

Museum Accreditation

Section 1: Environmental sustainability

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors. We borrow it from our children."
Native American proverb

Helping to meet the requirements for environmental sustainability

The guidance in this resource is aimed at Museum Development Officers/ Museum Mentors and any museum developing their policy statement on environmental sustainability.

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1. What is meant by environmental sustainability?

Accreditation 2011 requires museums governing bodies to have an 'organisational approach to environmental sustainability' (requirement 1.10).

At the very least sustainability is "... about meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs." Maurice Davies. It is at the heart of what museums do and is embedded in the Code of Ethics for Museums: Section 8: Support the Protection of Natural and Human Environments (Museums Association 2008).



Environmental sustainability

Approach this topic in a positive frame of mind – prophecies of doom, global meltdown and change forced upon us foster denial and panic about what we can do to avert disaster. In the context of museum Accreditation, it is not yet another hoop to jump through.

Think rather what does it mean to be environmentally sustainable?

- ecologically literate
- stewards of nature
- climate smart
- to have the means to be happy and healthy

The carrot

Museums are uniquely effective at helping us understand our complex world, by putting objects into context and stimulating curiosity. With its focus on the preservation and passing on of collections, information and knowledge to future generations, sustainability in its broadest sense is fundamental to the museum profession.

In addition making your museum more environmentally sustainable and adopting positive action to raise the profile of sustainability within your organisation, it can save money, foster partnerships and make you eligible for grants: in short, contribute to your institution's resilience.

The stick

Responding to the issue of environmental sustainability is a legal requirement for national museums and local authorities: public bodies have an obligation to reduce their emissions by 25% by 2016. It may become so for other types of organisation. It is also a requirement of Accreditation 2011.

Accreditation requirement 1.10

Organisational approach to environmental sustainability

The museum must be environmentally conscious. Its approach to minimising waste and reducing its effect on the environment is a matter for the governing body.

The museum must be guided by a policy statement about its approach to environmental sustainability, and that policy statement must be appropriate to its statement of purpose.

Museums are required to submit a copy of their policy statement on environmental sustainability with their Accreditation return, together with evidence that it has been formally approved by the Governing Body. (<http://bit.ly/1MRRmNe>)

The guidance for the requirement states:

Environmental sustainability should be considered during the planning process.

- The approach to environmental sustainability should guide the collections care and conservation policy and plan.
- A separate policy document is not required in all cases, as the approach to sustainability will form part of a broader policy document or the forward plan.
- Accreditation recognises that it can be difficult to make some buildings energy efficient.
- Where steaming days etc are a core purpose of the museum then the museum should seek to balance the impact of these with other activities aimed at reducing environmental impact

So, it is not just about having a statement, but including its principles in your day to day management and strategic planning and having the evidence to demonstrate to the Accreditation assessor that you are doing this.

3. What does this mean in practice?

3.1 Two approaches

As a first step museums can focus on greening their operations by making technical changes to how they run the organisation.

The second, more in depth approach, is to incorporate environmental sustainability into your public-facing mission and develop learning and visitor programmes that address the topic.

Which is right for your museum? Follow the steps below to help you determine how your organisation will approach environmental sustainability and then distil this into the required policy statement.

3.2 Getting started

Environmental sustainability champion

Identify a specific member of the workforce to be your organisation's environmental sustainability 'green' champion. They can take the lead alone or gather a working group to help them. Ensure s/he has the authority to ask questions and the framework within which to report back, make suggestions and monitor actions.

See what's happening locally

All local authorities will have a sustainability policy and plan. It is worth seeking out the one for your authority even if you are an independent museum – there may be schemes to tap into, advice to garner or partnerships to build.

Where your museum is part of a larger organisation with an environmental sustainability policy, the museum must evidence how the museum implements that policy.

3.3 Audit the museum's current approach to environmental sustainability

3.3.1 Measuring the carbon footprint of your museum

This gives you a benchmark against which to measure the impact of any action you take to reduce your museum's impact on the environment. It is not necessary to do this unless you are going to make a substantial commitment to reduce your carbon footprint.

Renaissance East Midlands produced a comprehensive toolkit – Green Museums, a step by step guide (<http://bit.ly/1MAPKUJ>) - for auditing the environmental footprint of museums. It contains downloadable spreadsheets, templates, links to legislation, further sources, etc. More appropriate to a larger museum, it does contain information of use to everyone.

3.3.2 SWOT

Use either a SWOT analysis or the checklist below (3.3) for a less high tech and precise audit of your current performance and avenues for improvement.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	Threats



When doing a SWOT, think about

Use of resources: your use of energy, the type and age of plant you use, insulation, the condition and structure of the museum buildings, how you deal with waste, how economically you use materials, where you source materials for the museum from, whether you use environmentally friendly/sustainable materials (wood, cleaning products, paints, etc).

The perception of the workforce: how environmentally conscious the workforce and management are, whether they think it is something the museum should be involved with, whether it could benefit the museum, whether being more environmentally aware could be of financial benefit to the museum, how much time and resources you want to devote to this issue, how you would get workforce buy in if you introduced new measures.

The perception of the public: whether users are aware of the museum's environmental sustainability strategies, whether a raised profile on environmental sustainability would attract new audiences, raise the profile of the museum, open the door to new partnerships.

Your use of collections and museum site and your public programmes: whether environmental issues are addressed in permanent or temporary exhibitions (if not is there scope to do this?), whether parts of the site or customer offer (grounds, café, shop) could have an environmental sustainability focus.

3.3.3 Checklist

You may prefer to use the checklist below to audit your current practice and explore aspirations for the future.

As can the SWOT, it can be done by the 'green champions', the management group or by the whole workforce. Share the workload, make it fun and creative – it's more likely to be a positive exercise if you do.

Once done, highlight, prioritise and distil as set out at 2.1.2 and 2.1.2 above.

Museum environmental sustainability audit			
Date:.....			
	What you do now	What you can aim to do	Example
Utilities			
Heating Light Water			Water meter Change suppliers
Materials used / products sold			
Office Cleaning Toilets Display Workshop Café Shop Other			Green cleaning materials and regime Locally sourced food
Energy conservation			
Insulation Draft proofing Energy saving devices Positive action Other			Close doors Movement detectors
Waste:			
Office Staff room Café Public areas Workshop Food waste Garden Other			Materials recycling Composting Timber offcuts to schools
Transport			
Workforce Public			Cycle to work scheme
Public programmes			
Exhibitions Interpretation Events Activities Use of site Partnerships Other			Green themed exhibition Use grounds for community green project
Awareness of environmental sustainability issues			
Governing Body Management Paid workforce Volunteer workforce Partners Other			Hold briefing event Set up internal award scheme Appoint a green champion
Other areas of activity			

4. Drawing up the policy statement

Once done you have completed your audit the SWOT highlight what you'd like to do; what is a priority and what is a distant dream; what can you do with the resources and capacity you have and what you might be able to attract additional resources to achieve.

Distil this into your policy statement – remember a policy is the aims and standards you will work to (the what and the why), not the procedures you will follow (the how) or the plan whereby you will implement the policy (the what, when, who by).

Remember to:

- Make sure the Governing Body approves the statement and takes account of it when it is developing policy and its aims and objectives.
- Brief the workforce about it and any changes to working practices it involves.
- Include a copy of the statement in the induction materials for the Governing Body and the workforce.

5. Evidence required

You must submit a copy of the policy statement and a signed minute confirming its adoption by the Governing Body or person with delegated authority with your Accreditation return



The assessor will use the following questions to help determine if this requirement is fulfilled

- Is the statement realistic to the scale of the organisation?
- Is the policy reflected in the forward plan? The assessor will always look for evidence that the aims and objectives set out in the plan take account of the statement.
- Is the statement visible in the collections care and conservation policy and plan?
- Is the statement referenced in user services?

6. Resources and taking it further



“When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.”
John Muir

If you want to go further than 'greening' the internal operation of your museum by developing 'green' public programmes or tackling the three strands of sustainability (environmental, social and economic) there is plenty of guidance out there to help.

The materials below have been grouped into three rough categories depending on their main focus. However, most have useful cross-border information and links that are worth a look.

Measuring your environmental impact

Greener Museums Step by Step Guide, Renaissance East Midlands - A comprehensive guide to measuring the environmental impact of your museum operation
<http://www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=282631>

Museum Practice, May 2010, Carbon Footprinting, Case studies and information
<http://www.museumsassociation.org/museum-practice/carbon-footprinting>

Turning Green - A Rural Museums Network project in 2008 which includes a toolkit to measure your carbon footprint - www.ruralmuseums.specialistnetwork.org.uk/resources

Greener Museums healthcheck - A benchmarking tool to measure how environmentally aware your organisation is <http://swfed.org.uk/images/resources/sustainability/Greener-Museums-Organisational-Sustainability-Assessment.pdf>

The Carbon Trust – A not-for-profit company providing specialist support to help business and the public sector boost business returns by cutting carbon emissions, saving energy and commercialising low carbon technologies. www.carbontrust.co.uk

Evidencing Social and Environmental Impacts: AIM Advocacy Toolkit – how to demonstrate the impact your programmes are having. <http://www.swfed.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/AIM-Evidencing-social-and-env-impacts.pdf>

Becoming more environmentally sustainable through operational change and public programmes

Preserve the Past, Protect the Future, a green guide for museums – Case studies and report from the Renaissance North West sustainability project which deal with several aspects of museums' public programmes as well as organisational operation.
http://www.swfed.org.uk/images/content-media/resources/forward-planning/documents/GreenMuseums_v5.pdf

Museums for the Future was a project run by the Green SLIME initiative and Renaissance South East. It produced a development toolkit to help museums become the centre of a sustainable community. The toolkit contains an information pack, powerpoint to kickstart discussion, facilitator's notes, delegate handouts and a directory of further information. It focuses on your public-facing mission, your learning and visitor programmes, rather than technical changes to your operations. <http://abcOfWorkingWithSchools.org.uk/widening-access/museums-for-the-future/>

Turning Green Collections Toolkit –part of the Rural Museums Network project in 2008 provides ideas on how present day concerns about environmental sustainability can be interpreted using the collections in rural museums <http://www.swfed.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/rural-museums-collectionstoolkit.pdf>

Environmental Sustainability Report, Arts Council England, 2011 describes how a planned programme to reduce the organisation's environmental impact has produced considerable financial savings. <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/browse-advice-and-guidance/environmental-sustainability-report>

Greener Museums, case studies and blog - Greener Museums is a sustainability company that serves museums and the cultural sector. It works with museums of all kinds and sizes, all over the world, to help accelerate progress towards sustainability. The website includes

newsletters, a blog and case studies which all have ideas and strategies to get you started, <http://www.greenmuseums.org/>

Sustainability across all areas

Museums & Art Galleries Survival Strategies – Renaissance North West and Arup a guide to reducing operating costs and improving sustainability
(http://swfed.org.uk/images/resources/sustainability/MAG_survival_strategies_Arup.pdf)

Studies in Partnership – Renaissance East of England sustainability project which describes a range of public programmes and organisational change with sustainability at their heart
<http://www.swfed.org.uk/resource/forward-planning/step-4-carry-out-research/>

The Museums Association Sustainability Campaign, 2008 - investigates environmental, social and economic sustainability. The site contains discussion, guidance, case studies and links to other sources of advice.
<http://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/sustainability/sustainability-report>,

Mandan, R., 2011, *Sustainable Museums: Strategies for the 21st Century*, with case study contributions from practitioners around the world, MuseumsEtc, Edinburgh

Julie's Bicycle - helps make environmental sustainability intrinsic to the business, art and ethics of the music, theatre and creative industries. A non-profit providing expertise in environmental sustainability, it offers practical advice, tools, resources and Industry Green environmental certification, informed by world-leading research into the environmental impacts of the creative industries. <http://www.juliesbicycle.com>

Freecycle – Freecycle groups match people who have things they want to get rid of with people who can use them. Useful for office or exhibition fittings (not accessioned collections!) <http://uk.freecycle.org/>

Reuseful UK - Formerly known as Scrapstore, Reuseful UK supports reuse of resources for community benefit through the diversion of clean reusable scrap waste materials from businesses. Useful for materials for activities and workshops. <http://www.scrapstoresuk.org/>

Sustainability and 'green' awards and badging

Environmentawards – lists a whole range of awards relating to sustainability and green practice. www.environmentawards.net/

Green Tourism Business Scheme - The GTBS is the national sustainable tourism certification scheme for the UK. The Scheme's website says: 'Green tourism is a powerful tool for businesses, delivering demonstrable environmental benefits, operating efficiencies and cost savings; as well as by providing consumers with a clear and credible signpost to sustainable tourism products and services.' <http://www.green-business.co.uk>

"The biggest threat to this planet is the belief that someone else will save it."
Robert Swan

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