



# TELL US A STORY

Help CAE to build a repository of stories about  
the social impact of culture

**Title of the project:**

How can museums support the move to a sustainable world

**Please describe your action/project:**

we have reworked 'museum natural history' to explore the relationships between people and nature (individually and collectively), and to move from simply presenting information to promoting and enabling positive social and environmental outcomes, around nature conservation, climate change action, and supporting a fair, tolerant and inclusive society

**Tell us something more about your project/activity:**

Content

Duration (from \_\_/\_\_/2011\_\_\_\_/ ongoing

Location Manchester Museum, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester

Field/discipline: connecting people and nature, connecting science, nature, wellbeing

**Tell us something about who did it (individual(s), organization(s), formal, informal, their numbers, their role/skills, etc.):**

Since 2011, approximately 2,230,000 people have experienced exhibitions and events linked with environmental sustainability in the Museum

**Tell us something about the people who in your view received the most significant impact: who were they? How many of them?**





Our exhibitions and projects aim to connect people and nature, from pre-school age, to using natural heritage collections to support successful ageing, and all ages and interests in between. There is more evidence than ever of the benefit of contact nature; there is also lots of evidence that nature is in decline. Nature needs people, and people need nature. Ironically, the people who could potentially benefit most from contact with nature have least opportunity to do so (as environmental deprivation is one of the measures of social deprivation in the UK). Being in an inner city, where nature is least accessible, this places a special responsibility on the Museum to promote the value of nature, and time in/with nature.

**Was the impact planned from the start?**

Yes- the Living Worlds gallery (2010) used the New Economics Foundation 5 ways to wellbeing as one of the main models for developing the exhibition content.

**Tell us something about the context: recent history, social, economic and cultural features**

Manchester is the original modern city. It, and its galleries, are institutions of modernity, and have played a role (for good or otherwise) in shaping the world. As a post-industrial city, we needed to redevelop our galleries to reflect contemporary issues and concerns. We have an important role in delivering the University of Manchester's social responsibility agenda, including providing services for local communities, supporting environmental sustainability, and supporting ethically responsible graduates. Our ongoing work aims to strengthen the Museum's support for society, through supporting individuals, communities, and the wider environment, and helping support and enable policy and strategy areas linked to this.

**Tell us what were your expected results and the actual ones**

We wanted to change the role of the Museum from presenter to enabler, accepting that people have to have the opportunity to explore their own ideas and solutions.

**Tell us something about the most relevant resource inputs of your project/action: human, financial, organization, time**

The most recent major project was Climate Control, the Museum's main contribution to Manchester's time as European City of Science.



**Tell us how you have attained the main change: challenges, innovation, obstacles, brilliant solutions, turning points, quantum leaps, etc.**

By hard work, developing mutually beneficial partnerships, setting up projects that are exploratory and that don't always set out with a clear answer, by being brave, and having the confidence that things need to be done differently to move our activities and outcomes to 'a different place'. If we believe museums can make a real difference to people's lives and the wider world, we must live up to that responsibility.

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**Tell us the main area of impact of your project, i.e. a permanent or long lasting change in attitudes, awareness, behavior, conditions, economic status, income, occupation, perception, practice, quality of life, self-esteem, skills, social relations, etc. and for whom.**

The main area of impact is around a long-lasting trajectory that has gone from presenting the possibility of different ways of thinking about nature and our interactions with it, to making more and more opportunities for people to express their own ideas and what matters to them. This is how we collaborate with our visitors to support a future where people and nature flourish together. Good for people. Good for nature. As a consequence, the Museum is also in a stronger position as it creates real public value.

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**Which is the Big Idea behind your project/action?**

1. nature is important
2. people are important
3. our job is to support the belief that the future can be better
4. we must take responsibility for the impact we have on people through our exhibitions and other events
5. we absolutely must be as interested in promoting a better future, as we are in the past

