



Role profile

Role: Museum Accreditation Specialist

Project: The Rum Story Re-Imagined Project

Organisation: Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners

Overview of role

We want to appoint a Museum Accreditation Specialist to help us decide if The Rum Story should work towards becoming an accredited museum rather than a visitor attraction.

The Rum Story

The Rum Story visitor attraction in Whitehaven tells the history of the Jefferson family's business, which involved rum, shipping and the trading and enslavement of African people. The history of the Jefferson family sits alongside a wider history of Whitehaven as a significant shipping port, built first on mining and then by the wealth generated by the Transatlantic trade of enslaved African people. The town was one of the most important UK ports. This allowed some people to generate wealth through involvement in trading enslaved African people.

Set in the original 1785 shop, cellars, bonded warehouse and courtyard of the Jefferson family business, the attraction depicts life in 18th century Whitehaven. History is in abundance. The ground floor immerses visitors in an Antiguan rainforest before sugar plantations were there. The first floor looks like a ship and covers what life was like in African villages before people were enslaved, the Transatlantic trade and trafficking of enslaved African people, and making rum. The second floor is about rum, the navy, the Jeffersons, prohibition, pirates and Whitehaven. This video gives you a sense of the current attraction - <https://youtu.be/udam0OLP23k?si=8m6T0AD5xuUT1908>.

The Rum Story Re-Imagined Project

The Rum Story was created in 2000 and needs to become more accessible, inclusive and engaging. The way it currently tells history aligns with how it is told by the wider heritage sector and dilutes the extent of Britain's role in the Transatlantic trade of enslaved African people and how it profited. The Rum Story Re-Imagined Project is interested in exploring how that history can be told in an honest, in-depth way. The attraction talks about enslavement, but the way history is told is often shaped by who had the power and means to dominate the narrative at the time. We want to ensure that narratives not currently told or told in a harmful way in The Rum Story are heard and told better.

It's a partnership project between Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners and Anti Racist Cumbria that aims to address these issues and put Whitehaven firmly on the UK heritage map. [Anti Racist Cumbria](#) is a charity, tackling racism through action and education to

create a forward-thinking and actively anti-racist Cumbria. [Whitehaven Harbour Commissioners](#) is a not-for-profit organisation which is the custodian of Whitehaven Harbour and owns The Rum Story. All revenue generated is reinvested back into the harbour and wider estate for the benefit of its community.

Here are the project's aims:

1. Lots more people from all walks of life visit The Rum Story and come back again
2. The attraction is more accessible, thought-provoking and innovative
3. A complete history is told, including less well-known narratives
4. People get interested in our shared heritage - curious about how past links to present
5. Local people actively participate in preserving and sharing Whitehaven's heritage
6. The team becomes upskilled on best practice in telling histories of enslavement
7. Wider social and economic benefits are generated for the local area

Find out more on our website rumstory.co.uk/about/rum-story-re-imagined, or through this short film https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hif_pwDOnd0.

Phase 1 (2025-26) has been made possible by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Its focus has been on finding out how people think we should achieve our aims, using these ideas to create a recommendations report and implementing some of the early recommendations to improve the attraction. We have reached out to individuals, businesses, creative and community organisations, schools, universities, researchers, think tanks, funders, government, museums and more to gather feedback/ideas - through workshops, events, surveys and meetings. Phase 2 (2026-30, subject to funding) will be about working to put the rest of the recommendations into place.

By March 2026 we aim to deliver the following through the project:

- Tangible improvements to the attraction that make it more engaging and accessible and tell the history in a way that is shaped by the community, and which doesn't shy away from recounting a full picture.
- A report based on the consultation process that sets out recommendations and a feasibility study for a plan to deliver Phase 2 of the project, by 2030 - activities to achieve project aims that require more resource and time to be delivered.
- An independent evaluation of this National Lottery Heritage Funded project and the impacts that Phase 1 has had - intended and unintended.

[The Museum Accreditation Specialist brief, budget and timeframe](#)

We are looking to appoint a Museum Accreditation Specialist to help us decide if The Rum Story should become an accredited museum or if it should remain as a visitor attraction. This person will be responsible for producing a report that:

- Identifies and analyses the pros and cons of both options:
 1. Becoming an accredited museum
 2. Remaining as an unaccredited visitor attraction
- Sets out what we would need to do to achieve accredited museum status and the costs and timeframes involved
- Recommends which option is best and why

We expect the report to be informed by conversations with the Rum Story Re-Imagined Project Manager and team, project consultation/engagement findings (that we have already collated), your own expertise and experience, and desk research.

This role will be line-managed by The Rum Story Re-Imagined Project Manager. Some work will need to take place on site, but much can take place remotely. All work, including the final report will need to be completed and submitted by 31 January 2026.

We have a budget of up to £4,030 to contract someone on a self-employed basis in this role, assuming a day rate of up to £310 and up to 13 days of work. We also have a small travel, subsistence and accommodation budget we can make available if required.

Experience, skills and qualities

We are looking for someone with experience of:

- Working in a museum or heritage context
- Helping a heritage/visitor attraction work towards museum accreditation status
- Producing recommendation/feasibility reports in heritage settings
- Applying an anti-racist/anti-oppression approach

How to apply

Given the tight delivery timeframe, this opportunity has a rolling deadline, which means that there's no set deadline for when applications will close. Instead, we will review applications on an ongoing basis, closing them once we have found a suitable candidate.

To apply, email Katy Haigh, The Rum Story Re-Imagined Project Manager, your:

- CV
- Covering letter - detailing:
 1. Why you want to work with The Rum Story on this project
 2. Why you are suitable for this role, giving examples of relevant experience
 3. Two referees

Please keep each document to a maximum of 2 A4 pages long.

We particularly welcome applications from Black and Global Majority people.

Feel free to email katy.haigh@rumstory.co.uk with any questions about the role.

Care package

Leading this piece of work will involve working closely with challenging and potentially triggering histories of enslavement and its legacies. Because of this we are offering all project team members and participants (including this role) access to funded [racial trauma and wellbeing support](#) from Rowan Carr, who is qualified in Embodied Coaching and Somatic Approaches to Healing Racial Trauma.

We will also support you through:

- The opportunity to debrief after meetings/events
- Access to desk space/meeting rooms while they are unused
- The use of organisational resources, such as printers, where possible
- Access to free training resources that are available to the wider project team