

**The Happy Museum Project - Open Application Commissions (second round)**

**Background**

**An increasing number of academics, economists, psychologists and ecologists are identifying the vital linkage between sustainability and wellbeing and shedding new light on how thinking of these two issues in conjunction might offer the key to providing a better future.**

Launched in April 2011, and funded by an award to Tony Butler by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Breakthrough Fund, the Happy Museum Project (HMP) looks at how the UK museum sector can respond to the challenges presented by the need to create a more sustainable future. Its proposition is that museums are well placed to play an active part, but may need to re-imagine some key aspects of their role

In her speech to the Museums Association conference in Brighton in 2011, Caroline Lucas (Britain’s first Green MP) quoted extensively from the Happy Museum paper, making the links between museums, wellbeing and sustainability (available online [HERE](http://soundcloud.com/museumsassociation/12102011-conference-audio)). Further thinking on the linkage between wellbeing and sustainability can be found in relation to the new ONS Wellbeing measurements [HERE](http://bit.ly/QzPpad) and in a review of the first ever UN Conference on Happiness [HERE](http://bit.ly/Hwra6d))

The initial phase of the Happy Museum Project involved a co-ordinated programme of six funded commissions, papers, a symposium, press and social media activity.

A Symposium in January 2012 hosted the six commissions alongside leading UK museum and cultural practitioners. These included high-level policy makers from the Arts Council, the British Council, the Museums Association and representatives from think tanks, NGOs and academia such as New Economics Foundation (NEF), Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) and Liverpool University. (A copy of the Symposium report is online [HERE](http://www.happymuseumproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Happy-Museum-Symposium-report-January2012l1.pdf))

Further detail about the first phase of the project and details of the first round of commissioned projects can be found at **Appendix 1.**

**Commission Fund - Round 2**

A **fund of £60,000** is now available to a further group of **museums to demonstrate how thinking around happiness and well-being, brought together with issues of sustainability, can leave a legacy of cultural change within their organisations and communities.**

We would invite museums, who wish to re-imagine existing activity to embrace the thinking behind the Happy Museum, to apply for funding to support this development. This could take the form of:

* Adaptations to existing displays and interpretation or planned temporary exhibitions
* Support to develop new strands in learning programmes
* Development of a more participatory approach to the planning of public programmes
* Development of new events
* Development of participatory on-line activity

An essential part of each commission though, will be **a commitment to work with staff and other stakeholders on the personal and leadership behaviour changes which are essential in long term culture change**.

These new commissions, as part of a growing community of practice, will be supported by a co-ordinated programme of mentoring and bespoke thinking days using emerging leaders from the existing commissions (building on their existing learning and sense of agency) as well as experts from beyond the sector.

Engagement with the wider museum and cultural sector will be through a short programme of open workshops and a further symposium bringing together key and emergent thinkers to further test the intellectual underpinnings of the project.

**Proposed commissions should meet the following criteria**

* The proposal must be based in England – although it could have involvement or impact beyond those borders.
* The proposal can be related to existing work but must embrace the thinking behind the Happy Museum Project
* The proposal should **show how museums can support transition to a high well-being, sustainable society** - and should refer to the principles of the Happy Museum manifesto
* The lead organisation must be a museum (accredited or working towards accreditation)
* A named Champion must be identified in the lead organisation and any partner organisation(s). The Champion(s) will actively contribute to an ongoing Community of Practice (including participation in evaluation, blogging, symposium and conference and general advocacy)
* A named budget holder will be identified
* Funding per commission will be **between £6k and £20k**. Proposals are encouraged which seek a level of funding appropriate to the scale of the Commission.
* The budget can include additional funding from other sources but the core context and ethos of the proposal must be driven by the Happy Museum Project.
* The proposed activity should be (substantively) finished by end of March 2013

**Successful commissions will demonstrate the following:**

* A clear understanding of the context and ethos of the Happy Museum Paper, and in particular the importance of linking the issues of wellbeing and sustainability.
* Clarity around how the proposal addresses these key themes.
* A clear picture of change – ie what success will look like and commitment to measuring change and learning.
* How the proposal and the named champion(s) will contribute to the community of practice (including evaluation, blog, symposium and general advocacy,)
* An understanding of potential risks and how these would be overcome.
* A clear budget, appropriate to the scale and ambition of the proposal.

September 2012

**Appendix 1**

**Background to Happy Museum Project:**

Whilst many museums appreciate their position at the heart of their community and combine scholarship, stewardship, learning and a desire for greater participation, The Happy Museum Project shows that the context is now different. Climate change, pressures on the planet’s finite resources and awareness that a good, happy society need not set economic growth as it most meaningful measure offers a chance to re-imagine the purpose of museums.

**The Happy Museum: A Tale of How It Could Turn Out All Right**, co-written by the New Economics Foundation (nef) and leading museum commentators, argues museums have innate qualities that can inspire a re-imagining of society that values co-operation and stewardship of our surroundings as much as does economic wellbeing. A Manifesto for Well Being includes a set of 8 principles which examine how museums might cement the linkage between wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

In a first round of open commissions six museums awarded by HMP included: **London Transport Museum**, working with St Mungo’s homeless charity to create a Conversation Hub within the museum; **Godalming Museum** which is connecting with a variety of civic society groups including Transition Godalming to explore the towns hydro-electric heritage;  The Story Museum Oxford which is working with psychologists and well-being experts to influence designers and architects as they engineer their new capital developments;  **The Lightbox in Woking** working with mental health users and landscape painting;  The **Manchester University Museum** exploring museums as a place of play and **The Cinema Museum in Lambeth**, working with local volunteers to curate from their cinema collections. The six commissions create a living Manifesto informed by their community of practice, experience and policy.

**Commissioned activity is evaluated** using the ‘Story of Change’ model which indicates personal, professional and sectoral impact

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| **What we invest** |  | **What we do** |  | **The difference we make** |  | **Vision** |
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|  |  |  |  | **Personal change** |  | **Museum practice which develops sustainable well-being in communities and the state, building bridges between the two.** |
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| **Expertise and motivation** |  | **Manage & communicate the programme** |  | **Culture change in organisations** |  |
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| **Collections, heritage, places** |  | **Deliver events and a living manifesto** |  | **A community of practice in the sector** |  |
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| **Funding** |  | **Commisison new practice** |  | **A different role for museums in society** |  |
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|  |  |  |  | **More well-being with less consumption** |  |
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This is underpinned by 8 principles introduced in the manifesto:

**More well-being with less consumption (our impact)**

*Make people happy*

*Value past, present and future environments*

**A different role for museums**

*Find your niche*

*Lead on learning towards transition*

**A community of practice**

*Support learning for resilience*

*Measure what matters*

**Culture change**

*Think global, be networked*

*Develop mutual relationships*

**Commissioned activity has been supported by:**

* **Papers/sessions** at a wide range of conferences including Museums Association 2011 and 12, Museums and Galleries Scotland, GEM, Communicate 2011, Swedish Museums Association Conference 2012 Gothenburg ,Rikutstallingar Almedalen Symposium 2012, NSW Conference 2011 Australia, MMM Paris Re-think programme; Festival of Transition June 2012 with; Resurgence Launch with scientist Rupert Sheldrake/editor Satish Kumar, Taiwan Museums Conference, SUMMER LAB 2012, part of the European project IMAGINE 2020, Art and Climate Change
* **Articles** in a range of publications inc– Museums Journal, Resurgence June 2012, Arts Professional.
* **Interest** from Mayor’s London Cultural Group, British Council, UNESCO, Swedish Arts Council.
* **Social media** -12,000 visits to website, 60% new, 40% returns, 70% UK, 25% beyond. Over 1000 followers on twitter, 800+ on email subscription list.

**The programme is still ongoing but highlights to date include:**

* **Opportunity for more profound thinking**. The most welcome element to date has been the quality and space for individual and group thinking linked to the psychological, economic, social and cultural case for wellbeing, for example influencing the ONS consultation on well-being to pressure for the inclusion of cultural provision.
* **Leveraged funding**. All of the commissions have generated further income related to the programme. Both the Story Museum and LTM for example, have secured HLF funding for participants to be part of All Our Stories
* **Wellbeing evaluation**. Using the nef Five Ways to wellbeing and mental health and workforce assessments, alongside customised museums materials, the commissions have begun to understand how a focus on sustainable wellbeing improves staff, volunteer, trustee and participants’ experiences.
* **A nascent community of practice**. Together with a thriving social media campaign, these successes have led to relationships developing in and outside the sector, for example with the British Council, the RSA, the Transition Research Network and most lately inclusion in the Museums 2020 consultation paper. ‘Emerging leaders’ involved in the programme will be taking learning with them to national museums, including the British Museum and Imperial War Museum.
* **An increasing level of influence**. Dr Piotr Bienkowski of the parallel PHF Our Museum project, described Happy Museum as ‘punching above its weight’, and as one commission reported "certainly, here it’s been larger than the money invested in it" especially through a cross –departmental approach not seen on community projects before.”

The [Happy Museum website](http://www.happymuseumproject.org/) details work to date.

Museums of Happiness, by Tony Butler was published in June issue of Resurgence Magazine.  <http://www.resurgence.org/magazine/article3644-museums-of-happiness.html>.