pockets – how do you exhibit
the *inside* of what you're creating?

We were given four examples,
fairly similar in design,
yet none of these are similar
and the differentiating factors
are ourselves and our lives.

All that difference is just
ourselves in the purses,
which is very cool.

Hearing your stories,
having the space to talk whilst working,
where giving doesn't deplete me,
and everybody's purse has embodied
something so personal and generous.

Activism has become a vibrant living word again
and this feels like activism.

A display in the museum about us lot –
Pride Purses – never in my day
would I have thought this could happen.

With the challenges going on in the world,
it's a meaningful statement,
when things are being taken away and away,
we're going to put something up!

We've heard the breadth of people's life stories
across different generations and backgrounds.



'Pockets of Pride' project participants

Cyfarthfa Castle Museum and Art Gallery: Penry Williams Framing Project

The recent framing of more than fifty Penry Williams and Vosper sketches has brought significant cultural, educational, and visitor-experience benefits to Cyfarthfa Castle. By professionally mounting and protecting these pieces, the Castle will now be able to showcase important pieces of Welsh artistic heritage that were previously inaccessible or at risk of deterioration due to over-packed storage options and access at offsite stores. Visitors now experience the framed collections, offering deeper insight into technique, local history, and the social narratives captured by both artists.

The upcoming programme of **three artist-led workshops scheduled for May** further enhances engagement. Participants will be able to study the newly framed sketches up close, gaining creative inspiration while developing drawing skills informed directly by the works of Williams and Vosper. To support these workshops, **ten newly conserved works will also go on display**, with view of offering a larger sketchbook exhibition after essential works have been finished and factored into the exhibitions programming. This will enable us to broaden the collection available for public learning and offering fresh material for repeat visitors.

Recognising the value of these artworks for young learners, the Castle has also produced **six high-quality reproductions of key framed pieces** specifically for school use. These will be added to our “Art in a box” workshop. These durable copies allow pupils to explore composition, storytelling, and historical context in a hands-on way without risking damage to the originals. This investment strengthens the Castle’s educational outreach and supports curriculum-linked art and heritage learning.

Finally, the introduction of **new, improved storage facilities** ensures the long-term preservation of the collection. The framing and glazing ensured safeguarding from light levels, tearing etc and the purchase of new solander boxes and relevant preventative conservation will ensure we can re-house any unframed pieces and ensure their long term care. Currently they are in over-filled boxes. The purchase of a flight case was particularly useful for potential to engage with secondary schools or universities with the original copies, ensuring that we are able to create bespoke sessions for pupils who may wish to learn about representation, LGBTQ or disability themes. Providing visible access for learners of all ages, both onsite and offsite is vital in ensuring they can see themselves in art and no longer be a “hidden history”.



Penry Williams and Vosper sketches on display.

The project strongly aligns with Welsh cultural priorities by increasing access to Welsh artistic heritage, strengthening education, and ensuring long-term sustainability of important collections.

The professional framing of more than fifty Penry Williams and Vosper sketches has transformed works that were previously inaccessible or at risk due to over packed storage into publicly viewable cultural assets. This supports inclusivity and contributes to balanced interpretation of local history and social narratives, enriching place making and community well-being through enhanced visitor experience.

The upcoming series of artist led workshops in May builds creative engagement and learning inspired directly by the newly framed works. By allowing participants to study the sketches up close and develop practical drawing skills, the programme contributes to individual well-being and supports the aspirations of young people by embedding creativity and cultural learning into their experience. The display of ten newly conserved works, with plans for an expanded sketchbook exhibition, further broadens public access to the collection.

Educational outreach is strengthened through six high-quality reproductions created specifically for schools and integrated into the “Art in a Box” workshop. These durable resources allow pupils to explore composition, storytelling, identity, and local history without risk to the originals, ensuring cultural participation is inclusive, accessible, and reflective of diverse experiences.

The investment in new solander boxes, improved storage, and a specialist flight case ensures long-term preservation of the collection and demonstrates a strategic approach to collection care and significance. The ability to transport original works safely for sessions with secondary schools and universities supports engagement with themes such as representation, LGBTQ history, and disability, ensuring intangible cultural heritage is shared, explored, and made visible for future generations.



Penry Williams and Vosper sketches on display.

Training: Introduction to Fundraising

Introduction to fundraising, provided by the Association of Independent Museums

When: Tuesday 3, and Tuesday 10 November 2026, 4-6pm

What: This two-part online course is ideal for anyone working in the museum sector with little or no fundraising experience, who is keen to learn how to improve fundraising at their museum.

Hosted by fundraising expert and founder of Development Partners, Judy Niner, the sessions will be interactive, giving you the chance to network with and learn from others in a similar situation. Judy is the author of AIM's Fundraising Success Guide.

We are able to offer free places to those working in museums in Wales thanks to funding from the Welsh Government.

Where: Both sessions will take place on Zoom.

To book your place please email Christine Andrews, Programmes and Events Officer at christine.andrews@aim-museums.co.uk



**Association of
Independent
Museums**

Helping Heritage
Organisations Prosper

Museums Federation Conference 2026

Museums Federation Cymru are delighted to announce the second conference of 2026. This will be taking place on the week commencing 19th October. Make sure to keep updated as the date and location will be confirmed soon.

What can you expect from a Museums Federation Cymru conference?

In March 2026, Museums Federation Cymru held its conference at Storiel, Bangor. The day saw a fantastic group of sector professionals discussing the theme 'A Manifesto for Museum: Securing Our Future'.

Jacob Dafydd Ellis, Director for External Relations and Culture at the Future Generations Commission for Wales, reflected on the role culture has played—and must continue to play—in securing well-being for current and future generations in Wales. Ellis' explored what comes next: the potential of a Culture Bill to embed long-term thinking in cultural policy and decision-making.

Frank Olding, a former curator of Abergavenny Museum, and current member of the Gorsedd of Bards, discussed 'language and belonging (Cynefin ac Perthyn)'; equality, diversity and inclusion, and the Welsh language. His session explored why Welsh-language provision is political as well as personal and why museums should engage with the language wherever they are located.

Grace Todd, Senior curator of Oral History at Amgueddfa Cymru, gave a session on Intangible Cultural Heritage and mapping living traditions. The UK signed up to the UNESCO 2003 Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2024. The international agreement aims to support and promote 'Living Heritage' around the world. Grace discussed this community led work, facilitated by the DCMS and a network of community hubs, and this important opportunity to start a conversation here in Wales about our cultural heritage.



Storiel, Bangor

Ruth McKew, director at Headland Design, discussed 'Cydnabod' - a pilot scheme that celebrates nationally (and internationally) significant collections in regional museums in Wales. Museums were invited to participate and 16 have gone forward through a two-stage process. The process involved external verification by specialists, academics and through community collaboration

Emma Chaplin and Esther Roberts discussed the Museums Spotlight 2025 survey, commissioned by the Welsh Government, and highlighted the headline findings and signposted how museums can use the data to support their own work.

Sophie Edwards and John Robert from Heneb (The Trust for Welsh Archaeology) discussed their pilot project on behalf of Welsh Government which assessed the archaeology collections of five Welsh Museums, considering their size, accessibility, condition, value, research and display potential and conservation requirements and looking for opportunities where material may be refined/de-accessioned/re-used or discarded.

Thank you to all our speakers and to Welsh Government for their continued support. We look forward to seeing you at the next Conference in October, please make sure to check Museums Federation Cymru website for details.



Museums Federation Cymru participants, March 2026.



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