

Building community partnerships

Our community partners represent ten organisations and agencies which are involved in some way with volunteering.

Many of them are third sector organisations and some are public sector organisations.

And together we are trying to look at the way, really that the museum can reflect the needs of communities today in Wales.

We want very much to build a museum which is a participatory museum; a museum which is based on our users' needs rather than the museum's needs alone.

Our process started back in 2009 when we were developing a large-scale Heritage Lottery bid for a major redevelopment of St Fagans National History Museum.

As part of the process we thought it was really important to ask the people of Wales what kind of museum they wanted us to develop.

So we worked with 200 organisations across the public and third sector to help shape and develop the planning process with us.

We found the 200 organisations

by asking our staff; from front-of-house staff

to learning staff to curators.

Then we compiled a sort of visual map

of all the different communities

that we might work with.

Then we actually asked

some of the communities themselves

because obviously they then fed into that process

and suggested perhaps other people

that would be useful and important for us to talk to.

The partners that we're working with the Our Museum

emerged as part of the redevelopment

of the St Fagans National History Museum.

And this meant that we could look

at organisation-wide change.

We had the opportunity then

to set up ten participatory forums

looking at different areas of work.

And the Our Museum forum

could therefore self-select itself

with some members joining

some of the other forums for example, looking at

informal learning or diversity.

And we see this as something

that will continue to evolve

as partners develop and change.

And that helps us remain critical

and develop together in the future.

Being strategic has enabled us to get
the right people around the table,
the right people across the volunteer sector,
some national organisations, some local agencies
and bringing that expertise
into the museum world so they can guide us
in the training, plans for staff
and they can also evolve the programmes
for volunteering alongside the museum.

So we've seen a huge learning within the museum
of how to deal particularly, perhaps,
with third sector organisations.

For example, with the Drug Aid Wales
we've been able to train our staff
in dealing with people with substance misuse.

Then with the users themselves
we've been able to have some pilot volunteering
and then evaluate the learning from that
with the community partners
who are feeding back
into how successful that has been.

Before we're then advertising
those programmes wider.

We've worked with the WCVA
on looking at how we actually develop
strategies for working with volunteers

and how we assess volunteers,
how we count volunteers and how we measure
the impact of volunteering.

Our community partners
have been training our staff
and have created, really with the museum,
a programme of staff training.

We've now trained about 70 members
of staff with our community partners.