

Extracts and abridged notes from :

**OUR MUSEUM YEAR 3 ANNUAL REPORT AND SELF-EVALUATION
ST FAGANS, NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM
AMGUEDDFA CYMRU - NATIONAL MUSEUM WALES**

Scaling up across Amgueddfa Cymru

Amgueddfa Cymru is made up of 7 Museums and a Collection Centre, has 543.3 members of staff and over 30 different departments, as such the process of embedding the Our Museum way of working is long term. In order to continue to meet the needs of our communities we need to be adaptive therefore, this will be an ongoing process and by its nature this work will never truly be completed. Past experience at Amgueddfa Cymru has taught us that it is important to maintain the impetus of change in order to redefine the status quo.

We worked with the staff at two museums to map local communities, identifying potential s (CPs) to help shape volunteering and community engagement opportunities. Events were held with the potential CPs¹, to share the Our Museum Model and to look at how this can be implemented and adapted to meet the needs of the communities they support².

The events were very well received by those in attendance. Initially some potential CPs were sceptical due to previous experience of the 'engagement light' approach from other organisations. After the events people were enthused and excited to work in partnership with Amgueddfa Cymru. Both sites have used the information gathered to inform the development of volunteering roles.

¹ The event in Big Pit was attended by representatives from Alzheimer's Society, CISWO, Diverse Cymru, DrugAid, Newlink Wales, SEWCED, Torfaen Mind and Torfaen Voluntary Alliance. The event in the Amgueddfa Lechi Cymru - National Slate Museum was attended by representatives from Agoriad Cyf, Diverse Cymru, GISDA, Groundwork North Wales, Mantell Gwynedd, Newlink Wales and Sylfaen Cymunedol Cyfyngedig.

² At Big Pit the focus was on health and wellbeing and the museum as an asset for older people that may be suffering from social isolation or ill health; this will work alongside existing initiatives to engage Dementia sufferers through reminiscence workshops. At the Amgueddfa Lechi Cymru - National Slate Museum the focus was around opportunities for skills development for young people looking to seek employment; staff were able to make initial links with charities that are already working strategically to support young people in this way.

Share learning across sectors to sustain legacy

Amgueddfa Cymru commissioned a Community Engagement Audit this year, following this we have been working with CPs and Staff Champions to develop a Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan. This has been a significant step in the process of formalising and embedding Amgueddfa Cymru's approach to community centred practice. It has been strongly influenced by our experiences and learning as part of the Our Museum Initiative.

Mentoring and skill-sharing has been written into the Community Engagement Strategy and will be considered professional development. It will give staff the opportunity to support each other and better understand each others roles to volunteer externally with CPs. This will allow networking and shadowing opportunities for staff. Its aim is to allow staff to gain skills and experiences in new areas, to help with professional and personal development, and with career progression. Additionally, staff will be better informed of community needs through direct volunteering opportunities with CPs.

Continue to develop a holistic training programme

A training programme has continued to be delivered to volunteer supervisors throughout the year. Staff have directly influenced the training provided, ensuring that it is responsive to their needs and the needs of the volunteers they supervise.

- Autism Awareness Training was delivered by the National Autistic Society in response to the growing number of volunteers and Youth Forum members with Autism.

It was identified that volunteer supervisors across Amgueddfa Cymru did not have time or space to interact, support and learn from one another. The geography of Amgueddfa Cymru means that some staff members may be the only volunteer supervisor at their site and therefore did not have a network of support. In response to this a networking element was added into future training sessions. This provided staff with the ability to get to know one another, to talk about common themes around supervising volunteers and to provide support and advice to one another.

Teamwork³ group was set up as an online network between museum staff and community partners to allow them to communicate with one another and to share best practice and learning.

Across Amgueddfa Cymru-different types of training are now being offered to staff as a result of the organisation's community focus.

- Training on enhancing the visitor experience for blind and partially sighted visitors has been delivered by Vocal Eyes, 26 members of staff from across Amgueddfa Cymru have received this.
- Following the success of the mentoring and coaching training provided to staff by Pedal Power in year 2, over 20 members of staff have begun coaching training and are working towards an LM Level 3 Certificate in Workplace Coaching. The focus of this is on empowering staff to mentor and support one another.

As part of the work undertaken whilst developing the Community Engagement Strategy staff and CPs have been looking into the types of training that should be provided to all staff in order to support them to work with diverse communities. The Human Resource Strategy, which has also been approved by the Board of Trustees, aims to create a comprehensive mandatory training programme that provides staff with the required skills and confidence.

- CET received training on the WCVA Impact Assessment Toolkit, as part of their consideration of different models of evaluating impact. One reflected on this and the role of other training through the initiative

“Throughout this process, we, as CPs, have been able to bring in training delivered either by our staff or by recommended external agencies. In turn, the museum has delivered training for CPs that has had a real impact on the way in which we work within our own roles. For instance, the WCVA toolkit has proved a valuable session for me to use in my own work life.”⁴

³ Teamwork is a website, on which we have created private closed networks for communication and sharing documents.

⁴ Katya York, Newlink as part of the year 3 evaluation workshop.

Developing community and staff skills and capabilities

A Staff Skills Forum has been created at St Fagans. This was in direct response to staff requesting opportunities to learn traditional craft skills which they can then share with other staff, volunteers and visitors. Items made by the forum will be placed on show in the houses at St Fagans. The group decides which craft skills to learn and membership is voluntary. At present there are 12 core members and interest from staff outside the group is continuing to grow.

Reflective practice

The agenda for each CET meeting is designed to provide spaces for CPs and staff to reflect and evaluate together, with an aim to continually adapt and improve practice. These meetings move away from a traditional structure, instead encourage a more participatory approach by including practical mini workshops, open space and group discussions. A built in “off the record” sharing space has encouraged an environment where people feel safe to challenge working practices and has helped with problem solving.

Community agency

Amgueddfa Cymru’s approach to volunteering and community engagement has changed even more profoundly over the last year, now even at the planning stage of a project at St Fagans there is a focus on how this can be used as an opportunity to work with communities with a consideration of the wider social impact of our work practices. This is happening outside of the core CET, evidencing the ripple effect and that this way of working is becoming embeded. A curator explained that it has changed the way their department looks at the collections, now seeing them as “a way to inspire meaningful relationships”⁵, as well as changing the way they frame questions, “asking ‘who do we work with’ rather than ‘who is this for?’ or imposing the museum’s views.”. The ethos and understanding of working with communities is becoming a natural work practice for them. It is no longer an add-on to a project or something that they need to consciously consider, it is now just the way in which they work.

⁵ Sioned Hughes, Head of Public History during Year 3 Evaluation visit.