

Collaborative decision making

We communicate with a range of stakeholders
by using an online platform called Teamwork.

Teamwork can hold emails, it can hold reports,
it can hold everybody's calendars.

It's a really useful way for us
to communicate with each other
but we also hold bi-monthly workshops
where we physically get together to discuss progress
and to develop the programme together.

One of the other benefits of Teamwork
is that you can capture everything in one place.

And so if you have a new partner joining you
it's very easy for them to read back over reports,
to read back over programmes
and discussions that have taken place.

And also when it comes to reporting
you've got everything in one place
and it's very easy to put that together
and to rattle it off as a report.

I guess you would say our decision-making process
is pretty much; discussion,
more discussion and consensus.

We're all pretty much along...
we have very, very similar values
and I think that's reflected in probably
why we got involved in the first place.

Our shared values and the kind of people that we are

I think help that consensus.

Sometimes not everybody is on-board

but the spirit of the group, really,

is to support the decision

and move forward with that.

And we've seen people's opinions change,

both ways, really but what's important, really

is that we've built trust over the last three years

and that we trust each other's opinions on decisions

and that we support that as a team.

There is always lots of discussion,

especially at meetings, which can then overrun,

because there is so much discussion

and the project coordinator's very careful

to make sure that everybody does have their say.

We don't really vote.

We don't make decisions that way.

What I would say is that all the feedback is taken on-board,

all that discussion that takes place

in meetings or in between meetings is all taken on-board.

Ultimately I guess the museum does make the decision

but always based on the feedback that they've received.

So people do feel they have ownership,

they're able to influence those decisions.

But it's not a formal process

inasmuch as a show of hands

or a vote or anything like that.

So I have worked in many partnerships over the years

and I have quite a lot of experience there

and I do know that one of the difficulties

in creating a true partnership

is achieving equality between the partners.

And particularly in older,

more established organisations

that are used to taking a dominant or lead role

it's hard to achieve that true equality

and from the moment I started

to get involved in this partnership

I could see that that had been achieved

and that everybody is equally valued

and all contributions are listened to.

There are indicators in the small detail

of how the project's running.

For example, at meetings,

the seating arrangements around the table

can have quite a big influence on communication

and the danger of creating an 'us and them' duality.

But in this project I can see that they're attuned

to those subtleties and those details

and all that sort of thing is thought out in advance.

One of the project meetings

they looked at designs for new exhibition space

and although there are some experts

from the museum side around the table
there was a real creativity because the input
from the community partners
was valued equally and there was a buzz
of designing things together that worked very well.

I think the secret to the success
of this project is the way everybody
does really work collaboratively at all levels.

From the steering group, the volunteer organisation
and hopefully, us as trustees as well.

You never feel it's a 'them and us' atmosphere there.

Everybody's working together, have the same aim
and love the place that we're working for.