

Forging New Agendas (AND/GEM joint event)

Thursday 7 February 2013, 10am – 4pm

Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Rd, London NW1 7AY

Summary & Workshop Feedback

Background

On Thursday 7th February, A New Direction and The Group for Education in Museums (GEM) held *Forging New Agendas: The Sector in Dialogue*.

The aim of this day-long event was to explore how current changes in the education and arts/cultural funding landscape will impact upon museum and other heritage educators, and to explore:

- The challenges that these changes will present;
- Opportunities that may arise, especially for innovation and partnership working;
- What support strategic organisations such as GEM, AND and others can provide in order to enable museums and others to respond most effectively.

Attendees

The event was attended by 60 museum and wider heritage education professionals, mostly London-based but also including colleagues from the East and South East of England. The full list of delegates (plus email addresses, where we have obtained permission to share them) can be found in the appendices to this document.

Keynote Presentations

The day was framed by a series of key-note presentations:

- *The strategic context of current changes, and the role of bridge organisations*
Steve Moffitt, Chief Executive Officer, A New Direction
- *Museums & heritage as partners not providers*
Sandra Stancliffe, Sandra Stancliffe, Head of Education & Interpretation, English Heritage
- *How HLF's new strategy and increased budget can support a wider range of heritage projects*
Jo Reilly, Head of Participation & Learning, Heritage Lottery Fund
- *Practical opportunities for museums & heritage – AND Programme, Arts Award, ACE Funding, Creative Employment Programme*
John McMahon, Museums, Libraries & Heritage Advisor, A New Direction
- *What the GEM survey tells us about heritage education today*
John Stevenson, Director, GEM

A general summary of the day, together with presentations, can be found at:

<http://anewdirection.org.uk/blog/forging-new-agendas-the-sector-in-dialogue>

Links on Issues discussed:

Steve's presentation spoke about:

A New Direction's [Bridge](#) role

The [Cultural Education Partnership Group](#) (and the Barking & Dagenham pilot)

Artsmark

Artsmark as a vehicle to start discussions with schools

A New Direction's 1) Newsletter, 2) Blog and 3) Research

Jo Reilly

HLF's sector [consultation](#)

HLF's [2013-18 strategic framework](#)

[Sharing Heritage](#)

[Young Roots](#)

Sandra Stancliffe

[Heritage Schools](#)

John McMahon

AND's partnership statement with the Museum of London

Cultural Education Progression Network

Connected London – area-based pilots to trial new models of Local Authority working

Arts Award, and how it works for museums

Strategic Support Fund for Museums

Grants for the Arts

Creative Employment Programme

Workshops

The late morning & afternoon sessions were focussed around a series of facilitated group discussions, first addressing the current challenges addressing the sector, and then exploring the solutions arising from landscape changes and the creation of additional partnership infrastructure such as Bridge organisations. Through each set of sessions, the discussions were captured by the groups as visual charts, with each group also asked to summarise its top 3 challenges (in the morning) and key solutions (in the afternoon).

Challenges

In the morning, a series of the key challenges that we collectively face were identified. It was possible to group these into the following themes:

Constant flux –

- The challenge of sustaining good work in uncertain times
- And in the face of shifting/sometimes conflicting priorities (ie from funders, clients & internal management)
- How professionals who are stretched in maintaining 'business as usual' can make sense of, and engage with, the steady flow of new initiatives
- Short-termism of new initiatives, duplicating and replacing each other with minimal join-up, continuity or the opportunity to learn lessons (from successes and failures)

Schools and the curriculum –

- Uncertainty about the role & importance of the national curriculum (and the place for culture within it, regionally and nationally) ;
- Will academies use the NC (many currently still do, even though they don't have to)?

- Paradoxically, a sizeable chunk of work by museums with schools still takes place 'off the curriculum'
- (a subsequent show of hands by delegates demonstrated that almost organisations represented delivery curriculum-linked opportunities, most also deliver extra-curricular opportunities for both schools, families, and individual children & young people)

Restricted opportunity within the sector –

- High barriers to entry in terms of prior qualifications, voluntary work experience, contracting range of secure paid opportunities;
- Lack of diversity within the heritage education workforce

Partnerships –

- Finding the opportunity to work as 'friends not competitors' with other cultural organisations
- How to form partnerships – need for brokerage, especially locally
- How can we clarify shared ground & common agendas to which most partners can subscribe?

Getting communication right –

- Within the museums/heritage sector;
- Between museums and the arts;
- Between front-line and strategic partners/funders;
- All needs to be 2-way...!
- The need for somebody to simplify/translate the 'information overload' faced by individual museums

Support from government –

- Need for/apprehension at the loss of funding for culture from Government
- Need for 'moral support'/backing for the value of culture

Also raised –

- the importance of resilience and adaptability;
- maximising the contribution of volunteers as core sector capacity decreases
- Better use of museums as delivery spaces for other partners, and safe '3rd spaces' for young people

Solutions

The solution discussions in the afternoon were extremely fruitful – the groups engaged in the discussions with great enthusiasm and positivity. The feedback provided by the groups is included below, but there were consistent calls for 'support organisations' such as AND, GEM and the Museum of London to:

- play a brokerage role for the sector, bringing schools and the sector into contact, signposting potential partnerships and highlighting and promoting existing sector networks;
- support strong, effective partnership working, perhaps by offering advice and resources (for instance, on things like partnership agreements, shared planning processes, etc);
- protect individual organisations and practitioners from 'information overload' and helping them to navigate emergent opportunities by providing clear, easily digestible updates on things like policy changes and new funding opportunities;

- conduct and share research and data which could further support and enable the types of positive working practices described above.

Group #1 – Steps to success

- Learning at the core of the organisation
- Building partnerships
- Formalising partnerships
- Brokers to bring schools and providers together
- More entrepreneurialism (eg opportunity to learn from theatre sector)
- Better planning, and legacy focus
- Cooperative curriculum development
- Successful communication at all levels/between all partners
- Importance of building resilience and sustainability

Group #2 – Partnership focus

- Potential of partners like AND and GEM to 'join the dots' and provide an overview
- Value of long-term, pre-established, inexpensive networks eg local museum groups
- Partnerships must be realistic and flexible;
- Easy to scale up, & scale down
- Important to not become static in 'stagnant' partnerships
- Striking a balance between core offer & emergent opportunities
- Only take on what your museum can sustain
- Deep commitment – not just finding partners, but where appropriate formalising roles & responsibilities
- Buy in at the top of your organisation is important
- Assign roles at the earliest possible stage
- Regular communication, ideally face-to-face
- From experience, strongest partnerships emerge from a base of the National Curriculum

Group #3 – Brokerage

- Brokerage & matchmaking
- Support schools for post-project evaluation
- Toolkits – key steps for partners
- Bring together & nurture relationships
- Open-minded, ambitious, not overly risk-averse
- Understanding own vision in order to relate to others
- GEM/AND to provide knowledge, research, 'umbrella' support, advice, evaluation tools, etc toolkits & knowledge that is universally applicable and relevant;
- Also to open a dialogue with schools;
- Crucial for GEM/AND to listen and to be accessible

Group #4 – Strategic Partnership Working

- Effective partnerships
- Partnerships around (re)interpretation, outside the box...!
- Arts & heritage
- Scope for partnerships around qualifications
- Progression routes
- Opportunity of partnerships with private sector (eg Google, Sony, etc), for expertise & sponsorship
- Partnership must be sustainable;
- Brokerage & meeting space/opportunities
- Relationship > Partnership around clear outcomes > Research & strategy > signposting > don't replicate existing research – communicate outwards!

- Effective partnerships – partnerships linked to strategic goals and effective ‘match’
- Create infrastructure, brokerage, draw on existing local knowledge/support existing networks