

Meet the Changemakers event on Manchester Museum Top Floor. Credit: Manchester Museum.

Joint winners of the Sustainable Project of the Year Award at the Museums + Heritage Awards 2024, Manchester Museum and Museum Development England, share their tips for growing a Carbon Literate museum community.

The project

Roots and Branches is a two-part project testing new ways for museums to care for people and planet as well as collections.

Roots, based in Manchester Museum, has engaged a local network of climate action groups in a new coworking hub. **Branches**, led by Museum Development England's North team, has helped museums across the UK develop new skills with peer-to-peer training in Carbon Literacy.

Together the two arms of the project aim to build a heritage sector that better understands environmental sustainability and is fully equipped for the future.

Working with Manchester-based charity, The Carbon Literacy Project, Museum Development North has developed the first Carbon Literacy Toolkit specifically for museums.

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The Manchester Museum team engaging in Carbon Literacy training. Credit: Manchester Museum.

Bringing people together

Hannah Hartley, Environmental Action Manager at Manchester Museum, says: “Roots aimed to use the position of the museum, both physically and civically, as a way to connect people and convene different groups to interrogate the museum’s role in climate action.”

As for Branches, Alison Criddle, Museum Development Adviser: Environmental Responsibility at Museum Development North, says: “There’s so much appetite for collaboration in the sector. Responding to demand and bringing people together has been an exciting challenge.”

The organisations

Manchester Museum is part of the University of Manchester and is the world’s first Carbon Literate museum. Museum Development North is part of Museum Development England, a partnership delivering development activity for the museum sector.

The funding

Roots and Branches was supported by a £136,750 Arts Council England National Lottery Project Grant. The project coincided with and built on wider redevelopment work that Manchester Museum carried out with funding from The



The Top Floor space at Manchester Museum. Credit: Manchester Museum.

The results

So far Roots has hosted 14 co-working residencies, supported volunteers with 132 hours of climate action learning and engaged over 4,000 people through events.

Through their Carbon Literacy training programme, Branches have now trained over 1,300 individuals from over 370 organisations.

Sustainable Project of the Year Award

Roots and Branches was joint winner of the sustainability category at the Museums + Heritage Awards 2024, sharing first prize with The Scottish Crannog Centre. The prize, which is sponsored by the Heritage Fund, recognises projects which are responding to the climate crisis in innovative and inspiring ways.

Hannah says: “Winning the Sustainable Project of the Year Award has been really valuable for us in terms of building the profile of the project. The award acknowledges that what we’re doing is new and is having an impact.”



Manchester Museum staff on their pop-up stand at Ardwick Climate Action Day. Credit: Manchester Museum.

The future

For Roots, the next steps will be to reflect on the project evaluation and what they've achieved so far. Manchester Museum hopes that by continuing to develop the space they'll be able to build on the success of the project, reaching out to new partners and deepening their engagement with the community.

Branches has been extended for another two years to help give even more museums across England the tools to engage in environmental action. Between 2024 and 2026 Museum Development England, led by the North team are co-ordinating an online programme of Carbon Literacy courses, trainer support sessions and Seeds for Action workshops to allow organisations to connect and pool expertise.

Top tips

Alison and Hannah share their advice for delivering an environmentally-responsible project:

- **Go out and speak to people.** By reaching out to partners you'll build trust in your project and help bring everyone on board with your values.
- **Explore what is unique to your project and where your energy can be best used.**
- **Be open to challenging traditional ways of doing things.** Be flexible about changing your practices and encourage others to do the same.
- **Engage in training and continue to learn constantly.**

- **Keep pushing forward together.** There is a community of Carbon Literate heritage professionals there to support you.

Developing your own project?

Our environmental sustainability guidance provides information on how to plan a heritage project with the planet in mind.



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Rickshaw being painted as part of the South Asia Gallery at Manchester Museum Manchester Museum



following ambitious transformation



Some of the team stand in front of the newly completed roundhouses. Photo: The Scottish Crannog Centre.

Case study: The Scottish Crannog Centre