

the happy
museum

Five Year Plan (2015 – 2020)

Background - The HM Project and Resilience in Museums

Since 2011 Happy Museum (HM) has brought together thinking around well-being and sustainability and investigated the particular role of museums in supporting individual, organisational and societal resilience. It places its work firmly in the context of, and in response to, current global challenges:

- Despite the connections between resource depletion, carbon emissions, consumption and economic growth, most governments and commentators continue to focus their policies and pronouncements on growth as the primary driver and measure of societal progress.
- For the first time in human history, the concentration of climate-warming carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has passed the milestone level of 400 parts per million, extreme weather events such as droughts and flooding are increasing in frequency and the connection with human-made climate change is becoming ever harder to ignore.
- At the same time inequality is increasing globally and within individual countries, as wealth and power is concentrated on a minority, some countries struggle to raise living standards, and others implement cuts in public services which hit the most vulnerable. The knock on impact of this in UK for example is significant inequality in well-being and a c£70 billion cost of mental ill-health, as evidenced by 'Well-being in Four Policy Areas Report' by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Well-being Economics, Sept 2014.

- Meanwhile growing numbers of people and organisations are asking questions, getting in touch with their fears for the planet and looking for healthier, happier and more connected ways of living and different ways to measure societal progress.

In this context, we believe, there is a vital need to develop resilience in museums, in the individuals and communities who use them and in wider society as a whole.

The ACE definition of resilience states 'Organisational Resilience is the vision and capacity of organisations to anticipate and adapt to economic, environmental and social change by seizing opportunities, identifying and mitigating risks, and deploying resources effectively in order to continue delivering quality work in line with their mission.'

Along with increasing numbers of academics, economists, ecologists, politicians, psychologists and physicians; HM identifies the vital linkage between sustainability and well-being. It sheds light on how thinking of these two issues in conjunction might offer the key to providing a more resilient future and investigates the particular role that museums and culture have to play.

Happy Museum - the story so far

In the four years since its inception and with less than half a million pounds of investment (with gratitude to PHF, ACE and CyMAL) HM has:

- Funded creative interventions in 22 museums leading to individual development and organisational change.
- Undertaken evaluation using the Story of Change taking learning from creative interventions and research to develop a set of common principles.
- Created a suite of case studies, tools and resources for use by the wider sector.
- Shared learning with the wider sector through a series of events including three annual symposia bringing the community of practice alongside leading UK museum and cultural practitioners, policy makers such as ACE and MA and representatives from think tanks, NGOs and academia such as New Economics Foundation (NEF) and Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT).
- Developed complementary HMP activity in Wales supported by funding from CyMAL and supported the emergent Cantie Museums in Scotland with the backing of Museums and Galleries Scotland.
- Commissioned a ground-breaking piece of econometric research with Daniel Fujiwara of the LSE [Museums and Happiness – the Value of Participating in Museums and the Arts](#) measuring the value of museums to people's happiness.
- Developed a major new research programme - the [LIFE survey](#), which will explore how museums create well-being, and how significant that well-being is.

- Has had over 43,000 visits to its website by over 27,000 users and has over 4,700 followers on twitter.
- Has international reach with the HM presenting papers across UK, Europe, to Australia, the US and Brazil.

It has had a **significant impact on the museum sector** and its advocacy has, in the words of Piotr Bienkowski 'punched well above its weight'. It has:

- A committed community of practice involving individuals from museums across the UK and including many who have not been commissioned by HM. HM thinking is evident in, for example, the recruitment processes of the wider sector and three HM professionals had places on the MA's first Transformers programme.

“We really benefited from the networking and development opportunity offered through the Happy Museum community of practice. The Happy Museum Project celebrates what museums can do, what's possible, and being positive about change. We found the input from other practitioners helped to shape what was happening, gave us a chance to think about our work, and reflect in a different way.” Manchester Museum

- Precipitated some significant organisational change. Its 'micro-commissioning' demonstrates excellent value for 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; Manchester Museum incorporated HM thinking into its' leading role in the NW; HM thinking 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 skills and knowledge which we have developed as an organisation as a result of this project are 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

- Created a set of principles and a blueprint for re-imagining museums fit for a sustainable future, with a focus on the key museum role of stewardship. It has widened museums’ focus from ‘arts and health’ to ‘population level’ thinking, so they are both well-being focused AND careful with resources.

“Working on this project has made us realise that environmental sustainability is at the heart of the story the museum tells about development and change in the local community, and is important for its own sustainable long term operation.” Godalming Museum

- 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 – and by the Warwick Commission, who are interested in HM action research methods. It continues to broaden this work by bringing both behavioural and social media research into the programme (with Bangor and Oxford Universities).

One impact of the Happy Museum Commission is Canterbury Museums and Galleries now include promoting wellbeing in its strategy. A stated aim of the city’s cultural institutions is now to: “Act as a catalyst for social change, contributing to the quality of people’s lives and the wellbeing of local communities.” The 2013 strategy document states: “We know that museums have the power to help promote good and active citizenship, and that we can play a significant role in supporting our users’ health and mental wellbeing as well as enhancing creative ability and academic performance.”

- Evidenced the well-being value of museums as over £3K a year.

In an evaluation of the Happy Museum commissioned Paper Apothecary project carried out by People United, museum staff, participating children and community groups all reported higher levels of wellbeing after involvement in the project. Of the 6,729 visitors, some 37% said they felt 'happy' after their cultural treatment, while 15 % felt 'very happy' and 12% felt 'inspired'.

HM has also had significant impact **beyond the cultural sector** influencing policy thinking around Well-being and Sustainability and advocating successfully for the particular role of culture and museums.

In 2011 the Office of National Statistics announced an open consultation on the first set of national well-being measures – which did not include measures on Arts, Culture and Heritage. HM used its networks and profile to campaign for the successful inclusion of measurement of 'engagement with arts/culture' from the outset.

HM was delighted to see the publication of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Well-being Economics' report on [Well-being in Four Policy Areas](#) included Arts and Culture. This cements the role of Arts and Culture in Well-being policy development and is a direct result of advocacy work by HM with the APPG, giving evidence at a key APPG session. As the report notes – 'Arts and culture play an important part in all our lives, and well-being data will help make the case for spending in these areas.'

As the UNESCO sustainability framework identifies '... a sustainable future – whatever form or forms it takes – will be decided by people in relation to their cultural traditions and values.'

***"We are a small team with four permanent officers working across three museums. There's lots of cuts and insecurity at the moment. The Happy Museum project gave us a little boost at a difficult time. We are trying to become a more resilient team. We have discussed the Happy Museum principles and ethos and they have guided and influenced what we do."* Abergavenny Museum**

What next - a 5-Year Plan

In autumn 2014 we gathered the core HM team together to look forward at the future of HM thinking and activity and to consider what our longer term plans should be. At this meeting we agreed to focus our activity on the development of a 5-year programme at the completion of we intend to disband. The programme will have the following outcomes:

- **Well-being and Sustainability are as familiar and relevant to museum thinking as Learning and Participation.**
- **Through a focus on Well-being and Sustainability we will have played a key part in supporting organisational resilience in the museum sector.**
- **In turn museums will have supported the development of resilience in their staff and communities and in wider society as a whole.**
- **The value of culture in developing a sustainable global future will be better recognised.**

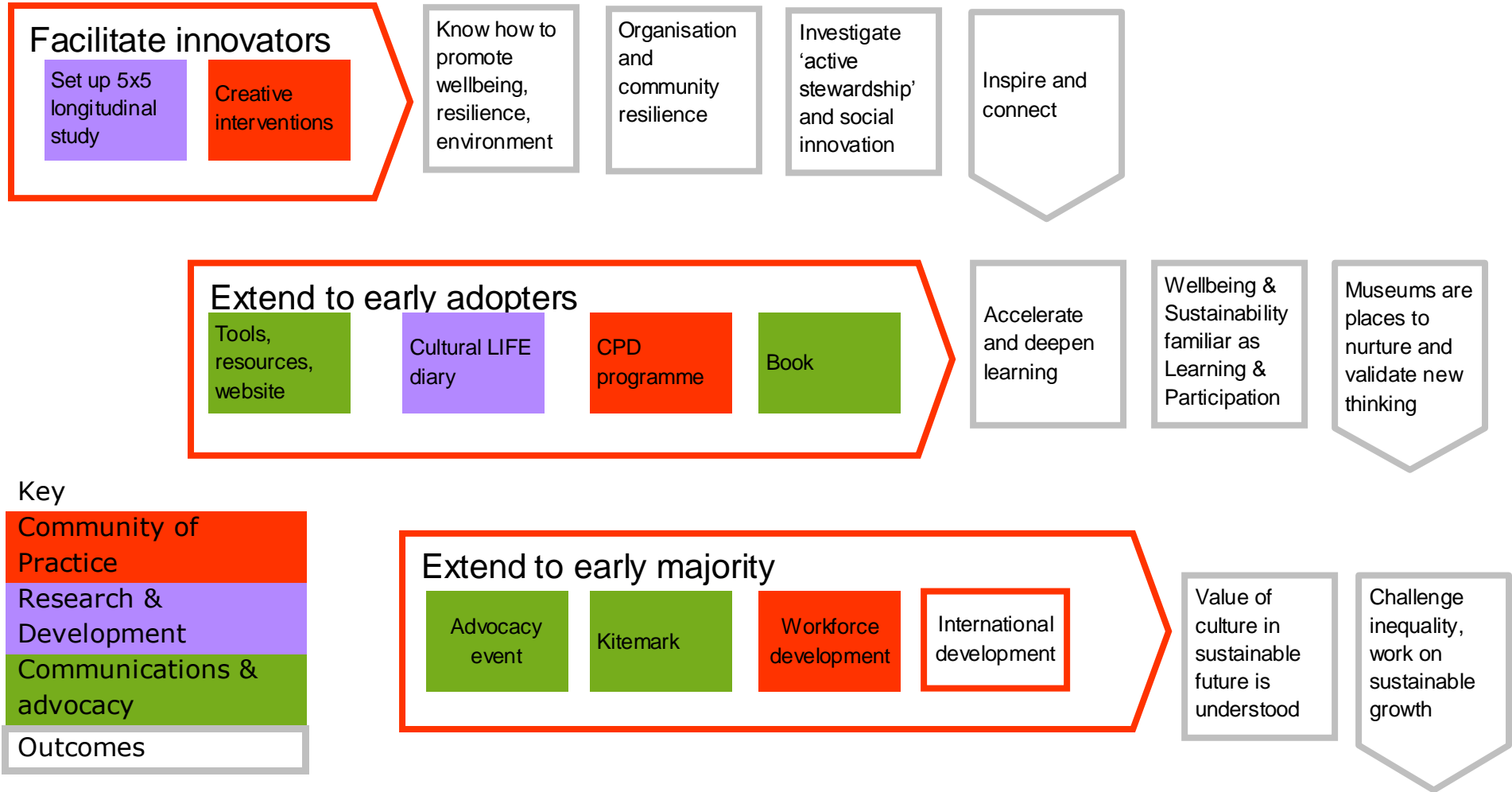
To support these ambitious aims we are putting together 5-year plan of activity, working with new and existing partners and supported by a broad base of potential funders. This programme is underpinned by our ongoing Story of Change, adapted and refined throughout the life of the programme.

In its first year, the Happy Museum Project will link with People United. People United will help us to establish a structure, plans and partnerships to enable us to deliver our aims to 2020. We are excited about this mutual collaboration and the possibilities of reaching and supporting museums across the country.

Summary Story of Change for Happy Museum

2015

2020



Proposed activity

A summary of our proposed activity is outlined in the table below.

In developing this activity we will be seeking to work with our existing community of practice, the wider museum sector and with a range of partners and funders who might include ACE, Cantie Museums, MGS, CyMAL, HLF, AIM, GEM, Julie’s Bicycle, Higher Education (including LSE, Oxford Research Institute, Bangor University) and Make Culture Work.

Activity	Content	Schedule
Community of practice: Action Research	<p>To develop and expand the existing Community of Practice extending our work from innovators to early adopters (targeting 16% of the sector) and an early majority (targeting in total half the sector)– supporting and develop individuals and institutions and building on existing learning developed through HM to date.</p> <p>This will include: a programme of events to share learning and good practice across and beyond the community on themes arising from the programme as well as focused development workshops for museum teams.</p>	2015 >
	<p>A programme of focused and directive Creative Interventions commissioned in museums to further test the thinking emerging from the project – a key approach of HM is that real world experimentation continues to inform research and tools and workforce development. Such interventions can introduce new narratives eg well-being, sustainability and enhance existing narratives that need stronger emphasis eg cultural diversity and disability.</p>	2016 >

Community of practice: Workforce Development	A CPD programme for mid-career cultural professionals focusing on well-being and sustainability, ethics and values and how to lead on these as an individual section practitioner. Informed by creative interventions and bridging activity from innovators to early adopters.	2016 >
	Investigation into the potential to support apprentices or paid internships focused on HM thinking – informed by creative interventions and bridging with early majority	2017 >
Research and Development	<p>In-depth longitudinal study</p> <p>5 year study with a minimum of five museums, investigating the impact of a focus on well-being and sustainability in museums on individual, organisational and community resilience. A five year programme working with teams and involving a programme of peer mentoring and supported by a learning evaluation.</p> <p>This study forms part of a continuous learning cycle with the creative interventions and tools HM are developing. We will take a baseline in 2015 using Cultural LIFE to be reviewed in 2020. We will work with Julie’s Bicycle on corresponding measurements of carbon consumption.</p> <p>Year One: Identify Museums – undertake HM induction and setting of Story of Change Visions. Baseline evaluation. Creation of network of peer support within and beyond the core museums. Explore potential to work beyond England and beyond museum sector. Additional funding identified.</p> <p>Year Two: Programmes underway – including partnerships and projects</p> <p>Year Three: Programmes continue with exchanges between core Museums. 2nd stage</p>	2015-2020

	<p>legacy projects initiated with arts, civil society, energy, community, social change, health, well-being sectors</p> <p>Year Four: Programmes concluding. Gathering and hosting of wider sector to share learning.</p> <p>Year Five: Programmes complete. Evaluation and research complete and plans for dissemination in place. Legacy projects continue.</p>	
<p>Research and Development</p>	<p>Cultural LIFE Survey</p> <p>As part of a continuous learning cycle with the longitudinal study and creative interventions, our research programme, Cultural LIFE will establish a holistic picture of the benefits of culture to the well-being of society. It will motivate consumers and deliverers of cultural services to gather better evidence than has previously been the case, so that cultural organisations can take a lead in proving their value.</p> <p>The evidence will be interpreted centrally using cutting edge research into the value of well-being. It combines the work of leading academics in the field of well-being economics, social media and behaviour change, tested by some of the most innovative museums and cultural organisations in the country.</p> <p>The evidence will be better, because it is both longitudinal and specific to the cultural experience, having been developed over four years of action and academic research run by the HM project. We expect to generate a broad data set, gathered in the main through a digital 'cultural diary' offered free to consumers to record their own Cultural LIFE; the highs and lows, their best experiences and photos , tweets and 'likes' that they shared with others. The app will be based around the outcomes identified for HMs, and by analysing GPS locations and the accompanying comments and images, we</p>	<p>2015 ></p>

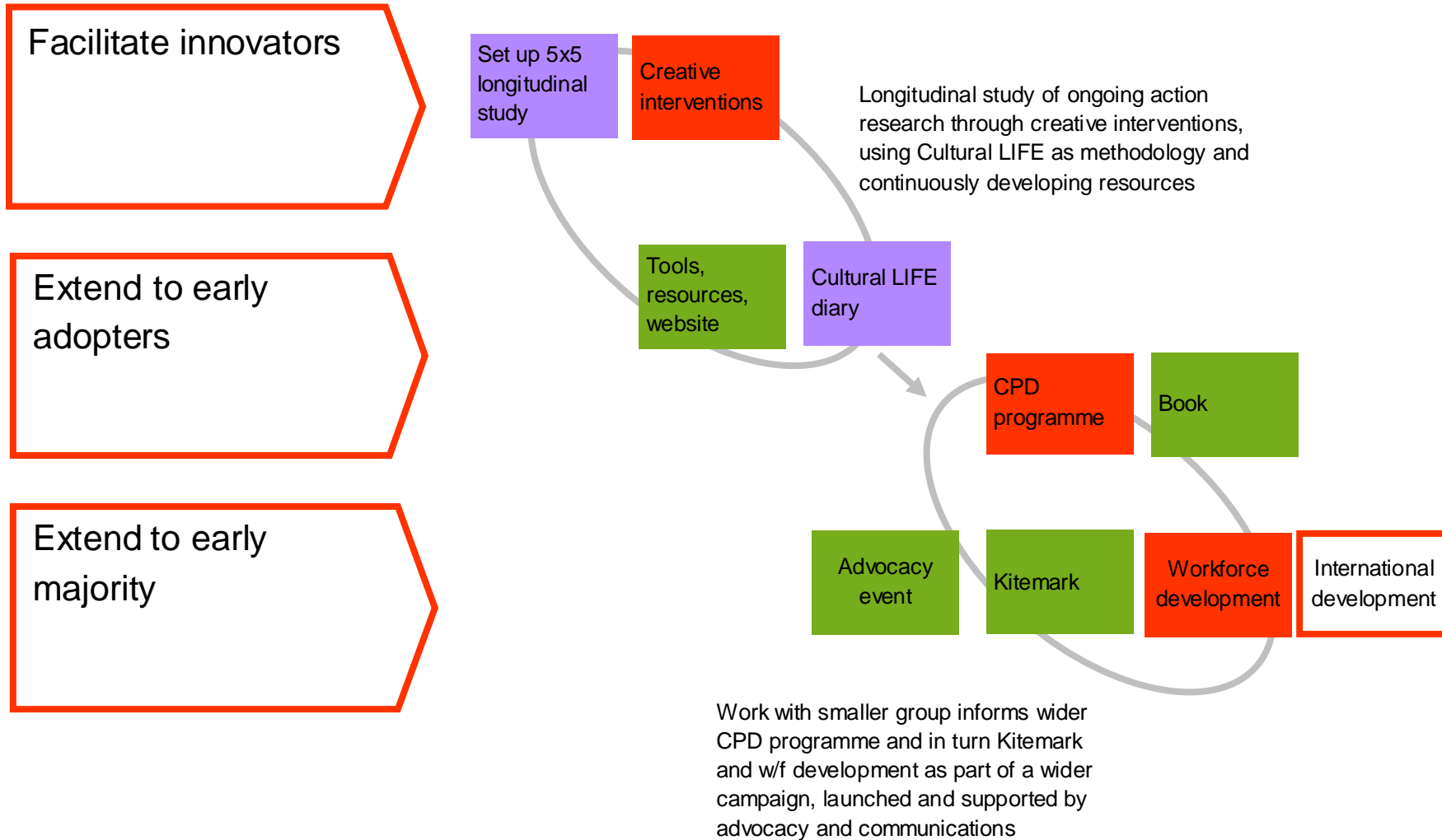
	<p>can begin to learn what it is that is making the difference.</p> <p>The LIFE app is backed up by low tech tools for use locally and by those without access to technology. Supporting the cultural LIFE outcomes of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning • Interaction • Feeling happy, active and worthwhile • Environmental awareness and care for surroundings <p>We will establish a range of behaviours that our Measure What Matters resources can identify, through simple but robust tools from observation through visitor comment analysis to activities like 'time capsule'.</p>	
<p>Advocacy and Communication</p>	<p>Further development of resources, toolkits and case studies emerging from HM activity and sharing these within and beyond the museum sector. Supported by a re-developed and more functional website (the current website is a basic wordpress site developed initially to support a one-off project and now with insufficient functionality and design) These resources are informed by the creative interventions and bridge with and beyond the wider sector.</p>	<p>2015></p>
	<p>A high-profile advocacy event focusing on the role of culture/heritage in delivering Well-being and Sustainability in support of individual, institutional and societal resilience – and how a focus on well-being measurement might affect public policy. Showcasing museums as safe public spaces to validate innovative thinking and share it more widely – combining active stewardship with political and intellectual thought.</p>	<p>2015</p>

	<p>Potential partners from beyond the cultural sector might include NEF, Legatum Institute, ONS, Action for Happiness and Common Cause.</p>	
	<p>Major public event to close and mark achievements of the programme in 2020. Reviewing the longitudinal research in the light of the 2020 context and sharing learning and good practice with and beyond the sector.</p>	2020
	<p>Possible Awards or Kitemark scheme allowing museums to assess their activities against HM principles through a process of peer-assessment. Museums achieving an identified standard would be entitled to use the kitemark 'HM'. Successful assessments being considered by a high profile panel with awards at a special ceremony or event.</p>	2016
	<p>Happy Museum Publication. HM have been approached by publishers interested in publishing a book focusing on learning from the project which they feel would be of interest to both an academic and professional audience. We are interested in seeking funding to support the resource required to produce the content. To achieve the outcome that museums become places to validate new thinking and share it widely – combining active stewardship with political and intellectual thought.</p>	2017

	<p>Working across the Arts and Cultural Sectors</p> <p>HM thinking has resonance beyond its museum context and has the potential to be adapted and extended to institutions across the arts and cultural sector (and indeed beyond). Through our partnerships with organisations like People United and Julie’s Bicycle we have already connected with like-minded institutions such as Battersea Arts Centre and the Arcola Theatre. We have also built links with others working with and beyond the cultural sector including Happy City, New Economics Foundation, Transition Network and Action for Happiness.</p> <p>We see significant potential to expand this work in the later phases of the project.</p>	2016>
<p>International Development</p>	<p>There has been very significant interest in HM from beyond the UK and there is potential to extend HM activity into Europe and beyond.</p> <p>Several mature multi-partnership networks exist to link UK with cultural initiatives overseas eg IMAGINE2020 which has a 7 year track record of working with sustainability programmes, funded by EU in 12 European countries including Germany, Slovenia, Latvia, UK, France, Belgium and Portugal. Well-being is now emerging as a component of this programme alongside sustainability and HM could seek a partnership with a European Museum/arts commission to establish an international dimension. Potential partners might include NESTA, Tipping Point and Imagine 2020.</p>	2017

Programme Management and Evaluation	Underpinning the above strands of activity will be core support for delivery, developing new activities, responding to new opportunities, building partnerships, fundraising, responding to policy initiatives (eg ONS, APPG), undertaking evaluation and sharing activities and learning to the museum sector and beyond.	Ongoing
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How things fit together



The HM project, resilience and legacy

In order to create and demonstrate resilience within the HM Project itself, the first year of activity includes sufficient resource and time to investigate options and establish a structure and partnerships to support the remaining four years activity and ultimately support its legacy beyond the 5-year period. This long-term legacy might include a self-sustaining Community of Practice and a long-term hosting to enable tools and resources developed during the programme to be available to the sector in the longer term.

As recognised by bodies such as ACE, resilience is the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while undergoing change, so as to retain essentially the same function, structure, identity and feedbacks. Resilience can often be seen as a more useful concept than sustainability. In relation to the Museum sector, how can HM contribute to supporting museum's abilities to be stewards of the past and present; cultivate active citizenship in communities and wider society?

A 'resilient system' benefits from the greatest diversity of links and relationships within it. The HM Community of Practice will further forge these connections and make channels for learning between museums to feedback into the sector swiftly. The HM Principles of 'pursuing mutual relationships' and 'learning for resilience' are key to building what some, such as Rob Hopkins from the Transition Network, has called 'bouncebackability'. In the Arts Council funded *Playing For Time* (published Spring 2015) he takes this a step further to ask how we might evolve our sectors and communities to use creativity and inventiveness to 'bounce forwards'.

HM Legacy will be evident in how its four goals are embedded into the museum and wider arts and cultural sector. It will also be evidenced in impacts beyond the sector where the value of arts and culture are brought into whole policy frameworks looking at well-being and sustainability from a range of perspectives including economics, public health, social prescribing at local levels and education.