

Trustee involvement

The trustees of Amgueddfa Cymru
are responsible for around 650 staff
that we have at the moment.

We have about 1.7 million visitors
which is the most we've ever had in this last year.
We've got seven sites that are open to the public
but we also have a National Collections Centre
and the turnout of the museum is about £30 million a year.

So it's quite a big responsibility that I have.

So we first of all, involved the trustees at the bid writing process.

They signed off the bid before it was submitted to the funders.

Following that, we really developed engagement
through a trustee briefing session
which was delivered to the whole board
after which, four individual trustees
signed up to take part more actively in the initiative.

Going on from that all four came to our next team meeting
and met the community partners
and got to know more about the programme.

And from then, we were able to develop
with them, trustee involvement notes
that really outlined their role
and their commitment in the initiative.

Afterwards they began to take interns
to attend our meetings, which was brilliant,
so, generally speaking we'd always have a trustee present

at any of our partner meetings.

After about six months it was agreed that we would evaluate the trustees' involvement in the initiative and we did this collaboratively with the trustees with the community partners, and with internal museum staff.

All of the findings were pooled together into a report, which was circulated really widely in terms of going to the funders, going to the whole engagement team and also going more broadly across the museum.

And one of the key findings that came out in that report was the need to return to the board as a whole and look at issues around participation.

And so, to do that, we developed a trustee training day which focused centrally on participation, participatory methods and how we can look at the strategic issues around developing and embedding participatory practice in the work that we're doing, not only in the museum, but more broadly across the sector.

One of the roles of a trustee on a project like this is to engage the rest of the trustees on the board in the culture change that the project is bringing about.

You're a conduit back to other trustees, you're reassuring them that the project is going well,

that the money is being well-spent, and so on.

As a trustee you're there to take a strategic role

to guide and advise but not to get involved

in detailed project management,

which is the task of the project team.

And in some ways it's a symbolic presence,

in the sense that it shows that

every level of the institution is involved,

but on the other hand,

it's a real honest role in the project.

It's not merely a symbolic presence.

You get to know what's really happening

in part of the organisation at the grass-roots level

and that really helps you with your strategic role.

I think this kind of structured opportunity

for a trustee to get involved

would always bring a benefit

to someone who's at board-level.

The role of the trustee in an initiative like this

is to support the work that's going on.

There's a very experienced team

working on it there and we can bring

an external perspective to their work.

And by seeing the great work that goes on,

with our external perspective,

we can give them further confidence

to steer the project onwards and upwards.

To be honest, in terms of selecting trustees

we really left that door open.

It was much more of an invitation

to the board as a whole

in terms of, "Would you like to take

a more active role in this process?"

So when four trustees signed up,

we were absolutely thrilled.

And in terms of the kind of people

or the types of background or skills

again, we've come up with some fantastically experienced

and very, very knowledgeable individuals

who carry a lot of weight in their own sectors

but are also able to experiment with new ideas

embrace new ways of working

and centrally be really enthusiastic

and supportive to the initiative.