

Promoting diversity and inclusion in small rural museums

Every museum is different in the way they are governed, funded and operated. We collaborated with six museums in Cornwall and the [Inclusivity Project](#) to find out how diversity and inclusion (D&I) works for museums in a rural setting.

Together we discussed the challenges and opportunities for recruiting a diverse workforce at small rural museums, and our aspirations for building inclusive workplaces for our staff and volunteers.

What does diversity & inclusion mean for small museums?

“Diversity is what’s different about people, and inclusivity is involving all those differences in the work that we do”.

The museums agreed that D&I are equally important to achieving their goals. Museums need to attract a wide talent pool that represents everyone in their community, while promoting inclusivity amongst staff and volunteers.

What challenges do small museums face?

Small museums face interlinking challenges that impact the success of D&I practices. When recruiting, smaller museums are often restricted by lower pay grades, specific qualifications or experience. This makes it challenging to attract a range of applicants for new positions.

Recruiting people from different ages, sexes, ethnicities and skill sets is also dependent on who lives locally. In Cornwall, [1 in 4 people](#) are over the age of 65. This reflects our volunteer communities and impacts other challenges.

At an organisational level, managing diversity requires flexibility and adjustment. This is difficult for smaller teams who rely on the support of volunteers. This highlights the

need to train both staff and volunteers by first reducing knowledge gaps at governance and management levels.

What opportunities can small museums embrace?

Operationally, every museum is unique, but the principles of D&I remain the same. These can be integrated within our organisational values and embedded into workplace culture by governance and management teams.

Encouraging staff and volunteers to understand different perspectives can build awareness of people’s needs so that gaps in D&I practices can be ‘seen’. Valuing transparency and communication will enable open and honest conversations to bridge those gaps.

Paving the way for diversity and inclusion

The pathway to achieving a diverse and inclusive workforce is different for every museum. Together, we have developed a set of aspirations to foster a vibrant and thriving museum workforce across Cornwall. We hope you will join us on the journey.

What are our aspirations?

- 1. To be aware of who we are as an organisation** to shape diversity and inclusion.

“Everyone’s version of what they need is not going to look the same”.

- 2. To challenge the status quo** to meet our goals, be flexible and seek new approaches.

“Empowerment for anybody at any level... so they feel able to contribute and help shape the culture and direction of an organisation”

- 3. Promote open and honest communication** and champion accessible recruitment processes.

“You need to be achieving a diversity of outcomes, and a diverse workforce to get you there”

- 4. Recruit differently** by embracing inclusive approaches to support new and more applicants.

“What is your model of change and how will you implement it?”

- 5. Zero tolerance to discrimination** across all levels and aspects of our workplace practices.

“When you address somebody’s extra need, it tends to benefit more people than you realise”

