



NI  
Museums  
Council

# Museum Trends 2023 Results

Summary of Major Stated  
Strengths



[www.nimc.co.uk](http://www.nimc.co.uk)

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NI Museums Council  
153 Bangor Road  
Holywood  
Co. Down  
BT18 0EU



[info@nimc.co.uk](mailto:info@nimc.co.uk)

*Cover photography NIWM gallery, courtesy of NIMC.*

# 1. Background

Our accredited museum members spent much time and effort filling in our Museum Trends survey questionnaires and developing their 'Museum Impact Statement' at the end of 2023.

The purpose of the survey was to provide focused quantitative and qualitative data about local authority and independent museums so that NIMC can argue effectively for their social, cultural and economic value and help to secure the resources they need collectively. The Museum Trends Survey offers NIMC an opportunity to discover what museums are doing well, and to celebrate that. It also offers an opportunity to discover what is not being done, and why that might be, which is key to advocating for increased provision.

The survey was divided into three themes mapped to the UK Accreditation Standard:

1. Organisational Health (workforce, finance, infrastructure, strategic outlook)
2. Managing Collections (collection scope, development and management)
3. Users and their Experiences (audience / digital engagement and impact)

As part of the survey, museums were asked to provide a SWOT analysis to put their environment into context. This first paper focuses on the STRENGTHs museum's offer.

## 2. Summary of Major Stated Strengths

The collective strengths of our museums include strategic locations, strong community ties, and dedicated, experienced staff and volunteers. Many of these institutions are in historic buildings and have unique, significant collections that range from local to international importance.

Our museums benefit from supportive boards, strong relationships with local councils, educational programs, and active partnerships with schools, universities, and other cultural institutions. Accessibility and free admission are common assets, as are well-maintained websites and social media presence.

The museums also excel in diverse programming and have the capability to attract significant external funding and high-profile loans for exhibitions. Additionally, some museums are recognized for their accreditation status and high-quality visitor services.



### 3. Impact on the Local Museum Sector and Potential Action Points

The self-assessed organisational strengths reflect a robust and dynamic local museum sector that plays a critical role in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. These strengths indicate that local museums are well-positioned to serve their communities effectively, offering educational, recreational, and cultural value.

The emphasis on dedicated staff and volunteers, strong community ties, and strategic partnerships suggests a sector that is resilient and capable of adapting to changing needs and opportunities.

### 4. Potential Action Points

Aim	Action
1. Enhance Collaboration:	Foster greater collaboration among museums to leverage combined resources, share best practices, and coordinate joint initiatives and events, enhancing the overall visitor experience.
2. Expand Educational Programs:	Build on strong educational foundations by developing more targeted programs for various demographics, such as schools, families, and senior citizens, ensuring broad community engagement.
3. Improve Accessibility:	Continue efforts to make museums more accessible to all visitors, including those with disabilities, through physical infrastructure improvements and inclusive programming.
4. Increase Visibility and Marketing:	Develop comprehensive marketing strategies to improve public profile and attract more visitors, leveraging social media, local media partnerships, and community events.



Aim	Action
5. Secure Funding:	Actively seek external funding opportunities to support maintenance, refurbishments, and new initiatives, ensuring financial sustainability and the ability to expand offerings.
6. Strengthen Volunteer Programs:	Enhance volunteer recruitment and training programs to maintain a strong volunteer base that can support museum operations and visitor engagement.
7. Leverage Digital Technologies:	Utilise digital tools and platforms to reach wider audiences through virtual tours, online exhibitions, and digital archives, making collections more accessible globally.
8. Focus on Community Engagement:	Develop initiatives that engage local communities more deeply, such as community-curated exhibitions, local history projects, and interactive events that foster a sense of ownership and pride.
9. Sustain Environmental Conditions:	Invest in climate control and preservation technologies to ensure that collections are maintained in optimal conditions, protecting valuable artifacts for future generations.

By addressing these action points, local museums can further strengthen their roles as cultural and educational hubs, ensuring they continue to serve and enrich their communities effectively.

## 5. Potential Action Points for NIMC Corporate Plan 2026–2030

Aim	Action
1. Strategic Funding Enablement	Utilise the Corporate Plan as a tool to attract and unlock funding from government departments and external stakeholders by demonstrating clear value, impact, and strategic alignment.
2. Innovation through Pilot Projects.	Identify and launch new pilot initiatives that test innovative practices, address sector challenges, and provide scalable models for future implementation.
3. Advocacy and Sector Representation	Position the Corporate Plan as a mechanism to advocate for the role and potential of museums in cultural, educational, and social development.
4. Capacity Building and Professional Development	Use the Plan to inform the design and delivery of future training programs, workshops, and site visits tailored to emerging sector needs.
5. Strategic Partnership Development	Guide the identification and nurturing of strategic partnerships at national and international levels to enhance collaboration, resource sharing, and impact.

If you require this plan in an alternative format and/or an alternative language, please contact the NI Museums Council.