**Happy and Green- the benefits to Museums of a focus on Wellbeing and Sustainability**

Tuesday 4th March - The Cinema Museum, London SE11 4TH

This workshop, the first ever run jointly by The Happy Museum Project and Julie’s Bicycle, investigated the value of a focus on Wellbeing and Sustainability in museum (and wider cultural) practice. The workshop built on the Happy Museum learning evaluation which asks where the synergies between social and environmental sustainability can be found and highlights opportunities to cultivate social and natural capital alongside the “cultural assets” of the museum’s collection. These include physical resources such as outdoor space, efficient use of natural resources, the role of volunteers and the benefits of a happy workforce. Alongside information and insights from Happy Museum and Julie’s Bicycle participants heard practical case studies from partner organisations such as the Godalming Museum, The Cinema Museum and Battersea Arts Centre.

A list of the participants at the event is found at the end of this document.

**Notes from the day’s discussions**

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| We were welcomed to the event by Katherine Ford from our hosts, the fantastic, volunteer run, **Cinema Museum** in Kennington, London. Housed in the old workhouse where Charlie Chaplin once lived, the museum was one of the first to receive a Happy Museum Commission <http://www.cinemamuseum.org.uk/> |
| Participants noted **what do we want from the day** – these were summarised as:* Learning more about Julie’s Bicycle and Happy Museum Project
* Re-connecting with Happy Museum thinking
* Be inspired
* Meet others
* Spend time focusing on wellbeing and sustainability
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| We started the day by thinking about what contributes to our wellbeing as individuals – and sharing this with others. |
| We then heard from Hilary Jennings of Happy Museum Project and Catherine Langabeer of Julie’s Bicycle about **the global context** and the challenges which lie behind the thinking of both Happy Museum and Julie’s Bicycle. Their joint presentation can be found HERE. |
| We then heard more about how **Happy Museum** and **Julie’s Bicycle** have been addressing these issues through their work – their presentations can be found HERE and HERE  |
| Delegates then considered **how important are wellbeing and sustainability** to organisations they work for or with – and how important they are to them as individuals. Is there a gap between the commitment of organisations and their ability to make a difference? Is there a gap between the commitment of organisations and individuals? |
| We then heard a case study from Alison Pattison of **Godalming Museum** – one of the first Happy Museum commissions – who reflected on the impact in the museum of taking an approach that considered both wellbeing and sustainability. Her presentation can be found HERE. |
| We heard from Jo Hunter with a case study about **Battersea Arts Centre** – an arts centre sited in a historic town hall setting whose major capital redevelopment was underpinned by a commitment to sustainability and wellbeing. A copy of her presentation can be found HERE. |
| Participants then gathered in small groups and discussed examples of good practice they were aware of in terms of sustainability and wellbeing in museums – a whole range of ideas emerged from the discussion and some are captured in the notes of the discussions below: |
| Over lunch we had a tour of the **Cinema Museum** followed by a presentation on their approach to sustainability (challenging in a listed building which they do not own!) and shared their business plan and wellbeing support package. Copies of their presentation and these two documents can be found HERE. |
| We then gathered in small groups to discuss what might be the **benefits** of an approach that combines wellbeing and sustainability – what are the results tangible and intangible, expected and unanticipated, to individuals and organisations?Ideas emerging fell under four broad headings – with more detail in the notes of discussion below:**Leadership*** This thinking supports continued relevance of museums = sustainability in face of cuts
* Being forced to think of the world in new and different ways
* An understanding that this is what museums were for in the first place
* A bold vision
* Enabling long term thinking and long term rewards
* Slowing down – more careful thought

**Staff*** This kind of thinking encourages staff creativity and motivation
* Helps to encourage a sense of equality – feelings are a leveller
* Utilising and encouraging people’s talents
* Engaged, positive and knowledgeable staff are ambassadors for the organisation Happy Staff = happy visitors
* Retaining staff = retaining knowledge
* Well designed staff areas and control over your working environment = happier staff

**Financial*** Long term perspective – invest now in benefits for the future
* Sustainability in face of funding cuts
* Emotional investment = actual investment
* Save money on energy bills
* Increase in spend in cafe as ‘nice place to be’
* Meeting demand for recycled products attracting trade into the shop

**Visitors*** Environmental issues and topics engage visitors
* Engaging young audiences – investment for the future
* Looking to the future – engaging the public in the discussion
* Arcola theatre in Hackney – environmental initiatives attracting repeat visits
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| Participants then considered **what is our role** as individuals and organisations?How do we, as wellbeing and sustainability ‘champions’, frame these topics for our colleagues and audiences? Individuals in each group identified an opportunity that they could see in their role, but that would be a challenge. Each person then received short focused advice/brainstorm from the others in their group. Feedback from this session included:* You can get a lot of ideas in 5 minutes.
* What would a museum late [night opening]” look like for an open air museum?
* Collaboration is key
* Have the confidence to stick your neck out
* Leadership doesn’t need to come from the front of an organization, you can lead from the back, or the side, or with an idea, not just from the top.
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| After a brief roundup of the day we reflected back on what we had hoped from the day at the outset, we thanked our fantastic hosts, the Cinema Museum and headed off to put all our ideas and thinking into action! |

**Some highlights from the discussion sessions.**

**Questions:**

**What are we doing as individuals/organisations that supports sustainability/wellbeing?**

**What are the benefits of an approach that combines wellbeing and sustainability – what are the results tangible and intangible, expected and unanticipated, to individuals and organisations?**

**What is our role as individuals and organisations? How do we as wellbeing and sustainability ‘champions’ frame these topics for our colleagues and audiences?**

* Much discussion about how staff wellbeing is linked to feeling supported and listened to in the organisation, about how power is expressed and where commitment lies.
* How do you keep sustainability a priority when there are so many priorities?
* It’s important to find ways to link sustainability (and wellbeing) actions to other company priorities. E.g. if income generation is a priority, can you create new sponsorship relationships with companies that have strong environmental or social credentials and align with yours? If audience development is a priority, can you create new opportunities for engagement around sustainability or wellbeing themes, e.g. a make-space or repair shop event or development of a community garden that might bring in different people into the cultural space.
* What can we do to bring programming and practice into alignment? Can we get artists or curators to be actively requesting more relaxed environmental controls for their work? Is there join-up between thematic programming and environmental or wellbeing commitments?
* Diversity in staff an issue as well as leadership perceptions of what is appropriate or relevant content for museum’s community. One example given of a proposed theme deemed irrelevant but then approved once researchers were able to show that there were objects in the collection archives that did support exploration of that theme. Need “proof” to change decisions “at the top”.
* Staff cohesion and wellbeing an issue when so many job are low paid, but the sought after nature of jobs in the heritage and cultural sectors means staff are expected to accept these working conditions in exchange for having an impressive cultural institution on their CV. Does the negative publicity about unpaid internships in recent years mean this is changing?
* There are issues with language that we use – too many “buzzwords” or hackneyed words around sustainability and wellbeing that can put people off (e.g.” responsibility”). Sense of the culture of experts and celebrities rather than a society of togetherness.
* Museum of London have a wellbeing budget for staff – it was justified in terms of increasing staff satisfaction, retention and productivity. Interesting question about how to evidence the value of the investment in staff.
* Questions about whether the basics are in place at organisations, such as staff taking their lunch-breaks or annual leave.
* Questions about whether staff members are listened to, whether sufficient internal consultation takes place.
* Recognition that professional wellbeing derives not just from organization you work for but professional networks as well, e.g. the Diversity Heritage Group.
* There are significant opportunities in working with young people on sustainability issues: they have different perspectives, and you can engage them with the organisation as well as the issues.
* Up-cycling materials could be turned into merchandise, creating a revenue stream as well as avoiding waste.
* Do small and large museums have more to learn from each other? Smaller museums tend to be more flexible and can take more risks? Or does a lack of funding sometimes constrain risk-taking? Need a culture that is prepared to take risks, to trust each other and note blame each other, in order to innovate and come up with solutions.
* Some organisations are changing their practice around environmental conditions for objects (temp and humidity) – PAS198 is a voluntary standard which advocates reconsidering the very strict standards approach.
* Resource efficiency can save money: could you ring-fence some of it for a wellbeing fund for staff and visitors: create an emotional investment in environmental sustainability initiatives?
* Practices such as up-cycling mean we are relearning knowledge that previous generations held – interesting to reflect on in relation to role of museums as stewards of past (and future).
* Object information can be very limited – can we discover and share more about the specific provenances of what objects are made of which may open up new perspectives on sustainability (e.g. what kind of wood, how would it have been gathered or harvested, what cultural practices were involved).
* With so many objects available to view online, the museum has to reconsider what it offers to visitors. Not just a connection to the objects but also connections to each other, opportunities to interact, something more tangible.
* The Arcola Theatre in Dalston makes its environmental commitments very tangible – you don’t learn about them in a glossy brochure, but can see evidence of their approach all around you in the fabric of the building, it’s honest and real. Others noted that this “gritty” approach would not appeal to their organisation, which precisely seek a more “glossy” image. Need to be flexible.

**Other references from the day**

All Together: <http://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/royal-shakespeare-company-creative-report-organisational-change>

A fascinating report from 2010 describing The Royal Shakespeare Company’s

efforts to change the way it was organised using the guiding principle of ‘ensemble’.

Arcola Theatre: <http://www.arcolatheatre.com/greenarcola>

Diversity in Heritage Group: <http://diversityheritage.org/>

Scenery Salvage: <http://www.scenerysalvage.com/>

A commercial service providing a dedicated system for the removal of scenery from studios or locations, not to a land-fill site but to a reclamation centre.

Set Exchange: <http://www.set-exchange.co.uk/>

Set-Exchange.co.uk is a free message board for the Theatre, TV, Film and related industries, to post and share their unwanted set, props and costumes.

**Happy Museum** provides a framework for a growing group of museums to investigate a holistic approach to sustainability and wellbeing. Whilst many museums appreciate their position at the heart of their community and combine scholarship, stewardship, learning and a desire for greater participation, HMP 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 make economic growth its only meaningful measure of success, offer a context to re-imagine the purpose of museums.  The project takes a view of sustainability which looks beyond financial and resource management and considers a museum’s role as steward of people, place and planet, supporting institutional and community resilience in the face of global financial and environmental challenges.

A full list of resources which feed into Happy Museum thinking on the resource section of our website here. [www.happymuseumproject.org](http://www.happymuseumproject.org)

**Julie’s Bicycle** – Currently working with over 1000 cultural organisations in the UK and Europe, Julie’s Bicycle offers free online tools, research, and bespoke consultancy to help arts organisations measure, manage, and reduce their environmental impacts. Founded by the music industry, with expertise from the arts and sustainability, Julie’s Bicycle bridges the gap between the creative industries and sustainability. Based on a foundation of peer-reviewed research, we sustain creativity, enabling the arts to create change. [www.juliesbicycle.com](http://www.juliesbicycle.com)

**In terms of climate control considerations, Julie’s Bicycle is aware of the following:**

2008 Bizot Meeting

• Nick Serota calls for revision of guidelines governing environmental conditions imposed on preservation of objects – current limits are out of date and unsustainable.

National Museum Director's Council

• Interim response after Serota's initial presentation and the MA's consultation into sustainability: http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/publications/nmdc\_response\_ma\_sustainability.pdf (2008)

• Guidelines as published post-Bizot meeting (and accepted by Bizot members, 2009): http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/media/documents/what\_we\_do\_documents/guiding\_principles\_reducing\_carbon\_footprint.pdf

British Standards Institute (BSI)

• Published PAS (Publicly Available Specification) 198:2012 - Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections – first for whole cultural sector (not just archives)

• Published March 2012 in collaboration with the National Archives

• More info here: http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/news/690.htm

• It is no longer sustainable for cultural organisations to presume specific upper and lower tolerances for heat, light and humidity. Instead, sustainable environmental management is increasingly about making strategic, informed choices which balance a number of variables. The purpose of the new BSI Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections, is to provide galleries, libraries, archives and museums with a body of evidence to help them make strategic and proportionate decisions about the environmental management of their collections.

• Intended as a toolkit to improve resilience, reduce costs and extend impact. More or less eliminates (or intends to eliminate) old parameters i.e. ranges of temperature and humidity.

The Collections Trust

• Currently working on a Practical Guide to Environmental Management as point of entry to new BSI standard – originally scheduled for release late 2012, though not certain on current status (i.e. it's not out yet): http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/blog/1290-blog-sustainable-environmental-management

European Committee for Standardization (CEN):

• Standard for the protection of heritage objects – CEN/TC 346 Conservation of cultural property (est. 2003)

• Still work-in-progress at present, with lots of standards under development/in draft form. In particular working group 4 (WG 4) is responsible for investigating environmental standards.

• Seem to be moving towards focusing on sustainability and variable risk assessment (like BSI/PAS 198) – abstract proposal for a presentation by WG 4 leader for Nov 2012: http://www.doernerinstitut.de/ccc\_2012/downloads/Programm/Abstracts/Presentation/Johnsen\_SustainableEuropeanStandardsEnvironment.pdf

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| Name  |  | Position | Organization |
| Sian | Hammerton-Fraser | Visitor Experience Manager | COAM |
| Heather  | Pike | Sustainability and Volunteer Management | COAM |
| Laura | Denning |  | Torquay |
| Heather | Thomas | Learning Officer | The Lightbox |
| Poppy | Szaybo | Head of London Programmes for DHG (Diversity Heritage Group) | Diversity Heritage Group |
| Sian | Hunter Dodsworth | Community Programmes Coordinator: Supplementary Schools | The British Museum |
| Kathryn | Eccles |  | Gwynedd |
| Babs | Guthrie | Freelancer | Main clients are the Maritime Museum and the Museum of London |
| Marilyn | Greene | Public Programmes Manager | London Transport Museum |
| Georgia | Goldsmith | UCL student: Museum Studies MA | UCL |
| Maya | Makker | UCL student: Museum Studies MA | UCL |
| Otone | Doi | UCL student: Museum Studies MA | UCL |
| Susan | Eskdale | Community Engagement & Volunteer development Officer | Royal Pavilion & Museums Brighton & Hove |
| Rosie | O'Connor | Cultural apprentice | Royal Pavilion & Museums Brighton & Hove |
| Vicky | Arvaniti | Freelance positive psychology consultant | BM |
| Janine | Marsh | Freelance Art and Drama Practitioner | British Museum, Geffrye Museum, Historic Royal Palaces. |
| Romain | Delia | PhD candidate | University of Leicester. |
| Tahlia | Coombs | Heritage Manager | Libraries, Heritage and Culture |
| Vanessa | Idika | Executive Administrator | A New Direction |
| Helen | Cooper | Manager, National Programmes | Tate |
| Rebecca | Head | Operations Officer | Whitechapel Gallery |
| Frances | Reed | Sustainability Trainee | Garden Museum |
| Natalie | Ellis | Training and Development Manager | Museum of London |
| Jennifer | Flippance | Project Manager | The Natural History Museum |
| Michael  | Martin | Senior Designer – Exhibitions | Royal Museums Greenwich |
| Lisa | Finch | Co-Director | Fabrica |
| Charlotte | Chester | Education assistant  | Thackray Medical Museum in Leeds |
| Katharine | Ford | Cinema Museum |
| Alison | Pattinson | Godalming Museum |
| Catharine  | Langabeer | Julie’s Bicycle |
| Hilary | Jennings | Happy Museum |  |
| Jo | Hunter | Battersea Arts Centre |