



NI  
Museums  
Council

# Newsletter

Autumn/Winter 2025



## Seasons Greetings

From NI Museums  
Council



### NI Museums Forum 2025

A look back at our  
afternoon of shared  
learning and discussion.

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

### Accreditation Awards

Ten local museums receive  
Full Accreditation.

### NIMC Awards Over £110,000

to Empower Museums Across  
Northern Ireland



@NIMuseums



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Cover photograph of NI War Memorial Museum in December ©NIMC.  
Top left: Maritime and trade related items in Newry and Mourne Museum's new temporary exhibition. ©NIMC.  
Bottom left: Bright Sparks Montessori Pre-School join the Deputy Mayor of North Down Vicky Moore and author-illustrator Ellan Rankin to launch their new book in North Down Museum. ©NIMC.

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Dear friends and colleagues,

The past ten months have been an exciting journey as I've gained deeper insight into the governance required to run NIMC. From these challenges, it has been wonderful to begin a collaboration with National Museums NI around our financial responsibilities, to work alongside a caring and knowledgeable Board, and to benefit from the support of the Culture team in the Department for Communities.

During this time, NIMC is proud to have distributed over £110,000 in grants, delivered a well-received training programme, and successfully administered the accreditation scheme. Interest in the scheme continues to grow as you can see in this newsletter with eight local museums retaining accredited status and first-time applicants such as the Museum of Derry achieving full accreditation.

NIMC has also received eligibility applications from several more potential candidates and looks forward to guiding them through the scheme. This demonstrates both the strength of the scheme and the importance of building relationships and trust to guide new members through the process. Equally important has been our outreach: meeting with members, listening to your needs, and ensuring that our initiatives reflect the realities of the sector.

We also want to acknowledge the sad loss of our former Chair, Nora Douds, whose leadership and dedication left a lasting impact on NIMC and the wider museum community. As we look ahead, we are excited to welcome a new Chair and five new Board members in the coming year, bringing fresh perspectives and energy to guide our work forward.

We are delighted to announce that the [Museum Trends](#) report has now been published on our website, including a detailed survey analysis and a separate SWOT analysis of the sector. Together, these resources provide valuable benchmarking data, enabling us to focus our efforts more strategically and support the continued growth of the museum community. In addition, we are developing the draft Corporate Plan 2026–2030, aligned with the forthcoming Museum Policy for Northern Ireland. Your insights and feedback will be vital in shaping this plan, ensuring that NIMC continues to meet the needs of our members and strengthen the sector for years to come.

Finally, NIMC is now the community hub for the [UNESCO Living Heritage Programme](#). If you would like to hear more about this initiative and how you or your organisation could participate, please join our free [Let's Talk session](#) on 12 January.

NIMC Director, Heather McGuicken

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# News in Brief

## Living Heritage in the UK

### Call for Submissions Now Open for Inventories of Living Heritage in the UK

A call for submissions has opened for inventories of living heritage in the UK, asking communities to submit their traditions and heritage practices.

An area of heritage often overlooked, living heritage (or 'intangible cultural heritage') includes folklore, performance, customs and crafts that are passed on from generation to generation.

Living Heritage is a broad subject that can include everything from bell-ringing to boat-building, céilí/cèilidh to carnival, pantomime to pancake day, highland games to Eisteddfod, Lambeg drumming to long sword dancing, and dry-stone walling to wassailing.

The inventories are being set up by the Governments of the UK, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland following the UK joining the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage last year.

The call for submissions will be open for 4 months until Friday 27 March. During this period, there are a range of information sessions, workshops and events, including those from a range of designated Community Support Hubs who can provide help and guidance. More details here [www.livingheritage.unesco.org.uk](http://www.livingheritage.unesco.org.uk)

The inventories will provide a snapshot of all the different types of living heritage across the UK: from popular to niche and old to new. Their purpose is to both raise awareness and to start a conversation about the value of this heritage, paving the way for future efforts to improve its safeguarding.



### Museums Continue to Welcome Scouts as part of the NI Challenge Award

We're pleased to announce that Irish Linen Centre & Lisburn Museum and Newry and Mourne Museum have both now joined the NI Challenge Award initiative, offering activities for all sections of Scouts NI members to complete the museum element of this badge.

We enjoyed joining the Lisburn Museum team along with the Mayor of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council Alderman Amanda Grehan and members of the Lisburn Cathedral Scouts group to learn more about the history of linen production in the area.

The activity trails are available at the museum receptions, feel free to pick one up and get involved! Photos thanks to LCCC.







# A Letter from the Outgoing NI Museums Council Chair

## Nora Douds Reflects on 4½ Years with the NI Museums Council.

As I grew up in Coleraine in the 1980's, it was museums and libraries that offered me a place of refuge, discovery and imagination. As the eldest of fourteen, in a family without means, these public spaces were where our curiosity was sparked. It was here I learned that heritage and history matter, not because they look back, but because they help us understand who we are in the present and shape who we become.

When I became Chair of the Northern Ireland Museums Council, that same sense of curiosity guided me. From the outset, I encouraged us to keep asking why:

- After 30 years since the NI Museums Council was founded are we still relevant?
- Do we make an impact for our members?
- Are we more than grants and governance?

At the Museums Forum 2024, I met Jamie Austin, Museums Officer from Ballymoney Museum. She told me about the first time she met our Development Officer Eva Lynch. Jamie's enthusiasm was evident, as she told me how Eva had spent time with her, highlighting what the museum was doing well and suggesting ideas for new programmes, projects and innovative use of the collections. Eva was there to support Causeway Coast Council Museums to achieve accreditation, but this visit was more than that to Jamie, it was an inspiration! I was delighted to

see Jamie present to the Museums Forum 2025 about the delivery of 'Our Museum' – Early Years Book Project, supported by NI Museums Council.

Despite budgetary constraints, felt by all in the heritage and cultural space, our team have continued to deliver meaningful support to the museums sector. Through accreditation we raise standards; through training, we build confidence and capability and through advice and inspiration, we help museums tell stories that connect people to place and to each other. We focus on building partnerships – what we can achieve together far outweighs what our limited resources might suggest. My niece, when trying to get out of doing something she's not keen on often says "too tiny". NI Museums Council may have a small team, with an even smaller budget, but we have demonstrated big impact. We're not too tiny – we can do it, as demonstrated by our outcomes! I was proud when this was recognised by our sponsor Department for Communities and Minister Gordon Lyons, with an increase to our grants programme in 2025-26.

**"We focus on building partnerships – what we can achieve together far outweighs what our limited resources might suggest."**





I would encourage you, the museums sector, to recognise and be very proud of the value of what you do. I see leaders who understand their impact; curators and educators who bring the past to life; and volunteers who keep curiosity alive in every community. I've seen inspiring examples of audience engagement and immersive storytelling throughout my tenure. The resilience of the sector continues to inspire me. You are creative, innovative, and deeply connected to your communities.

To the Board, I offer my heartfelt thanks. You gave freely of your time, insight, and care for the sector. Together we tried to ensure that we fulfilled our responsibilities with integrity and purpose, and I am certain this will continue in the future. My thanks also to Heather McGuicken and the NI Museums Council team, for your passion and dedication – a small but significant team.

In 2025 and beyond, museums face a new challenge: how to compete for attention in a world of screens and shrinking attention spans. But curiosity still matters. The power of seeing, touching, and experiencing the past remains unmatched. Our collections have the power to move, to educate, and to connect us. Diversity and inclusion, too, must continue to evolve, beyond nationality, gender, or religion, to include diversity of thought, perspective, and feeling. Museums can help us see each other more fully, and that, I believe, is their greatest gift.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as Chair of the NI Museums Council. I leave filled with gratitude – for the inspiration, expertise, and dedication of people like Jamie, for the passion of a small but mighty team, and for the enduring belief that what we learn from the past helps us make better decisions for the future.

Thank you for allowing me the privilege to serve.

**With thanks and warm regards,**

**Nora Douds**

Chair (2021–2025)

Northern Ireland Museums Council



Photography: Page 5 top: NIMC Director Heather McGuicken thanks Outgoing Chair Nora Douds with Minister Gordon Lyons.

Page 6 Top: The NIMC team with Minister Gordon Lyons at the Museums Forum. Photography thanks to Peter Carson.





# NI Museum Council Museums Forum 2025

On 23 September 2025 over 50 members from across the museum sector came together at Cultra Manor for this year's NIMC Forum. The day offered a chance to share updates, explore new projects, and reflect on sector-wide developments including the Museum Trends research and the forthcoming NI Museums Policy.

The programme began with a new addition for 2025 — a dedicated networking session. This was introduced in response to feedback from our Training Needs Survey, which highlighted the importance of creating more opportunities for peer-to-peer connections.

NIMC Director Heather McGuicken opened the event with an update on the Museum Trends analysis, outlining how data gathered is already being used to advocate for the sector. Members were invited to share feedback on the collection process and suggest ways to refine future projects.







Simon Morton (Department for Communities) then provided an update on the NI Museums Policy, including details of its upcoming publication and consultation period.

The Forum also spotlighted exciting NIMC projects from across the sector:

- Jamie Austin (Ballymoney Museum) presented Our Museum, an early years initiative co-ordinated by NIMC. Working with Ballymoney Museum, North Down Museum, local preschools, authors, illustrators and facilitators, the project helped children explore collections and co-create storybooks now available for nurseries, libraries and families. Jamie's presentation showed how the children's stories connected both to their own experiences and to their local area.
- Pamela Emerson (Scouts NI) introduced the NI Challenge Award, developed in partnership with NIMC. The award encourages young people to connect with museums in creative and engaging ways. Lots of scouts have begun claiming their badges after having completed successful museum visits. Many museums have already signed up, and more are welcome to get involved.





Delegates also took part in discussions to help shape the upcoming NIMC Corporate Plan, sharing ideas and priorities for the future.

The day concluded with a speech from Department for Communities Minister Gordon Lyons. The Minister shared his enjoyment of visiting many of our local museums in his time in office and his appreciation of the value museums bring to society and communities, as well as the passion, professionalism and dedication he sees in museum teams. We are pleased he also presented museums with their Accreditation Awards, suitable celebrating their achievement (see pg. )

This year's Forum was also a moment of transition, as we said farewell to Nora Douds, who steps down as Chair of the NIMC Board after four years of dedicated service. Nora's leadership and commitment have been invaluable, and she leaves with our sincere thanks and best wishes.



*Museum Forum and Accreditation Award Photography thanks to Peter Carson.*

*Page 7, Top: Attendees chat as the Museum Forum begins at Cultra Manor © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 7, Middle: NI Museums Council Director Heather McGuicken welcomes participants. © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 7, Bottom Left: Attendees congratulate Accreditation Awardees © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 7, Bottom Right: presentation of the Museum Trends SWOT results for the sector. © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 8, Top: Attendees discuss NI Museum Council Strategic Aims © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 8, Middle: Jamie Austin presents on Ballymoney Museum's 'Our Museum Book' project supported by NI Museums Council. © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 8, Bottom Left: Attendees enjoying case studies © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 8, Bottom Right: Pamela Emerson presents on the NI Challenge collaborative between Scouts NI, NI Museums council and local museums © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 9, All photos: Participants discuss and offer feedback on shared priorities for the future.*



# Accreditation News

We are pleased to share that eight local museums were recognised with Museum Accreditation Awards as part of the Museum Forum this year. Museums who were presented with Full Accreditation certificates by Minister Gordon Lyons included; Limavady Museum, Ballymoney Museum, Ballycastle Museum, Coleraine Museum, Carrickfergus Museum, Newry and Mourne Museum, Down County Museum, Whitehead Railway Museum, and last but not least independent museum the Royal Irish Fusiliers. Congratulations everyone!

The award is for museums whose return applications have been assessed in 2025 and have maintained their Full Accreditation status. The Accreditation Scheme defines good practice and identifies agreed standards, thereby encouraging development. It is a baseline quality standard that helps guide museums across the UK to be the best they can be, for current and future users. Museums are required to submit their Accreditation return applications every 5 years to ensure they are continuing to maintain the standard. Although Accreditation is a national standard, it's not a 'one size fits all' model. The expectations vary for museums of different types, sizes and scopes.





# Museum of Free Derry 1<sup>st</sup> Full Accreditation

Congratulations to the Museum of Free Derry on achieving Full Accreditation after making their first application to the UK Museum Accreditation scheme. We were pleased to award the certificate to Museum Manager Adrian Kerr during a visit to the museum in early October. The museum team are very proud to be the only museum to be accredited in both the UK and Ireland museum accreditation schemes. Well done to all involved in meeting the requirements, and continuing to improve the museum's standards of governance, collections management and care, and visitor engagement!



*Accreditation Award Photography thanks to Peter Carson.*

*Page 10, Top: Receiving Full Accreditation certificates from Minister Gordon Lyons for Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Coleraine and Limavady Museums were members of the Causeway Coast and Glens Museum service team Sarah Calvin, Jamie Austin, and Rachael Marshall © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 10, Second from top: Representatives from Whitehead Railway Museum staff and trustees receive their Full Accreditation certificate: Dr Joan Smyth, Rachelle Crawford and Peter Stark. © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 10, Middle left: Dr Kris Reid and Kris Martin received their Full Accreditation certificate for Down County Museum. © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 10, Middle Right: Newry and Mourne Museum's certificate was received by members of the team: Joanne Glymond, Dympna Tumilty and Seamus Laverty and. © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 10, Bottom left: Receiving a Full Accreditation certificate for the Royal Irish Fusiliers Museum were members staff team Patrick Corvan and Aimee Reynolds © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 10, Bottom Right: Representatives from Mid and East Antrim Museum Service receive their Full Accreditation certificate for Carrickfergus Museum: Shirin Murphy and Jayne Clarke. © NI Museums Council.*

*Page 11, Top: Museum of Free Derry Manager Adrian Kerr was awarded the museum's first Full Accreditation in the UK scheme by Eva Lynch Development Officer NI Museums Council. © NI Museums Council.*





## NIMC Awards Over £110,000 to Empower Museums Across Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Museums Council (NIMC) is proud to announce that more than £110,000 in funding has been distributed across three major grant programmes. This funding supports museums across Northern Ireland by strengthening collections care, improving access, and creating engaging experiences for all ages.

### Museum Collections Capital Grants

Funded by the Department for Communities (DfC), this programme helps museums care for collections and make them more accessible.

#### Round 1: Over £14,000 awarded to:

- Fermanagh County Museum – storage solutions and digitisation equipment for local history archives.
- Linen Hall Library – conservation and digitisation of the Buzz Logan Photographic Archive.
- Armagh Robinson Library – protection of its historic pamphlet collection.
- Down County Museum – digitisation and improved storage for 50,000 historic photographs.
- Whitehead Railway Museum – conservation care for historic locomotives and artefacts.

*“These grants reflect our commitment to supporting museums in caring for collections, improving accessibility, and creating meaningful experiences for all audiences. By investing in innovation and inclusivity, we help ensure Northern Ireland’s heritage remains vibrant and accessible for generations to come.”*

*— Heather McGuicken Director,  
Northern Ireland Museums Council*

#### Round 2: £15,396 awarded to:

- Museum of Policing NI – New museum of Policing enabling works– packaging and storage equipment.
- Tower Museum – conservation of shirt factory quilts.
- Newry & Mourne Museum – installation of an “Object of the Month” display case.
- NI War Memorial – HVAC and environmental monitoring system for archives.



## Local Museums Small Capital Grants

With £80,000 provided by DfC through NI Museums Council, this programme supports improvements to museum spaces and visitor experiences:

- North Down Museum – expanding outreach through handling collections.
- Ballymoney Museum – refurbishment of the Museum Minis area for young families.
- Coleraine Museum – creation of a sensory wall display.
- F.E. McWilliam Gallery & Studio – installation of a Changing Places facility and new education rooms.
- Downpatrick & County Down Railway – accessibility enhancements including seating and hearing loops.
- Mid-Antrim Museum – flood protection measures for collections.
- Whitehead Railway Museum – inclusive access improvements including a sensory room.
- Mount Stewart House & Gardens – new educational resources and loan boxes.
- Newry & Mourne Museum – development of toys and clothing loan boxes for outreach.



## Playful Museums Festival Grants

To celebrate the February 2026 festival, £3,479 has been awarded to eight museums for creative early-years programming, supported by Art Fund:

- North Down Museum – Bringing Max's Story to Life: music and movement workshops inspired by the museum's own storybook.
- NI War Memorial – Jeannie's Adventure to the Countryside: interactive sessions and a visual story resource for under-fives.
- Ballymoney Museum – Exploring Wild Ireland: multi-sensory workshops linked to the Wild Ireland art exhibition.
- Newry & Mourne Museum – Myths and Music: storytelling and song based on Irish mythological tales.
- Whitehead Railway Museum – Sensory Steam: railway-themed sensory play designed for neurodivergent children.
- Armagh Robinson Library & No. 5 Vicars Hill – Willow's Curious Cabinet: heritage-themed sessions exploring migration and diversity.
- Fermanagh County Museum – Play Away: creative play workshops at the museum and Strule Arts Centre.

Additionally, outreach projects will provide resources and evaluation tailored for inclusive engagement.

Photography: Handling collection and previous Playful Museum event at NI local museums. © NIMC.





# Education and Outreach Forum 2025



On 26 May 2025, the Irish Museums Association (IMA) and the NI Museums Council (NIMC) once again came together to host the annual Education and Outreach Forum. This much-anticipated event brought over 70 delegates to Dublin for a day of reflection, discussion, and knowledge sharing around learning and community engagement projects across the island of Ireland.

The Forum has become a cornerstone in the cultural sector calendar, providing museum practitioners, educators, and cultural workers with a space to exchange ideas and explore the impact of museums on the communities they serve. With its informal and supportive atmosphere, the day fosters meaningful networking, collaboration, and professional growth.

This year's programme emphasised a theme of museums and their collections beyond traditional settings. Presentations highlighted innovative uses of objects and stories, from engaging audiences in shops, football stadiums, and prisons, to exploring digital initiatives and projects centred on nature and sustainability.

Delegates not only discovered fresh approaches to outreach but also had opportunities to critically reflect and contribute to the ongoing development of lifelong learning within the museum context. The Forum continues to inspire and strengthen the role of museums as vital spaces for dialogue, inclusion, and creativity. We look forward to welcoming practitioners back for the next Education and Outreach Forum in 2026.

Thank you to all of the inspiring speakers:

**Beyond the Frame:** a collaborative programme between Crawford Art Gallery and Cork Prison. Matt Ryan and Daniel Sexton, Crawford Art Gallery

**Bringing the Museum to the Charity Shop:** Engaging hard-to-reach demographics using place-based artefacts and storytelling. Taryn de Vere, Artist & Curator

**Creating a modern legacy for the distant past.** Siobhán Pierce & Matthew Lester, National Museum of Ireland

**The Jackie Clarke Collection:** A thriving civic space for education, engagement, and enjoyment. Ann Marie Forbes and Celene Brennan, Jackie Clarke Collection

**Growing in Confidence – Connecting young people with nature at National Museums NI.** Nigel Gilmore-Cook, National Museums NI

**Engaging young people through cross-departmental collaboration:** NMI's TY Programme. Diarmuid Bolger, National Museum of Ireland

**The James Joyce Centre Quiz:** Making James Joyce accessible through interactive digital technology. Darina Gallagher and Monica Galindo Gonzalez, The James Joyce Cultural Centre

**Making exhibitions & artefacts accessible:** Galway in Objects. Brendan McGowan, Galway City Museum

**Cú Chulainn's Quest – A museum journey for our youngest visitors** Julianne McKeigue, GAA Museum



# Making Waves at Newry and Mourne Museum



**In October Newry and Mourne Museum officially launched a new temporary exhibition, looking at the development of Newry as an international trading hub beginning almost 300 years ago.**

The exhibition, *Making Waves: Newry's Rise as a Global Trade Centre*, which opened on Thursday 16 October, explores how the influx of goods from around the world transformed the lives of people in and around the Port of Newry, forever changing the region. It also shows how the maritime trade provided employment for generations of local people, from merchants and sailors to dockers and customs officers.

Visitors will discover Newry's transformation into a bustling global marketplace, a story told through the Museum's collection of artefacts and information boards. Panels highlight a bustling trade of imported goods like minerals and sugar, which filled the warehouses of Sugar Island and Merchants Quay. In turn, products exported included Newry granite, whiskey and fine linen.

Among the items on display are everyday relics from this era, such as postcards, paper bags for loose tea, receipts for tobacco and flax seed and 18<sup>th</sup> century consignment notices for linen bound for America. We particularly loved these little water colours of the area on loan from Armagh County Museum.

Accompanying the exhibition is a complimentary booklet of essays written by museum staff and local



contributors, offering more information and providing greater detail on subjects such as businesses in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women's work and the port and emigration, as well as the historical development of the port itself.







FLOWERING AT HILLTOWN, CO. DOWN. M.G. 3

Whilst at the museum for the exhibition opening we chatted with the team about their upcoming projects. They have a lot of exciting work in the pipeline which they've summarised for us. If you are interested in learning more about these or have ideas for partnering or facilitation, do get in touch!

### Flowering in the Mournes: a history of women's needlework in Newry & Mourne

Funded by the PeacePlus programme, in May 2026 Newry & Mourne Museum will be launching a new initiative honouring the lives and craftsmanship of the region's thousands of piece-work embroiderers, known locally as flowerers, from the 1800s through to the 1970s.

A new display will showcase local whitework, a delicate embroidery technique where the stitching matches the colour of the linen. Complementing the display, a programme of talks, workshops and site visits will bring together needleworkers, historians, and textile artists with participants from local community groups to explore the shared lived experiences and enduring legacy of the region's needleworking women.

The initiative will also examine the socio-economic forces that shaped these women's lives – including the challenges of piece-working, credit systems, and economic precarity. By drawing parallels with contemporary issues such as zero-hours contracts, sweatshop labour, and debt, the programme aims to foster dialogue around historical and modern-day labour conditions for women.



### Generation Hope: Fixing Our Broken Planet April-May 2026

In partnership with the Natural History Museum, London, Newry & Mourne Museum is launching a thought-provoking programme examining the environmental impact of fashion and textile production from the 18th century to the present day. Anchored by our new exhibition Making Waves: Newry's Rise as a Global Trade Centre and the forthcoming Flowering in the Mournes display, alongside our permanent collections, the initiative will feature a dynamic series of talks, discussions, and workshops. These events are designed to engage young adults aged 18–24, encouraging critical





reflection on the historical and contemporary consequences of textile, dye, leather, and accessory production. The programme will explore how these industries have contributed to environmental degradation and climate change, while also highlighting ongoing challenges. Collaborating with artists, scientists, sustainable producers, designers, students, and community groups, we will investigate historical practices of repair and recycling and consider how these approaches can inspire more sustainable choices today.

#### A Home for All: the history and legacy of social housing in Newry & Mourne

Funded by the PeacePlus initiative, Newry & Mourne Museum will launch a major community engagement programme in January 2026, focused on the history, and lived experience of social housing in the region from the Middle Ages to the present day – from alms houses, workhouses, and workers' villages, to homes for heroes and post-war housing estates. Working closely with socially housed communities, as well as planners, architects, elected members, developers and historians, the project will explore the development of social housing locally, examine the social and political contributions of these communities, and engage with both historical and contemporary debates surrounding housing provision. Through a series of talks, workshops, and site visits, participants will contribute to an oral history project, the creation of a dedicated digital resource, and a community-curated exhibition to be unveiled at the museum in September 2026.

#### Photography:

Page 15, Top: NIMC Development Officer Eva Lynch joined the Newry and Mourne Museum team and the Council's Deputy Chairperson, Councillor Geraldine Kearns to celebrate the opening of the Making Waves exhibition. © Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Page 15, Middle: the Making Waves Exhibition space, © NI Museums Council.

Page 15, Bottom: 'Views of Newry and Carlingford Lough' Watercolours by John Colley Nixon (1755-1818) on loan from Armagh County Museum.

Page 16, Top: NMM.2007.46.16 Photo titled Flowering at Hilltown, Co. Down from Newry & Mourne Museum Collection.

Page 16, middle: Ellen, Countess of Kilmorey, known as Nellie, a fashion icon of the late 19th century. Photograph by Thompson from Newry & Mourne Museum Collection.

Page 17, top: Photo of Community Sports and Field Day in Jennings Park c. late 1970s / early 1980s from Newry & Mourne Museum Collection



# North Down Museum Launch: Max's Magical Visit to the Museum



Following the Ballymoney Museum launch in April 2025, 'Our Museum' celebrated the second pilot book with a special event at North Down Museum in June 2025.

The book, Max's Magical Visit to the Museum was the result of a collaboration between Bright Sparks Montessori Pre-School, author-illustrator Ellan Rankin and North Down Museum Education Officer, Ruth Verner. Together, they created a story that brings the museum's rich history to life through the eyes of a child discovering its treasures for the first time.

During a lively ceremony on Tuesday 17 June, The Deputy Mayor of Ards and North Down, Councillor Vicky Moore, congratulated the young artists and presented each child with a certificate and their very own copy of the book — complete with their name listed as a co-creator!

During the launch, the children played games with movement and music and even became mini museum detectives using Max's magical key that unlocked the museum galleries.



Max's Magical Visit to the Museum now has a special place in the Story Corner of the museum's Little Historians Gallery and is available at libraries across the borough — including Bangor, Comber, Donaghadee, Holywood, Newtownards, Portaferry, and on the Bangor Mobile Library.

The project has shown just how magical museums can be when seen through the eyes of a child — full of stories waiting to be told and adventures waiting to begin.

Photography: Thanks to North Down Museum.



# An Art Exhibition with a Difference



An exhibition seeking venues in Northern Ireland in 2026 had a positive trial experience in Armagh Robinson Library during October 2025. The title of the exhibition is 'Icons on Ammo Boxes' and is made up of artwork painted on the bases of empty ammunition boxes from Ukraine.

The artists are Sonya Atlantova and Oleksandr Klymenko from Kyiv. They have chosen to combine two contrasting objects in their artwork by using ammunition boxes to paint religious icons. Their aim is to transform death, linking with the ammunition box, into life, shown in Ukrainian life by an icon. The boxes have been brought from the war zone and the artists believe that the icons painted on these fragments are silent yet eloquent witnesses of the war. They also play another important role as they are for sale, with proceeds going to buy ambulances and evacuation vehicles on the front line in Ukraine.

The exhibition has been displayed in a wide range of venues throughout Europe, and the local Ukrainian community is keen that it will be viewed in more places, such as museums, from next year.

It has just moved to the University of St Andrew and the intention is to have the exhibition return for a number of venues in early Spring.

Armagh Robinson Library has had the pleasure of working with local Ukrainian families over a number of years. This relationship was started thanks to funding from NIMC for the Late Shift in 2022 which enabled the museum to run yoga classes in Ukrainian. Since then the local community has worked with the museum on the Global Voices, Local Choices project and on an art project, to name but two ventures.

Speaking about the 'Icons on Ammo Boxes' exhibition, Inna Shynkevich said, "This exhibition is very special to us because it shows how even in the darkest times, life and hope can be born out of destruction. We are honoured to bring it to Northern Ireland for the first time, and I sincerely hope that more venues across the region will open their doors so that as many people as possible can see these powerful works."

For further information, please contact Armagh Robinson Library.



## NIMC Training Update

Since our last Newsletter we have provided online and in person training and events that have been attended by 179 people from the NI museums sector and we have featured speakers from England, Wales and across the island of Ireland.

### LET'S TALK Series:

- Early Years & Museums (July)
- Balancing Preservation & Access (November)

### Training and Events

- Museums and the Law (May)
- Introduction to Hazards in Museum Collections (October)
- Museum Forum (September)

### Collaborative Events

- Creating Family Friendly Museums (December)
- IMA- NIMC Education and Outreach Forum (May)

To find out more and to book our training or events check out <https://nimc.co.uk/events/>

## Upcoming NIMC Training

*LET'S TALK: Intangible Cultural Heritage – 12<sup>th</sup> January*

*Becoming an Accreditation Mentor (in collaboration with Arts Council England)– 20<sup>th</sup> January*

*Acquisition and Accessioning with Object Entry – 27<sup>th</sup> January*

*Being an Accreditation Mentor (in collaboration with Arts Council England) – 24<sup>th</sup> February*

*LET'S TALK: Funding – 24<sup>th</sup> February*

*Location and Movement Control – 10<sup>th</sup> March*

*Disaster Planning and Emergency Salvage – 25<sup>th</sup> March*

*If you would like to know more about any of these sessions, please reach out to [catherine.doran@nimc.co.uk](mailto:catherine.doran@nimc.co.uk)*

*Or if you would like to hear about upcoming events, please join our mailing list and visit our website and social media.*

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