



## The Happy Museum Symposium 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> February 2013, Trafford Hall

### How to make this report work for you?

This report is an at a glance overview of the symposium, picking out key themes and highlights with links to find out more information. So whether you have 1 minute or 1 hour we hope you can find what you need and be as inspired as those that attended

1. What happened?
2. What did people expect?
3. Questions are better than answers?
4. The story so far (day 1)
5. 'Active Citizenship', 'Resilience' and 'Coproduction' (day 2)
6. Reflections, going forward and final thoughts

### 1. What happened?

The second Happy Museum symposium took place at the beautiful Trafford Hall  
<http://www.traffordhall.com/>.



'Reminiscent of an  
Eco Butlins'

*Tony Butler*

Over two 'full on' days the Happy Museum 'community of practice' (commissioned projects, speakers and guests from across museums, culture, and environment sectors) discussed, absorbed and reflected on 'What's next for the Happy Museum'?

## The Symposium in Stats

45 attendees (including Rob on Skype)

0 Trafford Hall will have gone carbon neutral by next year

100 of Post-it notes

4

cakes consumed

10 Kilowatts of brain powered used



Hundreds of good ideas

6 new number of Happy Museum principles

100

tweets and counting at <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23happyappymuseum&src=hash>

1

Happy Museum!

### 2. What did people expect?

2.1 The commissioned projects, then guests and speakers were asked what they wanted to get out the symposium.



Ailsa Strachan @AilsaStrachan

We're expecting quite a lot!

## **We are a demanding bunch!**



**"I know I am going to be inspired"**

*Abigail, Cinema Museum*

### **3. 'Questions are more interesting than answers'**

The commissions were made to work for their lunch and worked to pose three questions that they wanted the symposium to try and answer.



“questions are more interesting than answers- questions gather people together and answers divide them”

*Alison, Godalming Museum*

1. How can we use happy museum principles to promote active citizens?
2. What shifts in thinking are required to make museums more sustainable and resilient?
3. How much do you think happy museum principles influence your sector at the moment and how much potential is there for future influence?

Ben Twist from Creative Carbon Scotland suggested that these questions are “wicked problems”. Wicked in terms of their ‘resistance to resolution’ and ability to spawn more questions.

#### 4. The Happy Museum story so far

On the first day the community of practice reflected on the happy museum story so far and identified the challenges going forward.



**Tony Butler** @tonybutler1

#happymuseum 12 museums reflecting on their practice and resilience via egg, apple, mobile phone and stuff

##### 4.1 Title: Project commissions

**Who:** London Transport Museum, Godalming Museum, The Story Museum, The Lightbox, Manchester Museum, The Cinema Museum, Beaney House of Art and Knowledge, Reading Museum, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Chiltern Open Air Museum Garden Museum, Imperial War Museum North



**‘Happiness is in the moment’**

*Alison, Godalming Museum*



**Details:** The commissions use selected objects to share their projects with each other. Highlights include guitar string bracelet (thinking differently), a taxi receipt (personal development journey on board the Happy Museum ship) and salt (recycling and sustainability). The commissions also interspersed the symposium with short presentations about their work.

**Find out more:** You can find out more the commissioned projects here <http://www.happymuseumproject.org/>

#### **4.1a Title:** The Happy Museum - The Story So Far

**Speaker:** Tony Butler and Mandy Barnett



**“High well-being does not have to cost the earth.”**

*Tony Butler*

**Summary:** Tony reflected on what we have learnt so far-

- Greatest impacts on individuals rather than organisations
- Network more powerful than a hierarchy
- Positive spill effects for organisations and their partners
- Disproportionate level of influence ‘punching above our weight’

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- Linking well-being and sustainability more difficult than expected
- Measuring what matters is really important but hard

The new simplified 6 Happy Museum principles

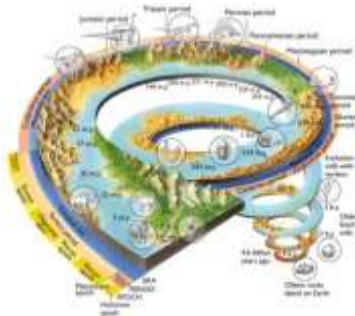
1. Create conditions for wellbeing
2. Pursue mutual relationships
3. Value the environment and be a steward of the future as well as the past
4. Be an active citizen
5. Learn for resilience
6. Measure what matters

**Find out more:** Download Tony's full report here

<http://www.happymuseumproject.org/blogs/the-happy-museum-project-what-we've-learnt-so-far>

### **4.1b Title:** The Wider Global Context – challenges and opportunities

**Speaker:** Various project commissions



"In 2013 we are moving – in the span of earth's ages - from **holocene** into **anthropocene** – the era where we recognise that humankind is having a significant impacting on environment"  
*Alison, Godalming Museum*



**Susan Sheehan** @GreenCChampion

Beautiful short film by @WeArePlanetary - [bit.ly/SRW28v](http://bit.ly/SRW28v) - well worth 20 mins of anyone's time via [#happymuseum](https://twitter.com/happymuseum)

**Summary:** Individuals from different commissions introduced the Wider Global Context to the Happy Museum. Exploring wellbeing and responding to the financial and environmental challenge.

**Find out more:**

[http://www.ted.com/talks/martin\\_seligman\\_on\\_the\\_state\\_of\\_psychology.html](http://www.ted.com/talks/martin_seligman_on_the_state_of_psychology.html)

<http://bloodinthemobile.org/>

<http://www.feradi.info/en/visualizations/happy-planet-index-2012>

<http://www.dangersoffracking.com/>

<http://www.co-operative.coop/join-the-revolution/our-plan/clean-energy-revolution/fracking/frack-free-future-films-interviews/>

**The Overview** <http://vimeo.com/55073825>

**4.1c Title:** Culture, Carbon and Complexity

**Speaker:** Ben Twist, Creative Carbon Scotland



“Much more interested in change and making things happen, than carbon”

*Ben Twist*

**Summary:** Ben spoke about his work for Creative Carbon Scotland, which works with cultural organisations in Scotland to reduce their carbon emissions. This is no easy task as 95% of carbon emissions are from audiences travelling to the venues. He said, like his organisation, the Happy Museum is a ‘Trojan Horse for introducing deeper conversations’. He reflected on his research into how challenging it is to change people’s behaviours through complexity theory, lock-ins and showering less.

**Find out more:** Elizabeth Shove: *Converging Conventions of Comfort, Cleanliness and Convenience* *Journal of Consumer Policy* 26, 395–418, 2003

John Urry: *The Complexity Turn* *Theory, Culture and Society* 2005 Vol. 22(5): 1–14

<http://www.creativecarbonscotland.com>

**4.1d Coming soon ...**

Dr Daniel Fujiwara and Mandy Barnett updated us on research carried out at LSE using the DCMS Taking Part survey to analyse whether museums make people ‘happy’. The results are positively confidential at the moment...but watch this space.

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### 5. Day 2. 'Active Citizenship', 'Resilience' and 'Coproduction'.

The second day interrogated the themes of resilience, active citizenship and co-production



**Sian Thurgood** @sianyt13

#happymuseum day 2 of the symposium starts with Tony challenging us to think about what's next for happy museums?

and gave space to reflect and share learning.

*"Be the change you want to see in the world"*

*Mahatma Gandhi*

#### 5.1 Active Citizenship

Two of the speakers stood out as inspiring exemplars of the power active citizenship has to change the world.

Rob Hopkins Co-founder Transition Towns joined the Happy Museum symposium virtually via Skype.

He spoke about how his active citizenship has sent Transition Towns global via the transition network with 40 countries now part of the network.  
<http://www.transitionnetwork.org/>.

*"Happy Museum is an invitation to be part of an experiment in resilience"*

*Rob Hopkins, Transition Towns*

Transition Towns build 'resilience to be able to withstand shock' and reduce environmental impact.



**Tony Butler:** "What object would you put in a Museum of Transition?"

**Rob Hopkins:** "Totnes Pound"

<http://transitionculture.org/2007/06/29/buy-a-totnes-pound-and-help-maximise-its->

Sue Sheehan embodied the term 'active citizen' and spoke eloquently about her journey from community activist to enabling others as Sustainability Officer for Lambeth Council.





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Along the way, she had Gordon Brown round to her house, was visited by Gardeners World and set up the Brixton energy project <https://brixtonenergy.co.uk/>. Most importantly she has empowered 150 citizens to be active through her green community champion's scheme. <http://www.lambeth.gov.uk/Services/Environment/GetInvolvedToImproveYourNeighbourhood/GreenChampions.ht>.

### 5.2 Resilience – building the case for the Happy Museum

**re-sil-i-ence** [ri-zil-yuh ns, -zil-ee-uh ns]

#### **Noun**

1. **concept of an individual or community's ability to flourish in the context of economic, social and environmental challenge**

The community of practice were challenged to think through their own resilience in two dynamic and most certainly not 'vapid' workshops chaired by Nick Winterbotham, Chair of GEM <http://www.gem.org.uk/>, and Maurice Davies, Head of Policy and Communication at the Museums Association <http://www.museumsassociation.org/home>.

#### 5.2.1 The Big Idea

Nick Winterbotham (Chair of GEM <http://www.gem.org.uk/>) talked to us about tipping points 'where words become action'. The way to do this is to find your 'Big Idea'. The 'Big Idea' is about 'behaving memorably inwards'; as Nick put it- it is 'the difference you agree you will make in the world expressed in a phrase'. For example the BBC's is 'authoritative' and Starbucks is 'coffee as cult'. Nick then took us through a three-step exercise to help us to start to find the big idea for the Happy Museum.

Here are our first attempts

- Fairly happy
- The new normal
- Possibilities we can breathe into places
- Good neighbour

(DO try this exercise at home)



1. 'What sort of organisation is your pre happy museum organisation'? To help you do this draw your organisation as a dinosaur and think about its characteristics e.g. slow lumbering feet, tiny eyes, defensive spikes
2. 'What is the Landscape ('Joyoscene') they have to make their way through now?



Political  
Economic  
Technology  
Social



3. What vehicle shall we use in the Joyoscene (because the dinosaurs have been wiped out)? E.g fast, adaptable, environmentally friendly

### 5.2.2 Happy Dragons Den

Business Case for Happy Museum



uncanny...

Happy Dragons Den challenged groups to present in 1 minute the business case for the following-

1. Benefits of an organisation with high well-being staff
2. The benefits of attracting more or different volunteers
3. Making the most of our physical resources
4. Natural and financial resource efficiency

Three top tips for making your business case

- Headlines
- Clear brand
- Understand what motivates your critics

### 5.3 Co-production – do we genuinely do it?

*Pursue happy relationships* is a Happy Museum principal and 'co-production' is a high priority for museum professionals, but Susan Sheehan challenged us to think '**Do museums do genuine co-production?**'

**co-pro-duc-tion** [koh-pruh-**duhk**-shuh n]

**Noun**

Delivering public services in equal and reciprocal relationships. It involves professional, people using services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are produced in this way, both services and neighbours become far more effective agents of change

**Is your coproduction genuine? Check yourself against the six principles of co-production**

1. Building on people's existing capabilities: altering the delivery model of public services from a deficit approach to one that provides opportunities to recognise and grow people's capabilities and actively support them to put them to use at an individual and community level.
2. Reciprocity and mutuality: offering people a range of incentives to engage which enable us to work in reciprocal relationships with professionals and with each other, where there are mutual responsibilities and expectations.
3. Peer support networks: engaging peer and personal networks alongside professionals as the best way of transferring knowledge.
4. Blurring distinctions: removing the distinction between professionals and recipients, and between producers and consumers of services, by reconfiguring the way services are developed and delivered.
5. Facilitating rather than delivering: enabling public service agencies to become catalysts and facilitators rather than central providers themselves.
6. Assets: transforming the perception of people from passive recipients of services and burdens on the system into one where they are equal partners in designing and delivering services.

<http://coproductionnetwork.com/page/about-coproduction>

**6. 'The future's bright, the future's green' - Reflections on the symposium**

**6.1 We asked 10 people to use one word to describe the symposium.**



6.2 Mitch Robertson, Project Manager of The Paper Apothecary, Beaney House of Art and Knowledge, Canterbury asked us at dinner to write what the Happy Museum meant to us on doilies.



“Trying things out, not  
thinking in a linear  
fashion”



“The chance to explore new possibilities  
and meet new people”



“When I am in HM  
company I feel much  
more confident”



“You are melting my  
cynicism”

“Happy Museum encourages us to think deeply  
about what we do, who we do it for and why it  
matters”

6.3 We asked people what had been rewarding, challenging and surprising about the Happy Museum.

Mandy, *Happy Museum*

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**Surprising:** "People are normally irritated by evaluation...picked up process and used it in other ways"

**Rewarding:** "People continue to be really pleased.... it keeps opening their eyes to new stuff"

**Challenging:** "Biggest challenge is going forward, making the business case for the social and environmental to museums as well as financial and cultural."

### **Beatrice, *The Garden Museum***

**Surprising:** "All encompassing- being here"... "you really get into it"

**Rewarding:** "To be able to unpick and interrogate our project"

**Challenging:** "Lot to think about in a short amount of time"

### **Grace, *Chiltern Open Air Museum***

**Surprising:** "Huge amount of inspiration that I am surprised and excited about"

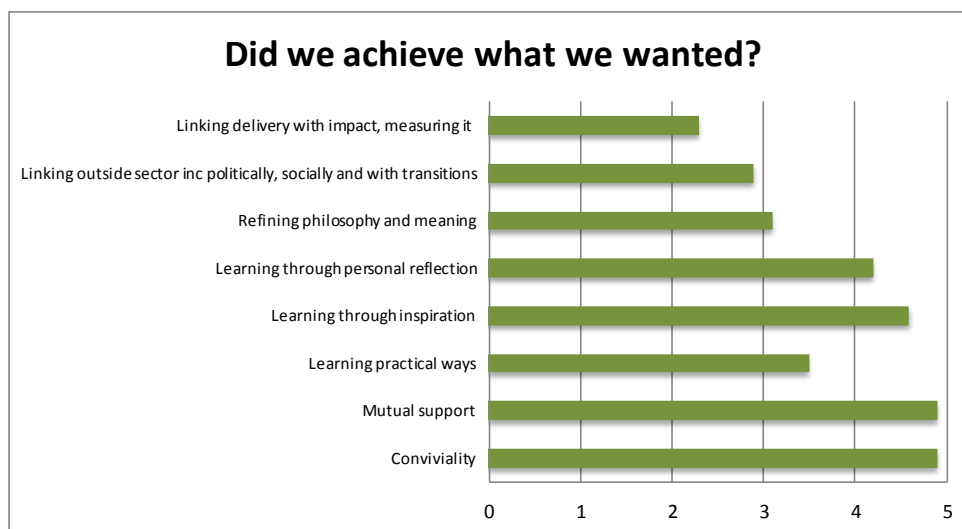
### **Carlene, *University of Richmond***

**Rewarding:** "Being around all these people that are so passionate about one cause and working together to try and grow from this and try to create something that's really going to help globally museums and different institution."

### **Catherine, *Julie's Bicycle***

**Surprising:** "Delighted by the sense of community (and the) constant flow of ideas"

**6.4 We asked everyone to mark on a scale 1-5 if we achieved what we wanted from the symposium.**



## 6.5 What we did well and what we could do better

### What we did well...

Balanced museums  
practice and ideas  
outside of museum  
world

Well organised

Venues feed practice  
because they practice  
what they preach

Networking



Chiltern Museum @ChilternOAM

Brilliant symposium. Many thanks to all the  
#happymuseum team, and to great venue  
@TraffordHall

**Comment [S1]:** Does this need a post  
it note?

### What we could do better next time...

Talk more about  
citizenship and  
environment

Take the  
message to  
more cynical  
people

## 6.6 Going forward

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- Immediate bright future
- Hoping for confirmation of ACE, NGMS and Wales funding- if successful there will be more commissions and potential of a Scholarship
- Growing distributed network
- Build new coalition with different organisations
- Open workshops April in Newcastle and Birmingham with new people...pass it on!

## 6.6 Community of Practice

What is the one thing you will take away?



## Resources to take away

- What we wanted
- The 3 questions from the symposium
- Commissions as case studies
- Happy Museum principles
- Stories from each other and guest speakers
- Clive's Ardagh film from the symposium
- Documentation
- Camaraderie
- Big Ideas



Lucy Neal @lucyhneal

homeagainhomeagain from chester after  
successful #happymuseum symposium.  
@robintransition @bentwist @suesheehan  
&all thankyou!

**Final word from Tony Butler and Maurice Davies**



**Tony Butler** @tonybutler1

Reflecting #happymuseum Key future themes for me, importance of being active citizens, resilience to flourishing and genuine co-production

We need to go on Maurice's four journeys

- Awakening to embedding
- Individual converts to organisations
- Well-being strategies to resilience
- Influencing participants to society

Written by Sian Thurgood and Ailsa Strachan