

Happy Museum (HM) stimulates and supports museum practice that places **wellbeing** within an **environmental and future-facing** frame, rethinking museums' role in creating more resilient people, places and planet. Through academic research, thought leadership, peer networking, advocacy, training and action, HM works directly with over 70 UK museums and impacted many more through events and an online presence which stretches globally. The Community of Practice's vision for HM is of: A space to experiment with museum practice, through principles of care, inclusion and collaboration, in a critical time of change.

What Happy Museum has achieved since its launch in 2011

Since 2011, and with investment from PHF, ACE, CyMAL and the Wales Federation of Museums, HM has:

- Funded creative interventions in 22 museumsⁱ leading to individual development and organisational change (2011 14).
- Undertaken evaluation using the Story of Change taking learning from creative interventions and research to develop a set of common principles see below.
- Created a suite of case studies, evaluation tools and resources for use by the wider sector with a relaunched website (happymuseum.org) to guide practitioners in How to Be a HM.
- In 2015 brought together 6 museumsⁱⁱ in an in-depth 5-year study into the impact of action research and peer learning on individual, organisational and community resilience.
- In 2017-8, recruited 17 Affiliateⁱⁱⁱ organisations to form an expanded Community of Practice, engaging c 200 participants from museum teams, volunteers, partners and communities with the HM principles, developing new practice and sharing learning through facilitated workshops and pairings.
- Held regular symposia bringing the Community of Practice alongside representatives from think tanks, NGOs and academia in fields such as energy, public health, economics, psychology and neuroscience.
- Shared learning with the wider sector through a programme of open workshops around themes including co-production, ethics, greening the museum, measuring what matters and play.
- Developed partnerships for impact within and beyond the sector including Julie's Bicycle, Culture 24, Battersea Arts Centre, Common Cause Foundation contributing to the Museums Environmental Framework, the Co-creating Change programme and resources for values based and digital museum practice.
- Developed complementary activity in Wales where a group of six museums^{iv} worked to align HM principles with the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and in Scotland with an emergent Cantie Museums group, with the backing of Museums and Galleries Scotland.
- Built international reach with the HM team presenting papers at more than 70 conferences and events across UK, Europe, Australia, the US and South America.
- Commissioned a ground-breaking piece of econometric research with Daniel Fujiwara of the LSE <u>Museums and Happiness – the Value of Participating in Museums and the Arts</u> measuring the value of museums to people's happiness.
- Developed a major research programme the <u>LIFE survey</u>, which explores how museums create wellbeing, and how significant that well-being is.

The impact of Happy Museum

"The skills and knowledge which we have developed as an organisation as a result of this project is phenomenal, and we are beginning to use these to work on other projects in more resourceful way. There has been a sense that aspirations have been raised in terms of what can be achieved in the future." Derby Silk Mill

Happy Museum is underpinned by a learning evaluation using a **Story of Change** model working with six **Principles** which fall within our overarching **aims** - summarised in the following diagram.



Our ongoing learning evaluation has identified the following impacts against its aims

Rethinking what matters: how has the project changed mindsets and opened up thinking about wellbeing and sustainability?

- The aims and principles of HM's Story of Change have helped museums to rethink what matters. The HM community sees HM as a 'light in the darkness', giving support and licence for museums to explore the big questions, to take risks and experiment. Study Group directors agreed that it has been "a transformative tool for exploration and change at a micro organisational level.... It is an invitation to expand your world."
- <u>A thematic case study</u> Measuring What Matters describes how some HM museums have developed their own Story of Change to refocus their mission and report on sustainable wellbeing. Another –

Learning for Resilience and Stewardship for the Future - is about how museum used HM Principles to gain new perspectives on the resources available to them. "[HM is] an opportunity to not only to make those small actions, but being able to magnify those actions by being part of a community campaigning and pushing for change." Carrie Canham, Director of Ceredigion Museum

• More museums are using the language of well-being, and some attribute this to involvement in and awareness of HM and over time. For some, HM provides impetus to consider the wider environmental aspects of well-being - widening the focus from 'arts and health' to 'population level' thinking and challenging the sector to consider how 'wellbeing doesn't cost the earth'. The Beaney have embarked on a mission of becoming a therapeutic museum, and are currently hosting a major community artist-led project on air pollution, which they attribute to HM. Brendan Carr of Reading Museum wrote: "I am happy to say Reading Museum continues to work on new Social and Eco-justice projects with the organisations and individuals we met through our HM Affiliate activity."

"I think HM has punched well above its weight...it has been one of a number of groups...that have led to museums and the wider cultural sector giving ever-increasing attention to issues of the environment and wellbeing." Rib Davies, Lightbox

Happy, resilient people: How have HM projects created change for individuals (including museum professionals, volunteers, audiences and communities), developing them as active citizens who are happy and healthy?

- For individuals in the network, involvement in the project has brought a sense of empowerment and has helped some to re-engage with their work with new energy. *"I'd like to thank HM for giving focus to a set of values I had as a person, a professional and as a curator/director of a museum that was built on a wellbeing approach."* Cara Sutherland, Curator, Mental Health Museum
- The facilitation approach is seen to be warm, creative and generous. There is a sense that the networking element is very valuable, as is the notion that participants are making a difference. *"It offers new thinking for emergent professionals. They can take it in any direction they want to...There have been a lot of junior people involved from the start."* Tony Butler
- HM has helped many to create a framework that allows for focus on personal well-being where this might have been considered inappropriate before. *"HM has given us a framework to help us identify our organisational values...has also helped the team focus more on personal wellbeing and how important that is to the development of the museum."* Carrie Canham, Curator, Ceredigion Museum
- Daniel Fujiwara's 2013 report, 'Museums and Happiness' provides contextual evidence about the value of more participatory, interactive approaches that are driven by local or social needs. This fed into the LIFE survey which aims to measure the impact of museum programmes on wellbeing. Piloted by 7 museums, all results showed some association between the experiences and good outcomes.

"I have been convinced by the impact of collective action based on shared values and am a passionate advocate for the power of museums [...] to link global issues to people in a deeply meaningful way." David Gelsthorpe, Curator of Earth Sciences, Manchester Museum

Happy, resilient teams: How has Happy Museum contributed positively to the museum sector, and particularly to the teams and organisations participating in its projects?

• A committed CoP has developed involving individuals and teams from museums across the UK and including many who have not been commissioned by HM. Organisations have found that their

governance models and planning methodologies have been enhanced by involvement with HM and it has precipitated some significant organisational change.

- Its 'micro-commissioning' showed excellent value of money influencing several whole museum developments. These include HLF bids for example £100k in Torquay for its re-focus, and major capital grants to Gwynedd and Ceredigion for re-build; HM informed a £6M build of the Story Museum; and museum re-purposing - Torquay as an environmental centre, the RWA's organisational review, and the multi-million pound re-make of the Silk Mill, Derby.
- The HM community were asked what their organisations had learnt from practice or projects inspired by the Principles. Some common themes were:
 - The value of collaboration (with other like-minded museums) in "an extended family of museums"
 - HM encouraging an experimental approach and feeling that you have permission to fail "The learning for us was around having permission for things to go wrong or fail. Being allowed to try things resulted in a richer kind of learning."
 - being encouraged to step out of your comfort zone and sometimes work across other disciplines or with other sectors
 - the importance of a developmental phase, and of reflection throughout
 - learning how to manage active participation with and by audiences/groups, and the importance and power of co-production

"I think there is an argument to be made about the contribution HM can make to planning and resilience." Maurice Davies, Head of Collections, Royal Academy

Happier, sustainable communities: How has the project helped create communities that learn, interact & promote wellbeing?

- The principles, in particular Mutual Relationships and Active Citizenship have helped museums gain insight into how to engage better with their audiences and communities. Jo Rice of the Ashmolean Museum said: *"Just wanted to say how helpful and empowering the co-curation/ co-production session was for me at the Design Museum. Am using many of the things learned particularly working from 'the edge' given me more confidence in several recent discussions.*
- There is more awareness of how mutual relationships with communities can build support for the museum, bring in fresh ideas and capacity, creating a virtuous circle, attracting new and different audiences, and resources to invest.. 'the HM projects forced us to do new types of collaboration, which had been a bit daunting, but turned out to be very valuable."
- Communities have benefitted from their involvement in HM-related projects, especially for those directly involved through commissioned projects in their local museums. *"Our participants, volunteers and community are reporting the positive impact of the activities they are engaged in on their personal wellbeing."* Carrie Canham, Curator, Ceredigion Museum
- Tony Butler said that the work HM was doing with Common Cause on values "was some of the most exciting work we have done." And it points the way for museums "who are trusted more than many others, to have a role as convenors of public space where conversations can happen. That's where the power of HM lies."

A more sustainable future planet: how has the HM impacted beyond its Community of Practice

- Project outcomes, research and resources have been made widely available on the website, on social media and in published reports and shared through a series of open workshops and events.
- The website has received over 100,000 visits and HM has over 8,000 followers on twitter.

- HM core team members have presented at over 100 national and international conferences sharing thinking about a more participatory role for museums, and the social and environmental issues raised.
- Evidenced the well-being value of museums as over £3K a year and influenced further cultural value work by the AHRC, RSA, DCMS and Arts Council, each of whom who has picked up the well-being valuation approach piloted by HM. It continues to broaden this work by bringing both behavioural and social media research into the programme with Bangor and Oxford Universities.

"It's helped to drive a more general mood for change in museums, so that lots of the ideas it espouses have become quite mainstream." Helen Wilkinson, Assistant Director, AIM



Word cloud from an online survey following HM workshops for the sector in 2018.

ⁱ Creative Interventions

Abergavenny Museum: Weaving Wellbeing, Beaney House of Art and Knowledge: Paper Apothecary, Bilston Craft Gallery: Craftplay. Ceredigion Museum: Reaping the Knowledge, Ceredigion Museum: The Gospel Ship, Cinema Museum, Lambeth: Creative Community Curators, Chiltern Open Air Museum, Bucks: Green ways from yesterday, Derby Museums: Re:make the museum, Garden Museum, Lambeth: Flowers for love and money. Godalming Museum, Surrey: Collecting Connections, Gwynedd Museum: What's Your Story?, Imperial War Museum North, Lambeth: Participating with objects. Kirkstall Abbey: Happy project. The Lightbox, Woking: Landscapes of the Mind and Waste Not. London Transport Museum: The Conversation Hub, Manchester Museum: The Playful Museum, Reading Museum: Revealing Hidden Histories and Where's Reading Heading?, Royal West of England Academy, Bristol: Shaping a Happy Academy, Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust: Sounds in the Garden, Slough Museum: Community conversations, The Story Museum, Oxford: Happy from the beginning, Torquay Museum: Young Sustainability Champions, Woodhorn Museums Trust: Stand up for Woodhorn

ⁱⁱ Study Group Museums

Manchester Museum, Derby Museums, Beaney House in Canterbury, The Lightbox in Woking, Woodhorn Museum and Northumberland Archives, and Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth

^{III} Affiliate organisations

Oxford University Museums; Design Museum; People's History Museum; Heritage Team at Toynbee Hall; Seven Stories; The Atkinson; Monmouthshire Museum Service; Mental Health Museum; Chester Zoo; Museum of Homelessness; Culture24; National Trust Midlands; Encounters Arts; Reading Museum. Leicester Museums, Battersea Arts Centre and Leeds Museums and Galleries.

^{iv} Wales Future Generations

Monmouthshire museums, Ceredigion, Storiel, Oriel Ynes Mon, Wrexham Museums and Cardiff Story Museum.