



Inviting you to consider joining the Steering Group of Happy Museum

Happy Museum invites people to think afresh about the role of museums by asking fresh questions; offering different perspectives and responses; and stimulating and supporting change towards our vision:

To re-imagine museums for a sustainable future by fostering wellbeing that doesn't cost the earth.

Happy Museum has now entered a partnership with Julie's Bicycle and seeks to recruit a small Steering Group (up to six people in the first instance) to help shape HM's strategic direction and open up new opportunities. In the first year, two former members of the board will serve on this Steering Group.

Our proposal is that this initial small Steering Group would then seek to recruit further members, including an early career museum professional with mentoring support (up to 10 people in all).

Steering Group members should expect to attend at least four and a maximum of eight meetings of the full group per year; and to actively contribute to HM's work through, for example:

- **Advocacy and support**, sharing the work of the HMP – speaking at events, being a vocal supporter and highlighting the importance of embedding HM principles;
- **Creating Connections**, participating in a thriving and vibrant community of practice, making links and recognising opportunities to build and develop activity;
- **Reflect and Review**, offering practical insight and tangible applications of the HM principles.

We are seeking Steering Group members with these qualities:

- Able to think and act strategically
- Managing risk and complexity
- Dispassionate
- Balancing courage with control and challenging where needed
- Strong interpersonal awareness

- Communication skills to engage diverse stakeholders, broker relationships and networks and act as a spokesperson for HM
- (with others) overseeing the work of the Director and other freelance team members
- Legal and financial oversight
- Future thinking/legacy.

We are keen to include:

- Members of Happy Museum's Community of Practice
- People from beyond the sector and from different disciplines/expertise
- A diversity of age and background, and diversity of ideas/ perspectives
- An international dimension.

We also propose that there should be co-chairs for the new Steering Group.

If you are interested in joining the Steering Group and feel you have these qualities, please send us an **Expression of Interest (not more than 750 words) responding to these questions:**

- What is your interest in the Happy Museum Project?
- What do you believe you would bring to the Steering Group?
- What do you hope you might gain from the role?
- How would your participation contribute to an inclusive Steering Group?
- Would you consider putting yourself forward to co-chair the Group?

Please send this by **Monday 3rd May 2021** to happymuseumproject@gmail.com.

The selection and induction of Steering Group members will be made by former directors of the Happy Museum CIC and Julie's Bicycle and confirmed by June 2021. Selection will be through the Expressions of Interest and through interview.

We include background to the Happy Museum Board and governance and our Manifesto on the following pages.

If you would like an informal chat about the role before putting yourself forward, please contact Gaby Porter, Happy Museum Associate and former Chair (gaby@gabyporter.co.uk) or Hilary Jennings, Happy Museum Director (Hilary.jennings1@gmail.com)

Background to Happy Museum Board and governance

Between 2011 and 2014 [the Happy Museum Project](#) (HM) commissioned activities by museums and gathered the learning generated by our community of practice, as well as undertaking complementary research. In autumn 2014, the core HM team agreed to focus on a 5-year programme of work to explore the deeper and longer-term impact on organisations and individuals of a focus on the wellbeing of people, place and planet, at the completion of which we intended to review and potentially bring the project to a close. From 2011 to 2016, HM operated as an un-constituted project with funding managed through the Museum of East Anglian Life and subsequently People United, which also supported our governance development and management. In 2016 HM became a Community Interest Company (CIC) with three directors and three further board members.

In 2016, HM received Museum Resilience Funding from Arts Council England (ACE) for two years to support a longer-term programme of work with these outcomes:

- Experimentation and learning lead to better practice
- People feel a real and different future
- Flourishing organisations
- Wellbeing and sustainability embraced and embedded.

HM was unable to secure further funding from ACE from 2018 to continue this broad programme of work. Subsequently, HM has maintained its work through a series of smaller and discrete programmes of work, including: workshops hosted by museums in our Community of Practice; collaborations with organisations including Common Cause Foundation, Clore Leadership Programme, Culture Declares and Playful Places; active involvement in networks like Co-Creating Change and the Alliance for Culture Health and Wellbeing; contributions at conferences and workshops in the UK and beyond.

In 2020, we launched [No Going Back](#), a commission within the [Season for Change programme](#), building on the particular power of museums to draw on past stories of rapid transition and transformation; and inspire museums and their communities to shape new stories and actions to address the climate and ecological emergency.

The Happy Museum did not set out to become an organisation – rather, to be an ongoing project. In 2020 the board decided to terminate the CIC, which had not served a useful purpose, and to enter a mutually beneficial partnership with Julie’s Bicycle. As part of this transfer, the former CIC directors will oversee/ support the recruitment of the new Steering Group.

HM’s assets include intellectual property (with an extensive suite of open resources), our website, Community of Practice, networks and contacts.



Happy Museum Manifesto – for the wellbeing of people, place and planet

The future is not some place we are going to, but one we are creating. The paths are not to be found, but made, and the activity of making them changes both the maker and the destinations. (John Schaar)

'It's the final call', say scientists, warning of the risks of rising global temperatures. We need to make urgent and unprecedented changes to respond to the threats of climate crisis, species extinction, the end of cultures and civilisations. We face increasing inequality, declining wellbeing and social polarisation. How can we build momentum with others in and beyond museums to support these wider concerns?

Happy Museum Project works for the wellbeing of people, place and planet both now and for the future. For us, wellbeing and sustainability are a continuum – a spectrum from personal to planetary. Deep compassion and human values are at the heart of our work.

- We are a community creating change and are committed to people, supporting them to lead and thrive as agents of change, positivity and innovation.
- We convene and support people working in museums to enquire into the deep, complex challenges that we face.
- We create space, focus, provocation and permission to experiment, cutting across disciplines and hierarchies.
- We encourage people to collaborate and scale up our responses through networked action.
- We expand and enrich our thinking with other voices and perspectives from beyond museums through connections with civil society and thought leaders – Common Cause Foundation, Rapid Transition, Ctrl Shift and others.

In all these ways, we raise aspirations, transform attitudes, spark new ideas, and build capabilities and skills. Members of the Happy Museum Project community have described our programme as:

'A space to experiment with museum practice, through principles of care, inclusion and collaboration, in a critical time of change.'

‘A light in the darkness.’

‘Expanding my world.’

‘Working from the edge.’

‘Forcing us to do different kinds of collaboration.’

Why museums?

We make the case for the distinctive role of the cultural sector – what, and how, can museums contribute? Happy Museum Project’s founder Tony Butler [observed](#): ‘If our business is really to change lives, then action to avert catastrophic climate change has to be the predominant point of entry’.

We support museums to connect wellbeing and environmentalism - an essential connection for resilient people, places and planet. Here is some of what we’ve learnt about the potential of museums:

- Museums are full of humanity and human stories; they contribute to our wellbeing and resilience both individually and communally. Those of us working in museums can become part of the growing movement calling for a [Wellbeing Economy](#).
- The [lack of conversation](#) around climate change is a major factor in our limited response. Museums are largely trusted institutions at a time of fake news and exploitative big data. People working in museums are able to open up these conversations in a positive and future-facing way – for example, Manchester Museum’s award winning [Climate Control](#) exhibition.
- Museums offer shared public space at a time when the public realm is being challenged both in real and virtual terms. They are places for encounter, where we can meet and connect beyond our immediate social bubble and where we can promote and cultivate our universal values. Research from the [Common Cause Foundation](#) shows that raising awareness of the centrality of compassionate values for most people helps to increase pro-social and environmental behaviours. Happy Museum has partnered with the Common Cause Foundation to [explore the role of museums](#) in promoting shared values.
- Museums are places to experience awe and wonder - feelings that [research shows](#) us help us to understand ourselves as communal and pro-social beings and to act accordingly.
- Museums are in a unique position to engage us in longer-term thinking, acting as an antidote to what the [Long Now Foundation](#) identify as the ‘acceleration of technology, the short-horizon perspective of market-driven economics’. Museums can use their buildings and collections to prompt deeper longer-term perspectives such as the [Coal Forest](#) exhibition at Woodhorn Colliery Museum which explored our continuing and complex relationship with coal.
- Museums are ideally placed to show us our potential for change. Museum collections

evidence the adaptability of the human race and show the enormous societal shifts we are capable of, shifts in energy, production, consumption, transport, arts and culture as well as in ethics and morals. Andrew Simms of the Rapid Transition Alliance [challenges us](#) in Museum ID to use museums to show that change is possible and people can make it happen.

- Museums have the potential to offer leadership in responsible environmental practices and to use their unique role to foster environmental values, understanding and action with their audiences and communities - as evidenced in the resources and case studies from the [Museums Environmental Framework](#) from Julie's Bicycle.