

The Network Newsletter: tackling social exclusion in libraries, museums, archives and galleries

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The Network's Website is at www.seapn.org.uk and includes information on courses, good practice, specific socially excluded groups, as well as the newsletter archive.

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Did you see ...?

Museums Journal

The Sep/Oct 2022 issue is a special issue devoted to climate justice. It includes:

- Geraldine Kendall Adams “Museums need to fight for change” (“Analysis” column), which highlights the “Museums for Climate Justice”¹ campaign [pp6-7].

The MA Campaign states that:

“The MA will support museums across the UK to:

1. Raise awareness: use your collections, programmes, exhibitions and learning and engagement work to explore climate and ecological issues and encourage audiences to take action for climate justice.
2. Champion change: work with all partners to implement regenerative policies in your local area.
3. Be the change: embed climate action across all decision making and processes. Focus on having a net positive impact and make sure your organisation’s footprint is as low as it can go. Commit to targets for reducing energy and water consumption, waste and carbon emissions.

As part of this campaign, the MA will:

4. Advocate on behalf of the sector to increase resources and facilitate partnership working on climate and ecological issues.
 5. Continue to reduce the MA’s climate impact further by implementing our own sustainability plan.
 6. Embed climate activism across all MA campaigns and activities, taking an intersectional approach with a focus on climate and social justice.”²
- Geraldine Kendall Adams “Learning to let go” (“Analysis” column), which looks at some of the changes of thinking that are required, eg that “[...] the preservation-at-all-costs mindset, the perpetual growth of collections and visitor figures – are no longer sustainable.” This also includes the urgent need to be able to alter buildings to allow us to achieve carbon net zero. (This article also has an inset column from Nick Merriman, arguing that museums need to be able to “forget”, ie dispose of collections.) [pp8-9]

¹ See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-for-climate-justice/>.

² Taken from: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-for-climate-justice/mfcj-introduction/>.

- Feimatta Conteh “Working life” (“People” column), which looks at her work as Manchester International Festival’s Environment Sustainability Manager [p10]
- Pooja Kishinani and Marion Smith “Using the arts to create spaces for community, care and justice”³ (“Comment” column), which looks at the role that museums can play in tackling eco-anxiety⁴ [p12]
- Amy Czuba “Museums’ environmental policies must include digital” (“Digital” column), which stresses the importance of assessing the environmental impact of our digital work: “Every time a webpage is accessed, every time an email is sent, every time a file is downloaded, carbon is emitted.” [p12]
- Jacob Ellis “The future demands bravery and innovation on the climate crisis”⁵, which looks at the likely impact of the “Wellbeing of Future Generations Act” in Wales, which “[...] obliges public institutions to maximise their contribution towards seven national wellbeing goals.” [p13]
- Sufina Ahmad “Funders must help museums face climate crisis, but the question is how”⁶ (“Comment” column), in which the Director of the John Ellerman Foundation⁷ looks at the role of funding bodies [p15]
- Rachael Rowley “The power of climate and culture partnerships”⁸ (“Policy” column), which very briefly looks at the start of the involvement of Museums Galleries Scotland in some climate partnerships [p15]
- Sria Chatterjee “Climate and colonialism” [pp16-21], which argues that “Making the link between our capitalist and colonial pasts and its consequences on our present and future allows us to work towards more equitable futures [...]” [p20]
- John Holt “The great outdoors”, which looks at ecomuseums⁹ which, he argues, should have a bright future through their work in engaging communities [pp22-25]

³ See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/opinion/2022/09/creating-spaces-for-community-care-and-justice/>.

⁴ See, for example: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/oct/06/eco-anxiety-fear-of-environmental-doom-weighs-on-young-people>.

⁵ See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/opinion/2022/09/tackling-the-climate-crisis-needs-bravery-and-innovation/>.

⁶ See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/opinion/2022/09/how-can-funders-can-help-address-the-climate-crisis/>.

⁷ See: <https://ellerman.org.uk/>.

⁸ See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/opinion/2022/09/the-power-of-climate-partnerships/>.

⁹ “An ecomuseum is a museum focused on the identity of a place, largely based on local participation and aiming to enhance the welfare and development of local communities.” Taken from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecomuseum>.

- “The bigger picture”, in which activists, environmentalists, writers and academics discuss how they see museums addressing the climate crisis [pp26-29]
- Rebecca Atkinson interviews Jacqueline Patterson¹⁰ “A just transition” [pp30-33], which looks at “[...] climate justice, creating change and empowering communities to tell their own stories”¹¹ [p30]
- Lorraine Finch “Sustainability success” (“In Practice” column), which looks at some low/no-cost ways for museums to work more environmentally sustainably¹² [pp56-57]
- “Key terms”, a glossary of phrases and words used around the climate emergency [pp60-61]
- Emma Gittins “Sustainable shopping” (“In Practice” column), which is a case study of how Manchester Museums are aiming to make their shop sustainable [p63]
- “Climate resources bank”, a list of resources, toolkits and strategies¹³ [pp64-65].

The MA also has a range of case studies on their website¹⁴.

Books for Keeps

The latest issue¹⁵ includes:

- Karen Sands-O’Connor and Darren Chetty “Beyond the Secret Garden: Talking About Racism in Children’s Books”, which looks at coverage of racism in children’s books [pp14-15].

¹⁰ “Jacqueline Patterson is the founder and executive director of the Chisholm Legacy Project, a resource hub for Black frontline climate justice leadership.”

¹¹ See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/people/2022/09/a-just-transition/#:~:text=She%20serves%20on%20the%20boards,and%20the%20Emerald%20Cities%20Collaborative..>

¹² Lorraine Finch is the author of: *Low cost/no cost tips for sustainability in cultural heritage: reduce your impact on the planet*. Self-published, Apr 2022, 978-1802274417. Cost approx £9.99.

¹³ See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-for-climate-justice/climate-resources-bank/>.

¹⁴ See: <https://www.museumsassociation.org/campaigns/museums-for-climate-justice/mfcj-case-studies/>.

¹⁵ *Books for Keeps*, 255, Jul 2022, <https://booksforkeeps.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/BfK-255-July-2022-single-pages.pdf>.

Tackling social and digital exclusion – Government, Government Agencies and Local Government

Ending rough sleeping for good

This new strategy¹⁶ was published in early Sep 2022:

“This strategy sets out how the whole of government is taking action to meet our ambition to end rough sleeping, reflecting on the significant progress that has been made since the 2018 Rough Sleeping Strategy.”

In summary:

“This strategy will build on what works and will bring forward new measures to deliver the step change required to end rough sleeping, by:

- “Defining what ending rough sleeping means, underpinned by a new data-led framework to measure it [...]
- £2bn investment over the next three years [...]
- A new ‘prevention first’ approach that means people are better prevented from sleeping rough in the first place [...]
- A new £200m Single Homelessness Accommodation Programme, to deliver up to 2,400 homes and wraparound support by March 2025. This will provide new supported housing and Housing First accommodation and homes, including for young people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping [...]
- A whole system approach that puts the needs of those experiencing rough sleeping at its heart and ensures strong national and, most importantly, local leadership and accountability to deliver rough sleeping outcomes.” [pp13-14]

In addition, the strategy makes the following commitments:

- No-one should leave prison homeless or to sleep rough
- Young people leaving care will receive the support they need to secure and maintain suitable accommodation
- No-one should be discharged from hospital to the streets
- No-one who has served in the UK Armed Forces should face the need to sleep rough
- We will review the impact of the new asylum dispersal system on homelessness and rough sleeping [taken from pp15-16]

There have been similar commitments in the recent past. This new strategy has received a largely positive response from homelessness and housing organisations, for example:

¹⁶ *Ending rough sleeping for good*. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2022, Web version: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ending-rough-sleeping-for-good/ending-rough-sleeping-for-good#executive-summary>; pdf: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1102408/20220903_Ending_rough_sleeping_for_good.pdf.

“Leading homelessness charity St Mungo’s welcomes the Government’s ambitious new rough sleeping strategy ‘Ending Rough Sleeping for Good’ [...]

St Mungo’s further welcomes the strategy’s whole system approach to tackling the root cause of rough sleeping, including a focus on strengthened partnerships, improved employment support, and investment in mental health and drug and alcohol provision.”¹⁷

Big Issue notes highlights from the strategy, but also warns:

“But it is pretty clear that without extensive support, there is going to be a rise in homelessness. The strategy notes the government will ‘support tenants with the cost of living by ensuring rent increases are predictable and fair’ through rent reforms and tackle supply issues through the Affordable Housing Programme.”¹⁸

The LGA notes:

“The strategy makes some positive steps towards the ultimate goal of ending rough sleeping, and councils and the LGA look forward to continuing to work with government to develop and implement any new plans.”

However, it adds:

“Additionally, we are concerned that the strategy fails to introduce anything new to address the national lack of affordable housing, or around preventing destitution for No Recourse for Public Funds (NRPF) customers, and councils would like to see the current welfare policy reformed.”¹⁹

This theme is also picked up by Praxis who welcome the strategy, but warn:

“But there are a number of important gaps in the strategy, which will continue to limit the Government’s ability to deliver on its manifesto commitment to end rough sleeping.

1. It fails to take sufficient account of the role of all Home Office policies in driving homelessness, effectively ignoring the areas in which action is most needed to prevent rough sleeping amongst non-UK nationals. For the non-UK national population – which made up a quarter of all rough sleepers in 2021 (and almost half in London) – action is limited to reviewing the effects of the asylum dispersal system on local authorities. The inadequacies of the

¹⁷ Taken from: <https://www.mungos.org/st-mungos-welcomes-the-new-rough-sleeping-strategy/>.

¹⁸ Taken from: <https://www.bigissue.com/news/housing/rough-sleeping-strategy-homelessness-liz-truss/>.

¹⁹ Taken from: <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/lga-responds-rough-sleeping-strategy>.

asylum system do drive homelessness amongst this group, but so too do a whole host of the Government's immigration policy choices. Yet the strategy is silent on these;

2. As a result, there's not enough emphasis on prevention for non-UK nationals. Ensuring that all those with restricted eligibility for public funds have a clear pathway off the streets is enormously important, but this will do nothing to prevent people continuing to be forced onto the streets by an uncaring immigration system, which forces people to live precarious lives with no access to the welfare safety net;
3. The strategy draws a false and unhelpful distinction between people who are here 'legally' and 'illegally', concluding that a person here 'illegally' is not worthy of support. This fails to recognise the role that the fiendishly complicated and expensive immigration system plays in pushing people out of status. As research by JCWI found in 2021, most people who don't have regular immigration status arrived in the UK via a 'legal' route, but later lost their status for a range of reasons. Having no status makes it much more likely that a person will become destitute and may end up sleeping rough, without any way to access the support they need."²⁰

This is an important new strategy, but we need to see how it is implemented, especially given the gaps in it (noted above).²¹

LGBTQ+ issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

Banning of LGBTQ+ books and other library materials [continued]

The anti-LGBTQ+ lobby is getting louder – and more dangerous.

In the US, for example²²:

“People in this western Michigan farming town said the Patmos Library was ‘grooming’ children and, according to fliers that one group printed, promoting an ‘LGBTQ ideology.’ They said bookshelves meant for young readers featured same-sex pornography. They called the staff pedophiles, McLaughlin said. Then one August morning, they voted to defund Jamestown’s only public library, jeopardizing the institution’s

²⁰ Taken from: <https://www.praxis.org.uk/news/reaction-government-launches-new-strategy-to-end-rough-sleeping>.

²¹ Source: *Equally Ours Newsletter*, 8 Sep 2022.

²² Source: IFLA LGBTQ on Facebook 5 Sep 2022.

future as neighbors clashed over who gets to decide free speech in this deep-red corner of America.”²³

Closer to home (and following on from the item in last month’s *Newsletter*):

“LGBTQ+ activists had a drag queen’s back after her story hour session was targeted by protestors.

About 300 activists formed a ‘protective ring’ around Aida H Dee’s event at Oxfordshire County Library on Tuesday (23 August), overwhelming the estimated 50 protesting it.”²⁴

Broader issues – Libraries, Museums, Archives and Cultural and Heritage Organisations

“Contested heritage” and “Culture wars”

“‘We’ve moved backwards’: US librarians face unprecedented attacks amid rightwing book bans”

A frightening article²⁵ in *The Guardian*, looking at the impact of “a conservative censorship craze”:

“This summer, Kuhl [26] and a group of colleagues planned to launch a bookmobile – a library in a bus that would visit various sites across town, including three schools. But when a law criminalizing anybody who makes visually explicit materials available at a school went into effect in late August, they decided to keep the bookmobile away from schools.”

The article continues:

“Conservative parent groups that formed to oppose masks during the pandemic, only to pivot to the fight against ‘critical race theory’, have now begun to focus on scrutinizing books, often by and about queer and

²³ Danielle Paquette “A Mich. library refused to remove an LGBTQ book. The town defunded it.”, *The Washington Post*, 24 Aug 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2022/08/24/michigan-library-defunded-gender-queer/?fbclid=IwAR2gHU90HdynxzEL2GNNklitQI5Go4p4-5DtzmR0XQq2JsRNaBAP8W8PfO0>.

²⁴ Amelia Hansford “Hundreds gather to protect Drag Queen Story Hour from vile anti-LGBTQ+ protest”, *PinkNews*, 24 Aug 2022, https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2022/08/24/aida-h-dee-drag-queen-story-hour-protests/?utm_source=piano&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=mypinknews&pnes_pid=rqFpUCJbP6EA06KdqWqsHsKCpww0CoplNrewkPNk.kxmJGPdXt0BJZO4joBj50l_45HU0IBkxg.

²⁵ Lauren Mechling “‘We’ve moved backwards’: US librarians face unprecedented attacks amid rightwing book bans”, *The Guardian*, 20 Sep 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2022/sep/20/librarians-banned-books-attacks-library>.

²⁶ Jason Kuhl, St Charles City County Library, Missouri.

Black people, and lobbying for their removal from library shelves. Politicians have hopped on the bandwagon, drafting legislation to supposedly protect children against indoctrination and predation, calling out books by name and making it impossible for the people who run schools and libraries to do their jobs. Fringe activists and government officials are taking to social media, holding meet ups, and riling up their bases with reports of indoctrination, propaganda and the supposedly pornographic materials that lurk on the bookshelves of public institutions.”²⁷

Abbreviations and acronyms

JCWI = Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants

LGA = Local Government Association

MA = Museums Association

Mich. = Michigan

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²⁷ Source: *Public Libraries News*, 25 Sep 2022.