



# Happy Museum – reflecting on the past, planning for the future

Report on 2018 residential symposium

# Contents

Introduction: Happy Museum – then, now and in the future	3
Landing on the awareness timeline	5
Looking to the future	6
Synthesising and sharing learning	7
Finding common challenges, forming partnerships	9
Are the Happy Museum's six principles fit for the future?	10
Say it in clay	12
The dinner	15
Revisiting the 'why?' of Happy Museum	16
The guest panel reflects on the power of systems thinking	19
What next for Happy Museum?	20
Team commitments for future work	22
A pivotal moment	24
Feedback after the April event	26



# Happy Museum – then, now and in the future



The Happy Museum (HM)'s fourth symposium was a chance to bring together our growing Community of Practice, share learning from our seven year journey so far – and consider together the direction for the years ahead says director **Hilary Jennings**.

---

*"... a chance to bring together  
our growing Community of  
Practice"*

---

**Hilary Jennings**

This was a pivotal moment for HM as it moves into a new phase and the symposium was a chance for our community of practice to look back at the journey so far, and also to look forward and shape the direction and focus of the work for the future. The symposium gave some 60 people from the five-year Study Group, Affiliates, project partners

and the HM team the time to reflect together, share learning and reconnect with the project's imperative to explore wellbeing through an environmental lens. The event had a collaborative focus with members of the community of practice co-producing and co-leading sessions with the HM team.



---

*"HM has maintained a sharp focus on how the sector responds to global challenges and societal change."*

---

Hilary Jennings

[Continued from page 3]

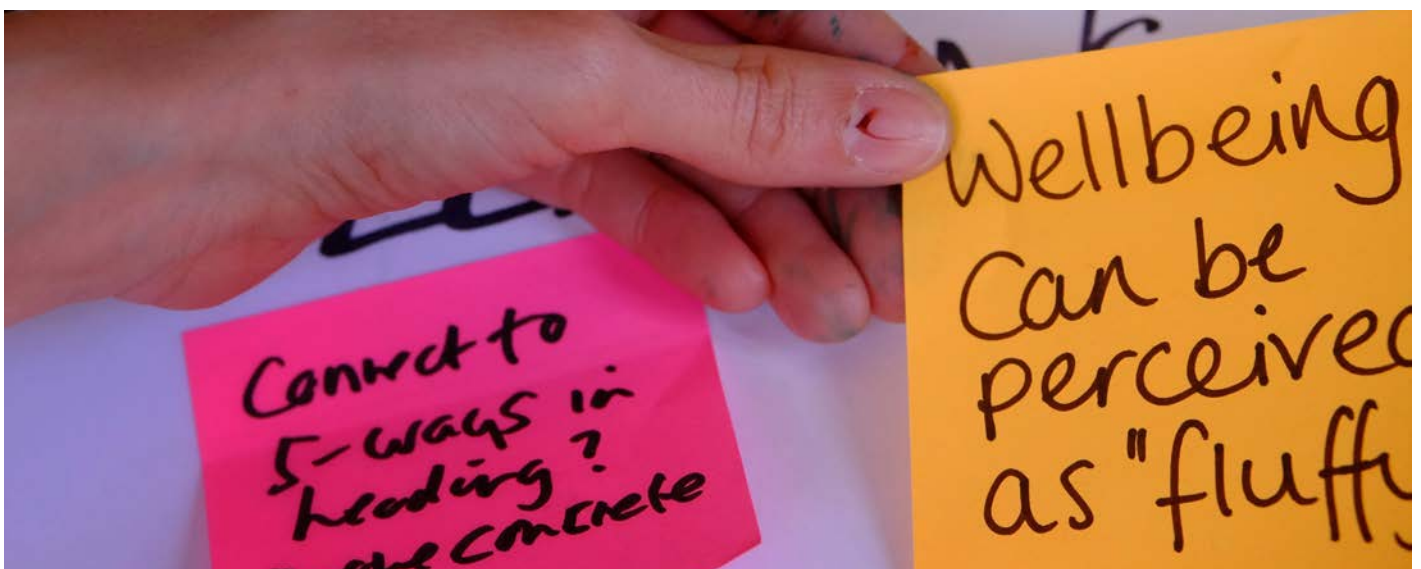
Since it began in 2011, HM has sought to stimulate and support museum practice that places wellbeing within an environmental and future-facing frame, rethinking the role that museums can play in creating more resilient people, places and planet. Core to our work is the principle that human wellbeing now depends on tackling pressing global challenges: resource depletion, climate change, biodiversity loss, inequality and social injustice.

Our belief was – and still is – that museums have much to offer in this context. Our catchy name risked our work being seen as 'fluffy', but HM has maintained a sharp focus on how the sector responds to global challenges and societal change. While the agendas of wellbeing and environmental sustainability were marginal in the cultural sector back in 2011, today more museums are responding to these issues and environmental reporting is a requirement in

terms of institutional policies and funding applications. However, the two issues are largely seen in isolation rather than as part of a holistic response to the wellbeing of people, place and planet.

Over the last seven years, through action research, academic research, peer networking and training, HM has worked directly with over 50 museums in the UK and connected with many more through events and an online presence which stretches globally. In my 'state of the nation' talk at the symposium, which you can read on [our website](#), I look back at our journey in detail and highlight key projects and milestones. The growth of our community of practice has been particularly satisfying to witness – through HM, connections and partnerships have been forged, innovative practice has been trialled, and good ideas have spread.

I hope you enjoy the coverage of our symposium on the following pages.



# Landing on the awareness timeline

*"The timeline session was a chance for all, regardless of when they got involved in HM, to step back and see the bigger picture and their place in it."*

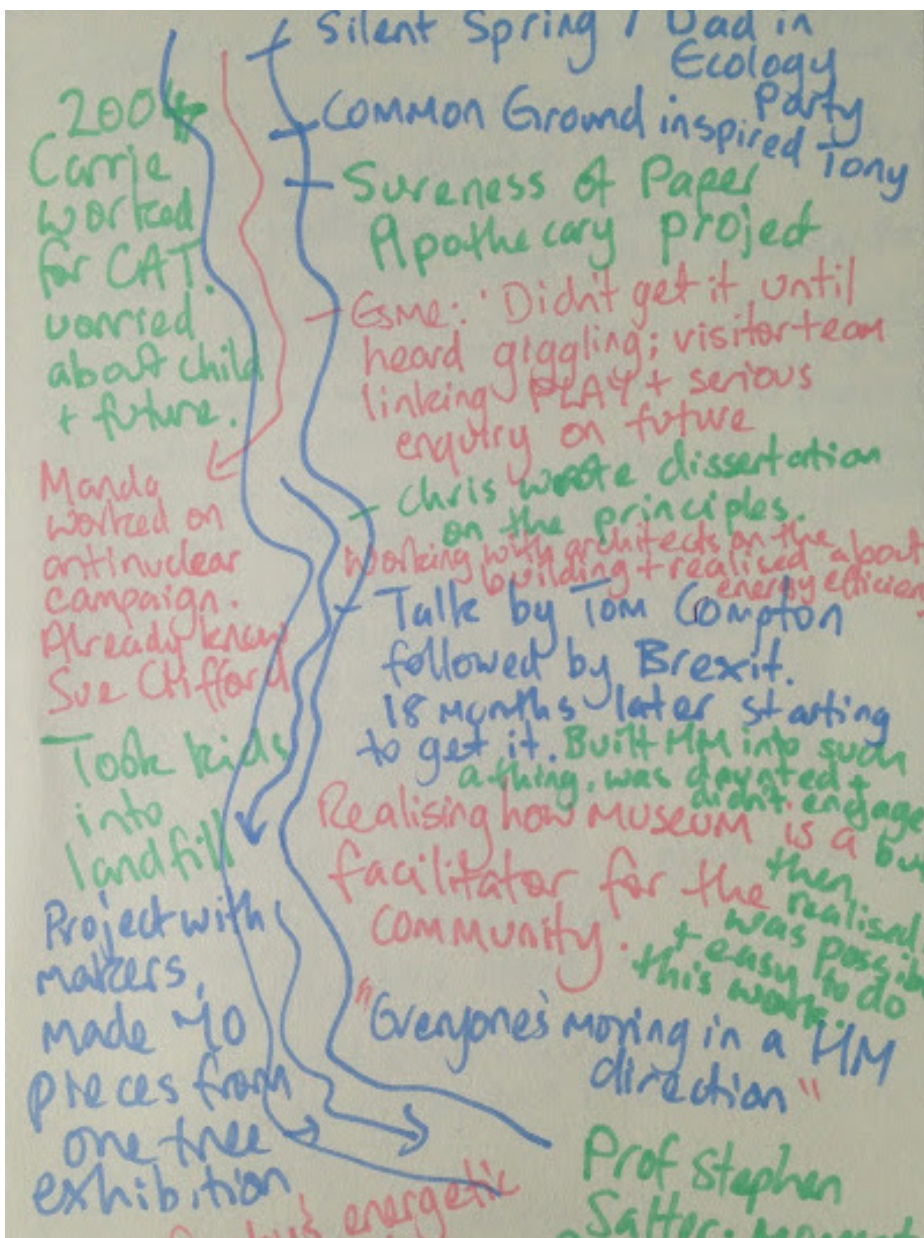
Lucy Neal

As they arrived at the symposium at Stoke Rochford, participants from the Study Group, Affiliates and the HM team created a 50 year timeline down the middle of the main room that wove the HM story and key cultural and environmental milestones, bringing together the personal and the historical.

The timeline showed a river, one bank of which charted the course of the environmental movement from its beginnings, featuring key consciousness raising moments like the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962 and the 'Earthrise' photograph taken from space in 1968, all the way through to Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth* and David Attenborough's *Blue Planet II*, which brought home the impact of our use of plastics to a worldwide audience. The river also charted growing awareness of the importance of wellbeing as something government, organisations and corporations should value and aim to improve.

On the other bank of the river, the timeline showed HM milestones – both personal and organisational – charting its course from the early days in 2011 through to the 2018 symposium. Participants added comments and reactions, and marked when and how they joined the HM community of practice.

HM's Lucy Neal ran the session and explains: "The idea of our timeline was to connect up to key moments of global environmental awareness and actions – such as the Kyoto Protocol 1998 – and add the personal by asking when people connected to this timeline in terms of their own awareness. The timeline session was a chance for all, regardless of when they got involved in HM, to step back and see the bigger picture and their place in it."



# Looking to the future

---

*“... concern that while HM’s aspiration is inclusive and democratic, its purpose and language are sometimes obscure...”*

---

A key focus for the community of practice was the future of HM. Key forward-looking sessions during the symposium were dedicated to **synthesising the learning** from HM projects (see page 7), **reviewing the six HM principles** that have guided our work to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose (see page 10) and gathering people’s views on what the focus and **future shape of HM** should be (see page 20). As well as the open sessions described in these pages, review sessions were held with the directors of the Study Group museums; and with visiting partners and collaborators.

The directors of the six Study Group museums confirmed the value and impact of HM for themselves, their colleagues and their organisations. They particularly valued these distinctive characteristics:

- maintaining a clear focus on the bigger picture and on ‘difficult’ issues, particularly climate emergency
- the challenge and provocation that HM brings through introducing speakers and ‘frames’ of thinking from beyond museums and the cultural sector
- encouraging people to reflect; experiment, test and learn; and to share their learning
- generous and inclusive, creating equality and deeply human in its approach.

They expressed concern that while HM’s aspiration is inclusive and democratic, its purpose and language are sometimes obscure when communicating with colleagues and stakeholders. They also asked HM to strive for greater diversity.



# Synthesising and sharing learning

*"It was a good exercise... there were things I'd learned that I didn't realise I'd learned."*

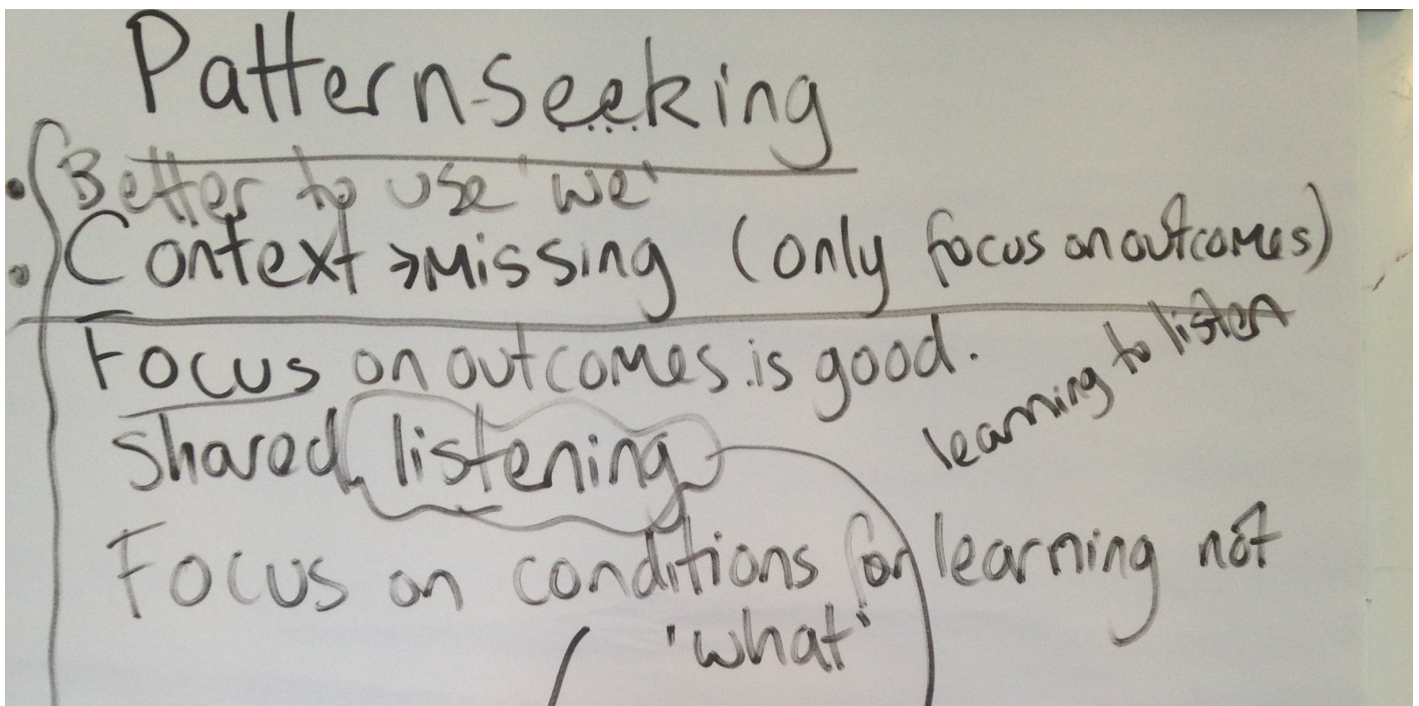
## Participant

In a session on the opening afternoon, the assembled community of practice was asked to synthesise their learning from an HM related project without describing what the project was. Working in table groups, participants took turns to answer three questions: what did you learn from the project, what did the organisation learn, and what did audiences or communities learn? The session emphasised 'pattern seeking' in order to make learning meaningful.

In feedback at the end of the session, participants shared key things that they had learned from HM inspired projects. Some of the common themes and patterns were: the value of collaboration; having permission to fail; being able to step out of

your comfort zone; the importance of a developmental phase; the importance of reflection; learning about how to manage active participation; the importance and power of co-production; and developing extended relationships with people.

"It was a good exercise," said one participant. "There were things I'd learned that I didn't realise I'd learned." Others spoke of how being part of the HM community of practice gave them the confidence to embark on new kinds of projects. "Having the support of a like-minded community of people created a safe space with feedback and support." Another person spoke about how, for a smaller museum, it was "invaluable to be part of an extended family of museums".



*“... invaluable to be part of an extended family of museums.”*

#### Participant

Several participants spoke of the value of the discussions. “In my group we talked a lot about how learning happens,” said one. “We had a better focus on that than if we had talked about what we did. It was powerful to ask ‘How did it help your learning?’ rather than ‘What did you learn?’ Another said: “Not focusing on the detail meant we saw the project in a wider frame of reference.”

One participant identified a common theme: “We all said that the HM projects forced us

to do new types of collaboration, which had been a bit daunting, but turned out to be very valuable.” Another commented: “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.”

The table below summarises the discussion one group had relating to the learning from two HM inspired projects.

	Project 1	Project 2
How did it help you learn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Took me out of academic silo into face-to-face projects with communities</li> <li>• I learnt the value of narrative and historical context</li> <li>• I learnt the value of working with those outside my area of expertise. There has been a lasting impact, there’s no going back.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revealed interdepartmental communication issues in the organisation</li> <li>• I can now empathise with lots of perspectives at once and for the first time</li> <li>• It was pleasurable, simply enriching – but harder than it should have been</li> </ul>
How did it help your organisation learn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How to invite people to participate. Participants were self-selected and not proposed by the organisation.</li> <li>• The core HM principles were embedded in the organisation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I had a useful discussion with my department head</li> <li>• This approach is now seen as more attractive across the organisation</li> <li>• It’s symbolic, an interactive new strategy</li> </ul>
How did it help your audiences/community learn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was a novel experience, new for all involved</li> <li>• New collaborative experiences</li> <li>• Sharing ideas sensitively and accessing knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visitors perceived the institution differently by having a shared experience and a stimulus for discussion</li> <li>• It was a deep learning process within a simple project</li> </ul>

# Finding common challenges, forming partnerships

---

*"... many found commonalities and shared challenges."*

---

This collaborative task asked paired museum teams to take turns describing the context of their organisation, together finding commonalities and shared challenges – as well as identifying opportunities to form learning partnerships where a significant overlap was found.

Though each museum has a unique setting – some are multi-site organisations, some are large city institutions, others are small and based in rural areas – through discussion many found commonalities and shared challenges: most had faced cuts in funding and reduced staffing, many were primarily local authority or council funded, and many served

areas where community cohesion was an issue. Some served areas where the political alignment affected funding streams for environmental or other projects.

Through this and other sessions, museum teams identified areas of common ground and common challenge. By the end of the symposium as many as ten 'exchange visits' were planned, with one museum aiming in the long-term to create an exhibition every year in partnership with other HM Affiliates and a local partner.

For more on commitments made during the symposium, see article on page 22.



# Are the HM's six principles fit for the future?



The HM's **six principles** are being reviewed as part of an on-going strategic evaluation of the project and a session inviting input from the community of practice was a key part of that process.

Six volunteers from the community of practice, based at different tables, led the review for one principle, with the remaining participants moving around, discussing and making suggestions for each of the principles.

The HM principles were created in 2011 and reviewed and revised in 2013. The principles were – and are – intended to inspire and guide

practice. In their current form, they are expressed as follows:

Create the conditions for wellbeing

Be an active citizen

Pursue mutual relationships

Learn together for resilience

Measure what matters

Value the environment and be a steward of the future as well as the past

The review session generated a lot of feedback and comments from participants at the symposium.

---

*"Crucially, none of the principles was considered to be redundant or superfluous."*

---



*"The principles are a method for articulating the bigger picture of change."*

#### Museum practitioner

Crucially, none of the principles was considered to be redundant or superfluous. There were many suggested rewordings and subtle changes, and many felt they needed texture and better explanation and definition.

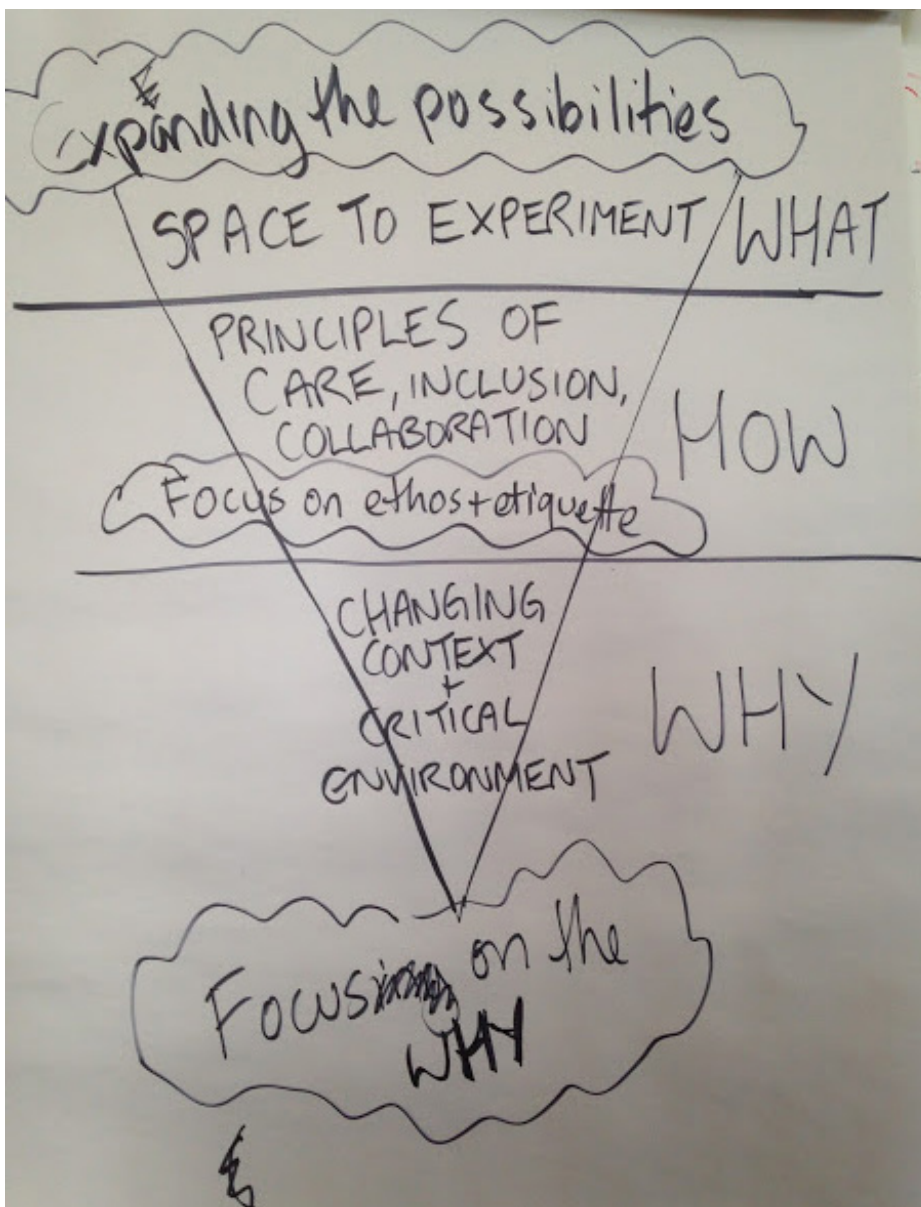
Overall, there were three common comments:

- They don't say enough about what they mean and can be confusing
- They don't explain whether they are about activity at the level of staff, organisations or audiences/communities

- They need to be more accessible to lay people (museum audiences) in their language

People asked: Are they 'ways of working' to achieve a bigger, single goal? Or are they goals for our practice in themselves? Could they be phrased as stating the value of museums, while also encouraging a re-imagining of the role of museums? A key question asked was: who are the principles talking about? It's not clear if they are related to actions carried out by individual staff, or organisations or audiences/communities.

As one museum practitioner said: "The principles are a method for articulating the bigger picture of change." This was an invaluable session and a refreshed and clarified version of the HM principles will be tested out over the coming months, both with existing and new members of the Community of Practice.



# Say it in Clay

---

*"If there's something you want to say that will last for thousands of years it's worth saying it in clay."*

---

Stoke Rochford's beautiful Orangery hosted *Say it in Clay*, a hands-on activity session led jointly by Lucy Neal and Michael Martin from Encounters Arts, with support from Alice Briggs (Ceredigion Museum) and Megan de Silva (Monmouthshire Museums).

The session grew out of a developing collaboration between Clayground Collective, Encounters Arts and HM, which began with a [session in 2015](#) investigating museums and our relationship with the material world. The starting point is the importance of clay, a traditional and universal material, which is still at technology's cutting edge. Such is the incredible longevity of objects made in clay that history teaches us that if there's something you want to say that will last for thousands of years it's worth saying it in clay.

Museums typically have clay objects in their collections. Many face the challenge of decommissioning objects – and their stories – that no longer have a place in their collections. Pottery fragments or 'sherds' are particularly tricky, as we don't always have their stories; story and object have become separated.

The community of practice were asked to work in pairs, and given a large lump of clay, clay tools and a pottery sherd found on the Thames' foreshore. Participants were invited to: tell a story to each other about clay; consider the pottery sherd they were given – how old is it? what could it be from?; use the clay to make a new imagined 'whole' object, inspired by the sherd, with a focus on something they would like to pass onto future generations; tell a new imagined story – starting with the object and telling its story or starting with the story and making the object; and finally, create an interpretation and display card to go with the object.

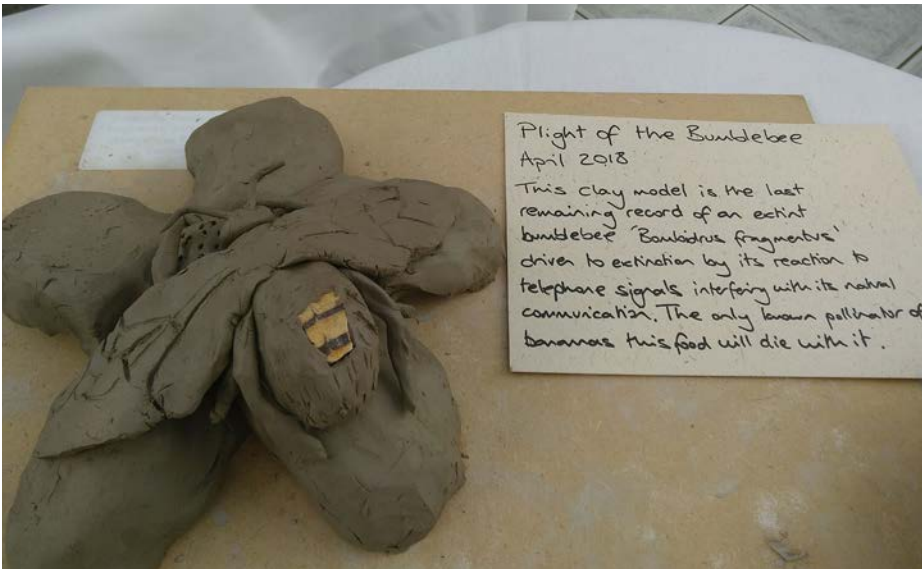




After 30 energetic minutes of talk, invention and making, some 25 objects were ready for display in the pop-up Say It In Clay exhibition. By a self-organising miracle, the 'exhibition' materialised on tables pulled together in the centre of the orangery. Museum practitioners proved themselves active stewards

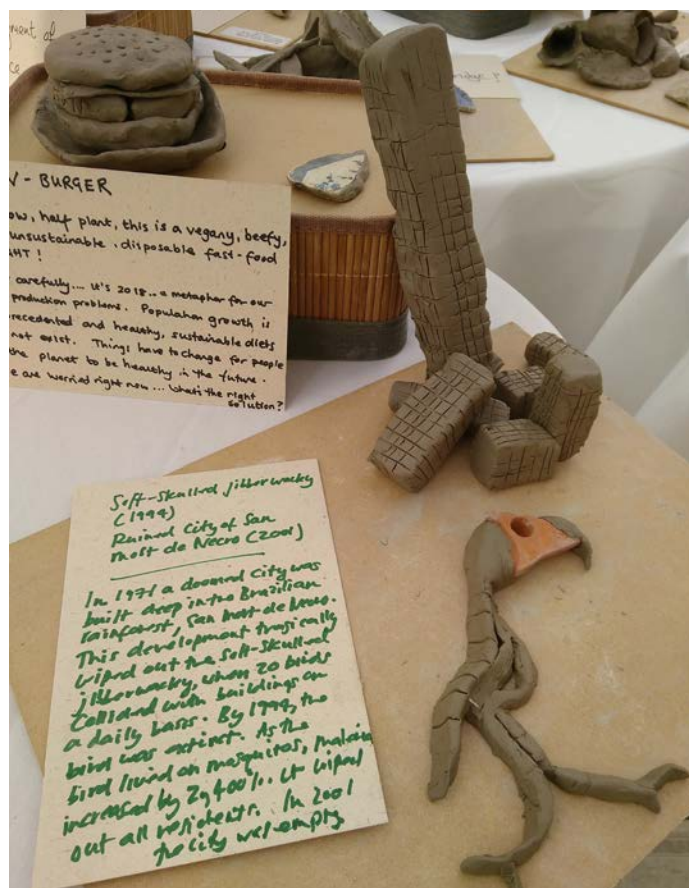
of past, present and future. 'Earth' narratives were prominent – voice given to the 'real' stories of species extinction and human disregard for future generations. Making had accessed a 'subsurface' layer to the day.

The interpretation display cards included these gems:



#### April 2018

This clay model is the last remaining record of an extinct bumblebee '*Bombidrus fragmentus*' driven to extinction by its reaction to telephone signals interfering with its natural communication. The only known pollinator of bananas, this food died with it.



#### Soft-skulled jabberwacky (1994), Ruined City of San Mort de Necro (2001)

In 1971 a doomed city was built deep in the Brazilian rainforest, San Mort de Necro. This development tragically wiped out the soft-skulled jabberwacky, when 20 birds collided into buildings on a daily basis. By 1994, the bird was extinct. As the bird lived on mosquitos, malaria increased by 2,400% wiping out all residents. In 2001 the city was empty.



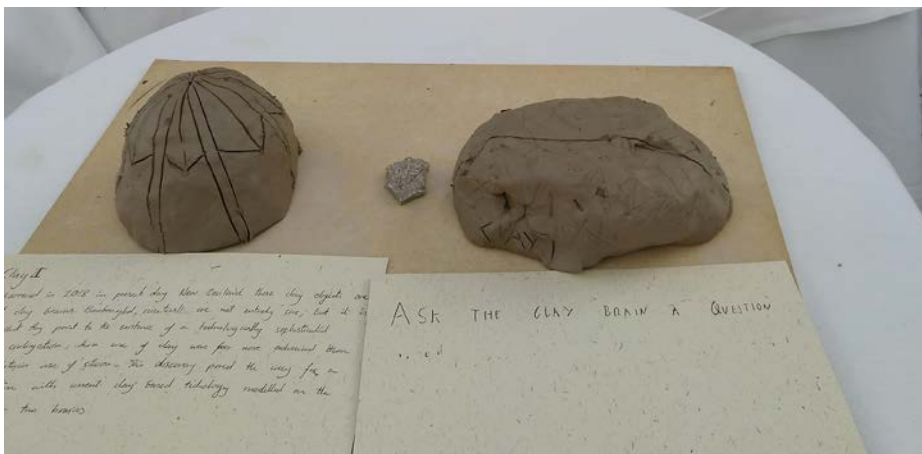
## Throwaway Culture

A series of used and disposable cups. We learn a lot about our values and culture from what we throw away. Clay is the original disposable material, can we undo the damage caused by transposing this ancient practice into a world with modern materials?



## Key (2018)

Made by Yarl's Wood detainee. 'I need a key to get out of here and a key for a new home.' This person is currently detained indefinitely under UK Law



## Clay 1

Discovered in 2018 in present day New Zealand these clay objects are in fact clay brains. Bamboozled scientists are not entirely sure, but it is believed that they point to the existence of a technologically sophisticated clay-based civilisation whose use of clay was far more advanced than the 21st century's use of silicon. This discovery paved the way for a clay1 revolution with current clay based technology modelled on the archetypes of these two brains.



We hope the session will lay groundwork for a future collaboration between [Encounters Arts](#) and [Clayground Collective](#) on working with museums and their communities.

# The dinner

The HM community of practice, the team and guests gather and celebrate on the last evening of the 2018 symposium in the inspiring setting of Stoke Rochford. A small group from the community of practice provided entertainment in the form of games of Chinese Whispers and Consequences – stimulating conversation and playfulness.



# Revisiting the ‘why?’ of Happy Museum

---

*“When we look down at the Earth from space, we see this amazing, indescribably beautiful planet. It looks like a living, breathing organism. But it also, at the same time, looks extremely fragile.”*

---

**Ron Garan, astronaut**

On the morning of the final day, a small group made a joint presentation, each speaking from personal experience about the imperative for cultural action and the HM – the why in ‘why are we doing this?’. This session, created collaboratively with visiting expert, Earth Systems Scientist Dr Tom Powell was underpinned by HM’s commitment to putting the big global challenges ‘in the room’, it’s encouragement to speak openly and from a personal perspective and it’s commitment to connecting museum practitioners with experts from beyond the sector.

Jennie Trueman, Visitor Team Assistant from Manchester Museum opened the session with an image of the Earth from space. When thinking of the why? of HM, she said she thought of astronaut Ron Garan, who said. “When we look down at the Earth from space, we see this amazing, indescribably beautiful planet. It looks like a living, breathing organism. But it also, at the same time, looks extremely fragile [...] and it’s really sobering to see this paper-thin layer and to realise that that [...] is all that protects every living thing on Earth.” It was this that inspired her to action.



*"... 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, Ceredigion Museum

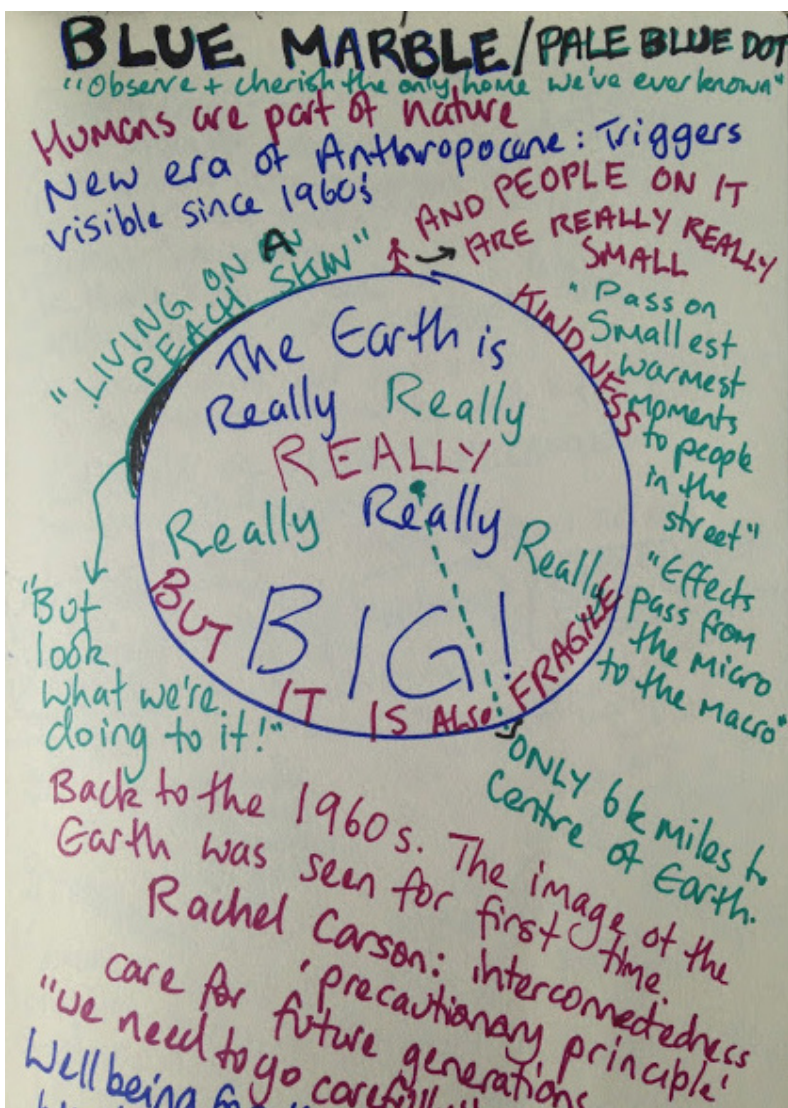
Janet Goodridge, Museums Officer at Northumberland Museums spoke about the 1960s, when the first images from space were seen. Those times and conflict and war also produced beauty like the Earthrise picture and – a particular inspiration for Janet – Rachel Carson's seminal *Silent Spring*. "She talked about the interconnectedness of life, and about the precautionary principle, of not acting when the risk is unknown, such as with pesticides."

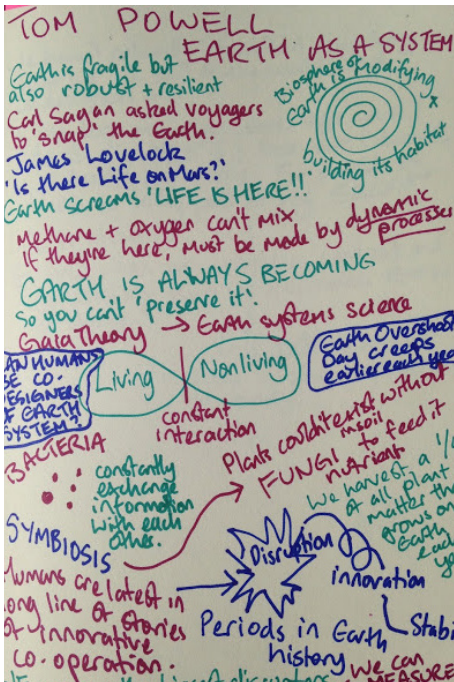
Carson believed we needed to have raised awareness of the past, present and future given the power human have. "We need to balance progress with understanding of how complex living systems

are." In the Anthropocene era of human power, public education was more important than ever. She drew a link to New Economics Foundation's Five Ways to Wellbeing and their connection to HM thinking. For her, 'the why?' had to do with the links that HM makes between individual wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

Victoria Coxon, Education Officer at Northumberland Museums picked up from Janet, starting with the 'pale blue dot' image taken in 1990 by the Voyager I as it left the solar system. She quoted Carl Sagan, who said of the image: "To me, it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the pale blue dot, the only home we've ever known." Kindness was important, she said, as HM was in a way about "creating space in your organisation for happiness." She concluded that the why of HM was about "realising that you had that responsibility both in your own life and in your organisation."

Carrie Canham, Director at Ceredigion Museum began her contribution by referring to a discussion she had had on the effectiveness of small gestures. "Somebody had said gestures matter, but sometimes it's like turning up to a motorway pile-up and saying: let me through, I've got a bottle of rescue remedy!" For her, the 'why?' of HM was that it was "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."





*"... we must temper our idealism with realism and work hard so our story of change doesn't become a fairy tale."*

**Tony Butler, Happy Museum founder**

HM founder Tony Butler recounted the story of Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers. "He was a proto communist, a founder of the green movement, and his story is a warning from history, a salutary tale." Some 369 years ago, Winstanley went up St George's Hill in Surrey with a few companions to till the land. "It was a challenge to landowners and the enclosure of common land." After a few months, the landowners sent armed men to drive them away. "And the Diggers became a footnote in history and St George's Hill is today a gated community owned by Russian oligarchs."

For Tony, the lesson from history was that "we must temper our idealism with realism and work hard so our story of change doesn't become a fairy tale". Tony said the election of Trump and Brexit "were sparks to reignite our passion". The work HM was doing with Common Cause on understanding how communities interact and why people think like they do "was some of the most exciting work we have done." It pointed 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".

You can watch these presentations online [here](#).

The final contribution was from Dr Tom Powell, an associate research fellow at Exeter University. A specialist in a field now called Earth Systems Science, Tom picked up fragile blue planet theme and told a different story: about how robust and resilient life on Earth is. "The evolution of life is usually told in terms of competition and

predation, but what we are finding out is that there's a different story in reality: on a broader scale, what we mostly see through evolution are stories of cooperation and innovation, different forms of life working together to co-create and build stability."

"Complex life is about symbiosis, about networks and sharing and what we find is that the more complex those networks, the more resilient they are. Humans are just the latest in a long line of innovations, and innovations have been mostly social ones and that has given us enormous power over the Earth. The pattern of this long history was of long periods of stability, where the natural systems were very robust to environmental change, followed by periods of huge disruption that stem from one of these innovative events and then the system will find stability again."

"And this long term view is a very reassuring and powerful message for us as we are huge disruptors of the stable way the world works. In my field we have measured about the scale of disruption, we know that humans farm about 50% of the land area on the planet and we harvest about a quarter of all plant life." The disruption that humans are causing is accelerating, he said. "When I was born in 1987, Earth Overshoot Day was the 19th of December, and by 2017 it was the 2nd of August." You can watch Tom's presentation online [here](#).

# Guest panel reflects on the power of systems thinking

---

*"I think that rather than be despondent that our individual actions are not changing anything instead we have to think at a systems level and this is how HM works..."*

---

Ian Rimington, ACE

On the final morning, some of HM's symposium guests from key roles in the cultural sector joined a panel: Ian Rimington Relationship Manager, Environmental Sustainability of [Arts Council England](#), Tom Crompton of [Common Cause](#), Al Tickell of [Julie's Bicycle](#), Dr Tom Powell of Exeter University. The session was chaired by HM's Lucy Neal.

Ian Rimington of ACE took up the challenge of summarising the morning's sessions and the panel discussion that followed. Ian identified five themes: going from micro to macro; interconnectedness; networks; systems; and kindness. He said that Dr Tom Powell's talk (see above) had summed up all these themes. "We all live in our own heads and it's hard sometimes not to think of ourselves as atomised individuals. The language we use reflects this: we talk of humans and the natural world as if they were two separate things."

As Tom's session made clear, the truth is very different. "Take the average human – some four pounds of the weight of that person is bacteria. We are our own ecosystems and we cannot survive without those bacteria in us. If you can get it into your head that 'I am my ecosystem and I can only survive because of other things within my ecosystem' then you can scale that idea up."

Ian recalled the references made in different symposium sessions to what some call the 'wood-wide web', whereby trees communicate with each other through their root systems with the help of fungi called mycorrhizae. "I think a key theme has been going from micro to macro. I think that rather than be despondent that our individual actions are not changing anything instead we have to think at a systems level and this is how HM works, it's about thinking as a system not as a group of atomised individuals, which means scaling up from the self to everybody in an institution, to being part of a network of institutions, and up to how we operate at all levels society."

You can watch Ian's summary online [here](#).



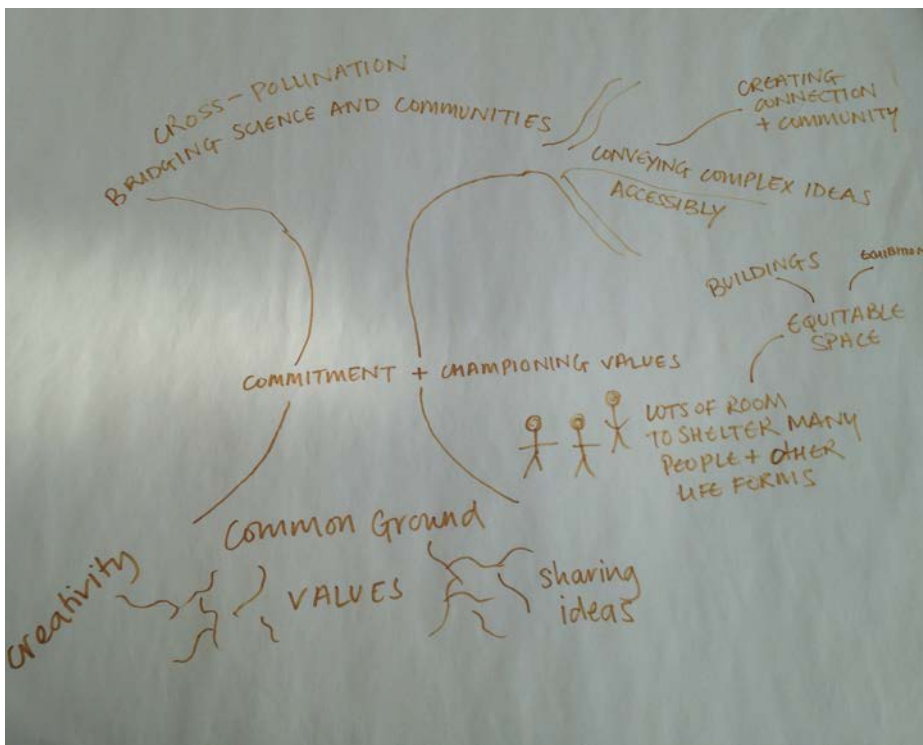
# What next for Happy Museum?

*“HM to continue to act as a ‘light in the darkness’ and give support and licence for museums to explore the big questions, to take risks and experiment.”*

The shape and direction of HM in the years ahead was discussed at a session on the final morning of the 2018 symposium. The review was intended to identify where motivations and needs might lie for future activity around HM’s themes. It was based on the idea of the community as a self-supporting network, and the session used the metaphor of mycorrhizae fungi that enhances a community of trees. Questions were: What is the nutrient or fuel of HM? What might be its future mission? Who will need and lead it? What will it do? How will it be shaped?

In terms of its mission, people were generally supportive of the current mission statement of ‘Reimagining museums for a changing world’. The community of practice wanted HM to continue to act as a ‘light in the darkness’ and give support and licence for museums to explore the big questions, to take risks and experiment. People supported the central environmental focus, which should be an integral part of a wider responsibility for museums, to their communities and future generations.

With the question of who the HM was for, the input proposed a broadening of the community, both within the museum sector and beyond. A bigger network, with more museums was desirable with support for the breadth of participation from across museum teams that was a key element of HM participation. There was support for involving the wider cultural sector, including zoos and conservation organisations, scientists and beyond.



*“There was a palpable energy in the room for HM going forward – a feeling of responsibility amongst the community not only to further their own work but the wider sector response to the pressing and urgent challenges of our time.”*

The networking and practice-sharing aspects of HM were supported as activities that should continue in the next chapter, with many wanting more regular opportunities to meet and particular enthusiasm for the diversity of museum roles who engaged in the project. Facilitated learning and mentoring, between museums as well as for individuals, were new areas of activity HM could develop. Some suggested a future role should include campaigning and advocacy, being a collective voice for change in the sector. There was support for more learning resources, such as toolkits, and more training opportunities. Action research projects and commissioned pure research were still seen as being important parts of the mix.

Discussing the organisational shape of HM, the participants at the symposium had many suggestions: a paid core team within a formally structured and constituted organisation, with clear oversight and governance; a membership subscription funding model, with a sliding scale of fees to reflect organisations' size and resources; commitment from members to take on roles in rotation and scope to second staff to HM; and calls for any expansion to be realistic and for the organisation to 'stay light' and be based in real practice.

There was a palpable energy in the room for HM going forward – a feeling of responsibility amongst the community not only to further their own work but the wider sector response to the pressing and urgent challenges of our time.

The session will feed into an enquiry, funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation and led by Flow Associates, into the future shape of HM. This work includes a contextual horizon-scanning, identifying what is distinctive about HM compared to other initiatives and what the sector may need beyond 2020, and an analysis of possible future options.



# Team commitments for future work



In one of the final sessions, participants were asked to meet in museum teams and to discuss any short and medium-term commitments to action that had been inspired by their experience at the HM symposium. They were asked for actions they would commit to do within one month, within three months and within a year.

The commitments ranged from very specific ones for one team member to handle, to grander and more aspirational ones involving the wider organisation or external partners. A flavour of these commitments can be seen below.

Examples of actions to be completed within:		
1 month	3 months	1 year
<div>"Reduce waste from school visits – e.g. plastic bottles."</div> <div>"Encourage a broader representation of staff beyond out team to join planned 'play' training session."</div> <div>"Disseminate the ideas from the last two days across the service – and arrange the visit to Oxford Museum we talked about."</div> <div>"Follow up contacts from the symposium and arrange visits."</div>	<div>"Revisit and reflect on wellbeing and environmental policy. Talk to council energy office – practical ideas."</div> <div>"Active planning with the internal team."</div> <div>"Create a playful museum working group, taking ideas from facing forward, generate a network."</div> <div>"Talk to team about Story of Change and actions coming out of it."</div> <div>"Volunteer wellbeing – work with a team to establish a plan they'd like to do."</div>	<div>"Make creative engagement a significant part of my work."</div> <div>"Plan in those ideas...keep revising and doing!"</div> <div>"Look at good examples of wellbeing/active citizenship in other organisations to inspire residential volunteers."</div> <div>"Wellbeing events – co-curate with audience?"</div> <div>"Continue to build my connection with the community for future working."</div>

---

*"Happy to report that we've managed many of our one month targets – I've had the meeting with another Affiliate I'd planned, and the environmental awareness email went out last week."*

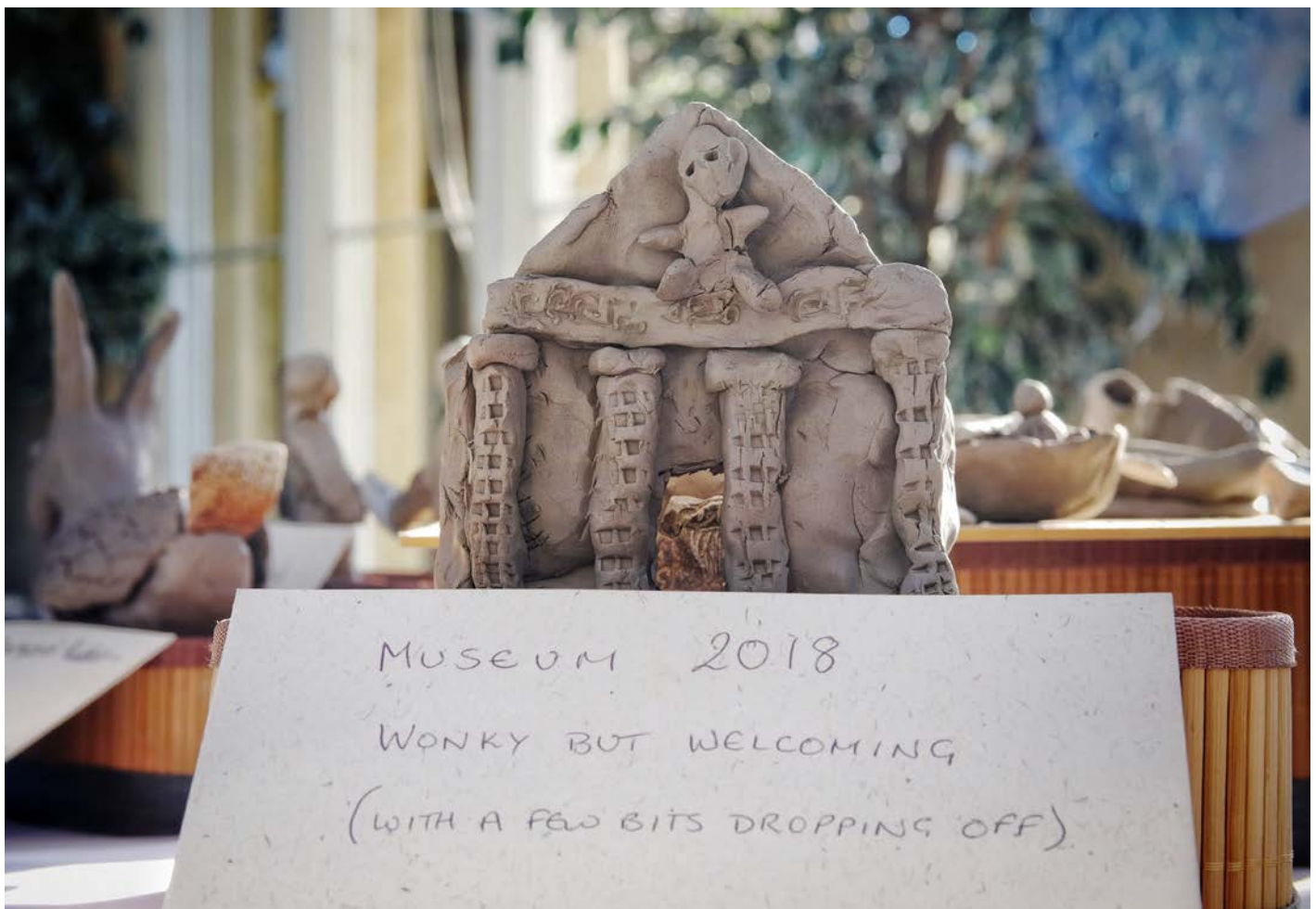
---

A month after the symposium, the HM team emailed all those who had taken part to check in on the commitments they had made. Among the responses were the following:

"Happy to report that we've managed many of our one month targets – I've had the meeting with another Affiliate I'd planned, and the environmental awareness email went out last week."

"I have given an internal presentation on HMs and the symposium to Learning Department colleagues. I am currently mapping our existing offer in terms of well-being."

"We have new recycling bins in the office, and we are looking into ways we can reduce waste. Over the next month or so we'll be assigning staff to their desired gallery for cross departmental gallery visits."



MUSEUM 2018  
WONKY BUT WELCOMING  
(WITH A FEW BITS DROPPING OFF)

# A pivotal moment

---

*“The symposium marked a pivotal moment in HM’s development – reflecting a shift both in the breadth and size of its community, but also in their focus on the holistic nature of its vision.”*

---

The symposium marked a pivotal moment in HM’s development – reflecting a shift both in the breadth and size of its community, but also in their focus on the holistic nature of its vision. Until the April symposium, our online evaluation survey showed that participants thought about the environment-focused principle the least. After the symposium the great majority of ‘new and interesting thinking’ was in the following aspects of environmental thinking and action (example responses opposite):

## **Ecological and holistic thinking:**

“The full extent of the relationship between the cultural sector and the natural world and ecology.”

“The simple idea that our singular and practical role in the creative sector is to reveal and illuminate human relationships to all living systems of the natural world: interdependent, collaborative and creative.”

“How much more interconnected and interdependent the physical world is and how we should mirror this through our networks.”

“Some interesting things to think about in terms of environment, Gaia theory and transition towns, co-operation towards longer term stability – which were new to me.”



**Systems thinking and co-operation**, inspired by Tom Powell's talk on Earth systems science.

"We are treading on eggshells above bubbling hot lava (about fragility of the Earth, thin biosphere)."

"How and where can we cooperate for life to flourish best? And how do we become inspiring tellers of that story?"

"Tom on using Earth sciences to take a positive view of future action on environmental issues."

"Good reminder that the big stuff is still big and sometimes what we think is big, isn't."

"The new (to me) take on evolution (that life forms are collaborative not competitive)."

"That Earth scientists are exploring positive ways forward for humanity. This felt like a beacon of hope in the barrage of alarming predictions about climate change that we are bombarded with."

**Being stewards of the future, and approaches to environmental action:**

"Thinking about how museums can help the environment."

"The extent of our responsibility to be 'stewards for the future as well as the past'."

"What we do to value the environment and be stewards of the future and past."

"How we build positive messages relating to environmental challenge into our audiences' offer."

"A diverse community for collaboration, provocation, inspiration, support. Genuine appetite for addressing the more profound challenges of people, place and planet with radical approaches."

"Making lots of little changes to be more sustainable."

\*\*\*

As Hilary Jennings reflected at the end of the symposium, the HM is a small initiative among many others in the cultural sector and beyond, responding in a multitude of ways to the challenges that face us.

As we head towards 2020 and the end of our current 5-Year Programme, and at a time of major change in the world, HM will continue to be (as the community of practice expressed it during the event) a space to experiment with museum practice, through principles of care, inclusion and collaboration.

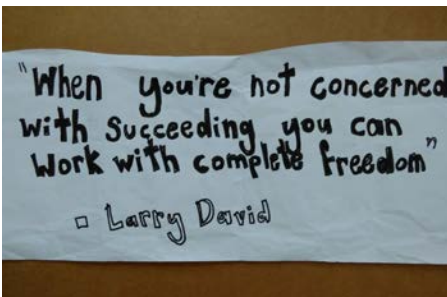


# Feedback after the April event

"Joy, passion, shifts, ah-has!  
Connections and reconnections  
... It really was one of the richest  
museum experiences I have had  
the fortune to be part of - the  
courage and faith!" Ruth Clarke

"Thank you for making me so  
welcome! The event really gave me  
food for thought – the participants  
were so engaged and so highly  
motivated to take change forward  
– very impressive. I also found the  
format and processes inclusive and  
democratic, very interesting stuff!  
Excellent speakers and thoughtful  
facilitation." Kathy Fawcett, ACE

"Thank you so much for an  
enriching and inspiring time. We  
came away feeling re-invigorated  
about our work, with really useful  
new connections and so pleased to  
be an Affiliate. Long live HM and  
all who sail in her." Jess and Matt  
Turtle, Museum of Homelessness



*"Thank you so much for  
an enriching and inspiring  
time. We came away feeling  
re-invigorated about our  
work, with really useful new  
connections and so pleased to  
be an Affiliate. Long live HM  
and all who sail in her."*

**Jess and Matt Turtle, Museum of  
Homelessness**

