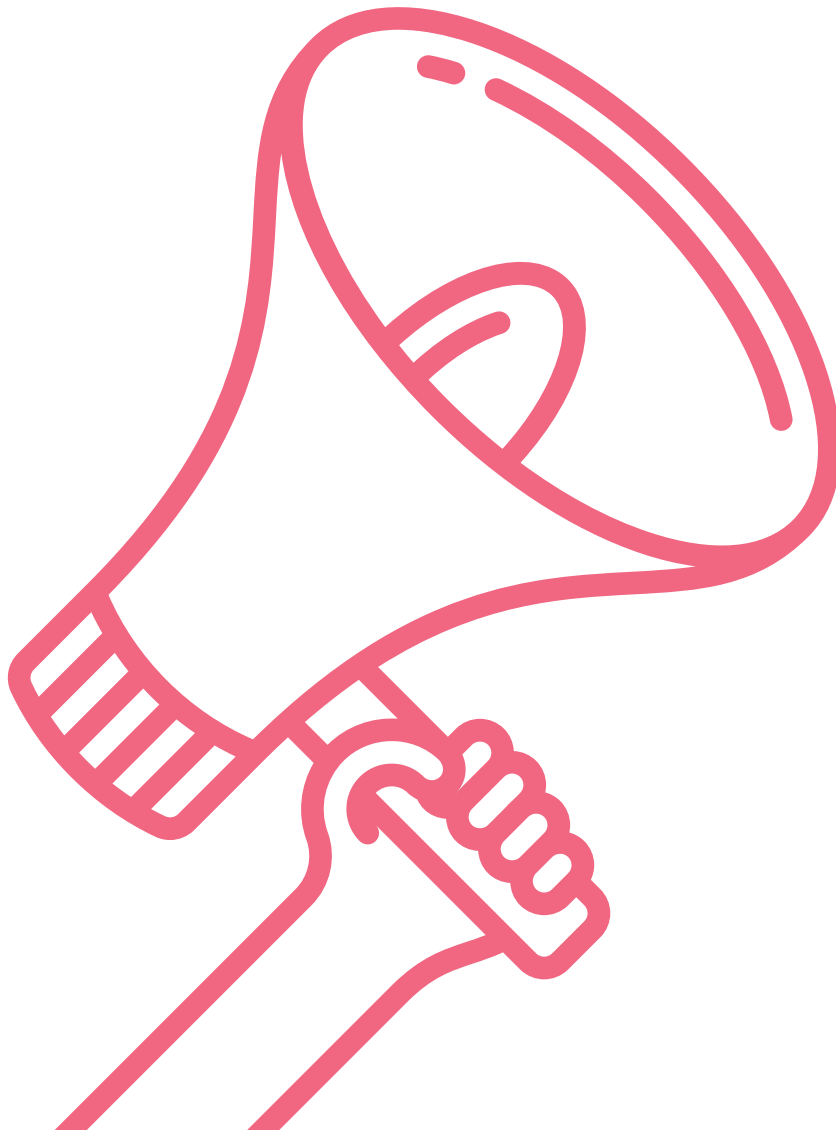


The Living Museums Project (June 2020-December 2021)

Final report, January 2022

By Chris Ross

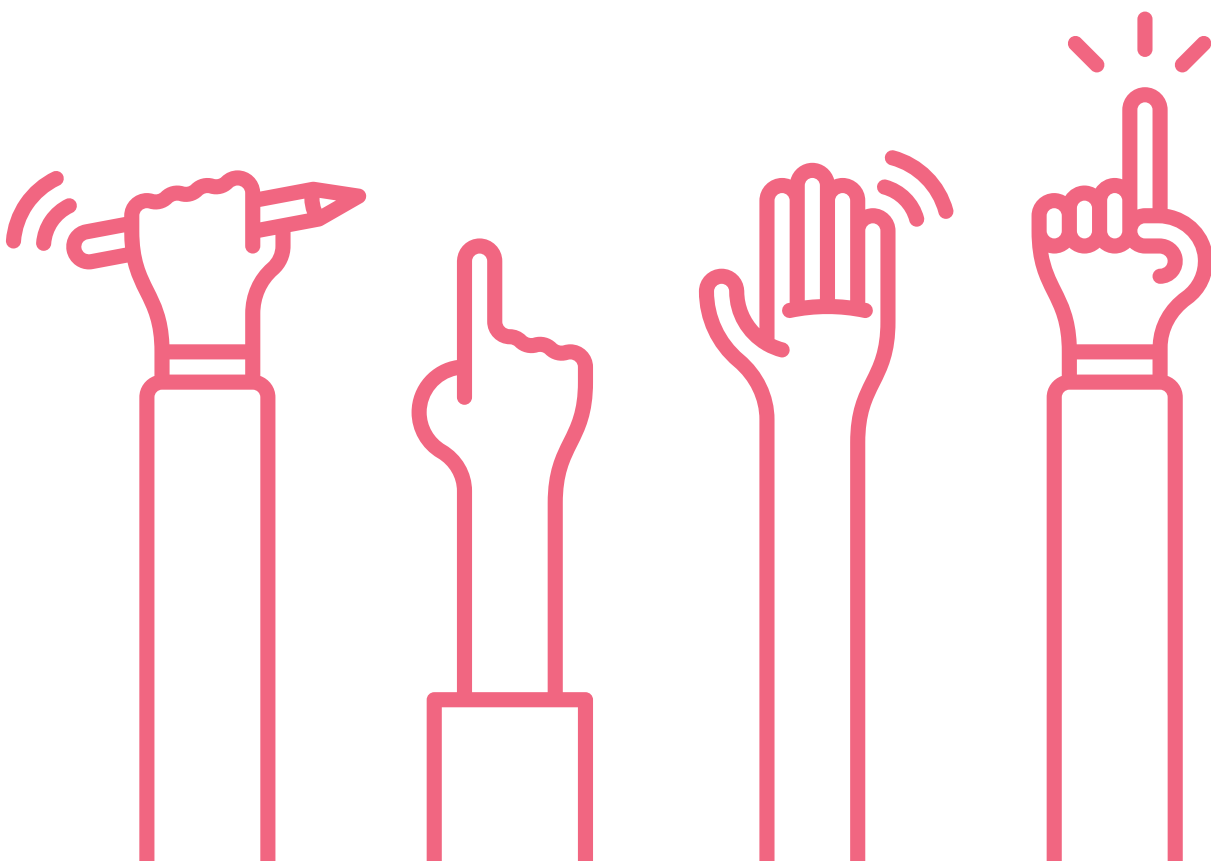


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Thanks to Emily Breedon and Millie Smith for their work on the project from 2020-21.





1. Introduction

Children in Scotland delivered the Living Museums Project between June 2020 and December 2021. The project aimed to ensure that young people were included and heard within museums and that their views and experiences were reflected within these public spaces.

Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Scotland, with the support of Holywood Trust and Fort Teviot Foundation, the project brought together young people, youth workers and museum staff to develop new approaches to supporting young people's engagement with museums.

It built on Children in Scotland's learning from our [Heritage Hunters project](#) and specifically aimed to support the museums and heritage sector to engage more actively with young people aged 14 – 21.

Taking a participatory approach, the project aimed to support museums to work in partnership with young people to develop their approaches and improve their practice.

The project worked in three sites across Dumfries and Galloway, Perth and Kinross and Stirling. In each area we worked with a museum partner and aimed to collaborate with a youth work partner.

This report outlines the impact of the project on the museums and young people involved and makes recommendations as to how the learning can be taken forward across the heritage sector.



Children's Rights and Heritage

In March 2021 the Scottish Parliament unanimously voted to incorporate the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) into Scots Law. Article 31 of the convention gives children and young people a right to participate fully in cultural life. Living Museums looked to support the realisation of this right by ensuring young people's views and experiences were heard and reflected in these spaces and museums were engaged and equipped to work with young people.

We also know that if children experience cultural and heritage opportunities, their wellbeing and development benefits.

Covid-19

Covid-19 undoubtedly had an effect on the delivery of Living Museums. The vast majority of the work took place online. This was particularly challenging for a project aiming to support young people to engage in museum programming as we were not able to visit museums as regularly as we would have liked. It has also made it harder

for the project participants to explore what was on offer in the museums early in the development process.

However, despite this, in all three project areas we developed innovative exhibitions on topics relevant to children and young people. The young people have also influenced policy and practice within the three project areas, as we will outline below.

Phase 1 (July – September 2020)

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we had to adapt our original plan for the first phase of the Living Museums project, as many heritage staff were placed on furlough while museums were closed to the public.

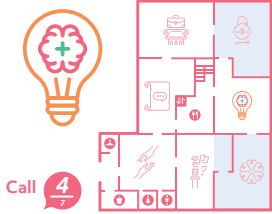
In summer 2020, we recruited 10 young people, aged between 16 and 22 years, to explore their own experiences of the heritage sector and how museums and heritage sites could engage more actively with young people. The project group delivered a social media campaign (see images, right) in September 2020 which highlighted the seven key areas that they felt museums should focus on if they wanted to engage more actively with young people. These were:

- Inclusion and Diversity
- Colonialism
- LGBT Inclusion
- Mental Health
- Housing
- Youth Employment/Unemployment
- Contemporary Collecting.


The seven topics highlighted in the social media campaign were used to frame Phase 2 of the project. In each of the project areas, the participating young people chose one of the eight topics on which to focus. This ensured the views of the young people involved in Phase 1 continued to shape and influence the project.

Mental health:
be open-minded

Museums must be alive to the issue of mental health. We want museums to be *open-minded* about reducing prejudice and stigma and helping to change attitudes.



Call 4/7



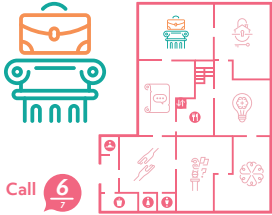
Living Museums

Make a change
Make history


#MuseumsHearUs

Youth employment and unemployment:
be open to opportunities

Museums must be alive to young people's concerns about job insecurity, now and in the future. We need museums to show they are *open to developing opportunities* for young people.



Call 6/7



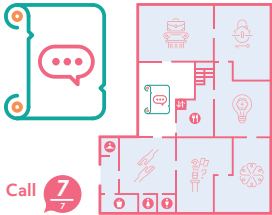
Living Museums

Make a change
Make history


#MuseumsHearUs

Contemporary collecting:
be open to now

Museums must be alive to the links between our past and present, explaining histories and celebrating today. We need museums to look back and be *open to now*.



Call 7/7



Living Museums

Make a change
Make history

#MuseumsHearUs

Caption these



2. Approach

Project Structure

Living Museums worked across three different museums in three local authority areas: Perth and Kinross, Stirling and Dumfries and Galloway. We aimed to bring together a museum partner and youth work organisation in each of these three localities. The partnerships in each area were formed between:

- Perth and Kinross (Perth Museum and YMCA Tayside)
- Dumfries and Galloway (Dumfries Museum and Dumfries and Galloway Youth Work Team)
- Stirling (The Battle of Bannockburn Experience).

This approach supported the sharing of learning and practice development to take advantage of local connections and relationships.

We recruited two members of staff to co-ordinate the projects in the three areas and to support the engagement between the young people and the museums. One delivered the project in Perth and Kinross and Stirling, the other delivered the project in Dumfries and Galloway.

Recruitment of young people

We aimed to recruit 15 young people in each of the three project areas.

Recruitment of young people took place between January and April 2021 in each of the three project areas. Where possible, the local youth work organisation identified young people to participate through their existing networks. We also conducted open recruitment through social media and direct emails to other local organisations in all three of the project areas to identify additional young people.



Recruitment ad for social media channels

Recruitment proved challenging across all three project areas; a key challenge was online engagement. We heard from partners about decreasing online participation generally as young people continued to experience 'Zoom fatigue'. More details of the participants in each of the projects are given below.

Delivery

Project delivery with the groups of young people began in Spring 2021. Due to ongoing pandemic restrictions, the early stages of the project all took place online.

We utilised Children in Scotland's established and successful approach to engagement work with children and young people. This included developing group agreements and using icebreakers and games to support the building of relationships. We also used interactive online tools such as Jamboard, Miro and Menti to support the young people's engagement.

Early sessions also focused on gathering a baseline understanding of what young people involved thought about museums, the barriers that they saw to engaging with them and what they thought needed to change and improve. This information was used to inform the project development and the focus for each group.

The groups explored how museums could support young people to be happy, healthy and safe so that they became more engaged with the sector and were therefore able to think about the impact that museums could have on their lives. Other key early work included art activities such as creating protest artwork to demonstrate issues they felt strongly about and they believe should be considered more seriously by adults.

Children in Scotland and the museum staff worked with the young people to develop key museum and heritage skills such as interpretation (writing labels and discussing collections). Ongoing engagement with staff from the museums also supported the young people to develop their knowledge of how museums work and the different roles and opportunities that are on offer.

The groups then identified a topic from the eight chosen by the group involved in Phase 1 of the project and agreed how they wanted to demonstrate this within the museums.

Evaluation

Evaluation was conducted with both young people and heritage staff. The various approaches are discussed below.

Focus group discussions

Children in Scotland staff held focus group discussions at the start and the end of the project with young people and museum staff in each of the three sites. At the pre-project discussion a total of 29 people took part. In the end of project discussions, 22 people took part.

For each group, baseline discussions were held to identify what they thought the key issues were in relation to museums' accessibility and relevance to young people. This information was used to set the scene for each project and to identify areas of focus. Focus groups with museum staff were formally transcribed. For our work with young people, Miro and Jamboard were used to take notes.



Discussions with the participating young people explored:

- Their views on museums, culture and heritage
- Their confidence in these spaces and how relatable they are
- The barriers to accessing museums and what makes people go
- How the project had affected their views of museums
- Their experience of working with the museum on the project.

Discussions with participating members of museums staff explored:

- Their confidence and experience in working with young people in a heritage setting
- The successes and challenges they had faced in engaging with young people
- The impact of the project on their practice.



Vox Pops

We offered the opportunity for young people and museum staff to submit short videos (vox pops) for the end of project evaluation. These gave people the opportunity to share what they had learned and how the project had affected them. We received four vox pops from participants.



3. Participants, numbers and engagement

Numbers of young people involved

In total we have engaged with at least 101 children and young people through the Living Museums project.

This included 10 young people involved in the Phase 1 national project group. It also included 15 young people involved for the whole duration of the project in the main project groups spread across the three areas (more young people engaged in the groups for shorter periods of time but this number accounts for those involved for the whole project).

Others were involved in specific sessions or got involved when it suited them. Young people engaged in surveys and activity days at the participating museums. (Detail can be found in *Table 3* page 36).

Numbers of people involved in evaluation activity

As we have discussed above, we carried out a range of evaluation activities for the project. The figures shown in *Table 4* and *Table 5* (page 36) demonstrate how many people took part in the start and end of project evaluation.

Total number of sessions

We also ran additional sessions with young artists who helped us explore issues such as colonialism and the Black Lives Matter movement. These were delivered by people working with Perth Museum and Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA). One session was also delivered in partnership with the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights. These partnerships were set up to give young people an insight into work being conducted by other young people and to provide examples of how they may want to take their project forward.

Events and Training

A number of events were held throughout the project to share the final exhibitions or to engage with wider groups of young people. Details of these events can be found in *Table 7* on page 37.

We also delivered a training session for museum staff in Summer 2021. This was delivered over Zoom and attended by 10 people. This training focused on delivering participation and engagement work within museums and heritage settings. It covered children's rights, the theories that underpin participation and engagement and an introduction to different methods. It also gave museum staff an opportunity to discuss their own practice and consider how they would develop their work.



4. Project journeys

This section of the report presents the work conducted in each of the three project areas and shows how the young people communicated their final work.

Perth and Kinross

In Perth and Kinross, the project was delivered in partnership with Perth Museum and YMCA Tayside. Children in Scotland and the YMCA worked together to recruit young people to the project. This included identifying young people who already had an existing relationship with the YMCA. We also ran a period of open recruitment in local schools to make sure we were reaching as diverse a group as possible.

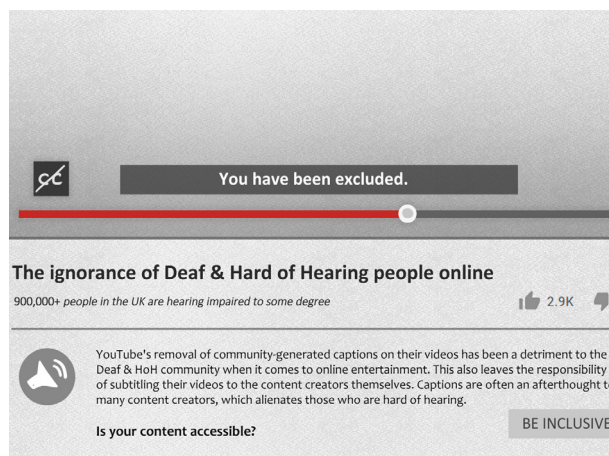
It was clear that the YMCA's local relationships helped with recruitment. We had a core group of eight young people who were engaged across the life of the project. However, a range of other young people were involved at different stages as suited their situation.

The group identified that they enjoyed going to museums with family and friends and that they really enjoyed the opportunity these visits presented to learn about new things. However, they also spoke about how museums could be hard to engage with for people with accessibility needs. This was a particularly important topic for the group.

“As a child when I went with the school it was fun because it was with my friends. But if I went with my gran it might be more boring because you don’t get to see things you wanted to. You might not be trusted to go view at things.”

Project Participant

The group chose to focus on mental health for their work across the project. They particularly wanted to explore the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the mental health of children and young people.



Perth and Kinross Group protest artwork

They explored this topic by displaying items that had supported them through the pandemic in a case at Perth Museum. The *Our Lockdown Journey: Facing the Unknown through Creativity* exhibition was laid out in the design of a young person's bedroom as this was where many of the group had spent large periods of time during the last 18 months.

The group also provided their own labels about their items to explain to viewers why these were important. The project group used QR codes to provide interactive ways for people to engage with the display. This included links to where people could access support and a playlist of music that the group felt supported their mental health.

A launch event for the exhibition was held at Perth Museum that was attended by around 35 people. The event was shared locally and targeted outreach was conducted. Attendees included staff from local organisations that provided mental health support, local youth work staff and also parents/carers. Attendees at the event highlighted that the display had supported them to think about why young people might not engage with museums, how the pandemic had affected young people and that they felt museums should continue with this sort of content.

"Yes, tonight has given me a better insight as to why young people aged 16-25 might not engage with these spaces."

Attendee, Exhibition Launch Event

They also contributed a range of content for the Kidz in Museums **Digital Takeover**. This included sharing **videos**, artwork and blogs on their views on the museum and the importance of the project for them. The work conducted by the Perth Living Museums group has also been included in the latest series of the General Education in Museums **Case Studies**.

As well as the exhibition, the group came up with an idea to develop a sensory room within Perth Museum to support engagement with people with sensory needs. This has subsequently been taken into a bigger Perth Museum Access Audit project, which will explore accessibility of the whole museum space. The project is now developing an animation about the importance of accessibility in museum spaces. We will continue to engage with Perth Museum and hope to see the sensory space developed as part of the longer-term plans for the museum.

It was extremely positive to see the group develop really strong relationships with each other. Members of the group felt a key success of the project for them was how they had become friends and felt empowered to share their views.

It has also been good to see partnerships between Perth Museum and the YMCA developing, with members of staff from Perth Museum volunteering within the YMCA and developing their own work with young people.



Kidz in Museums Digital Takeover artwork

Dumfries and Galloway

In Dumfries and Galloway, we worked with Dumfries Museum and the Dumfries and Galloway Council Communities Team. The Museum identified that its team had experience in working with young people but often this activity happens through schools. It was clear that the museum was keen to improve how its team worked with young people and increase the opportunities for this.

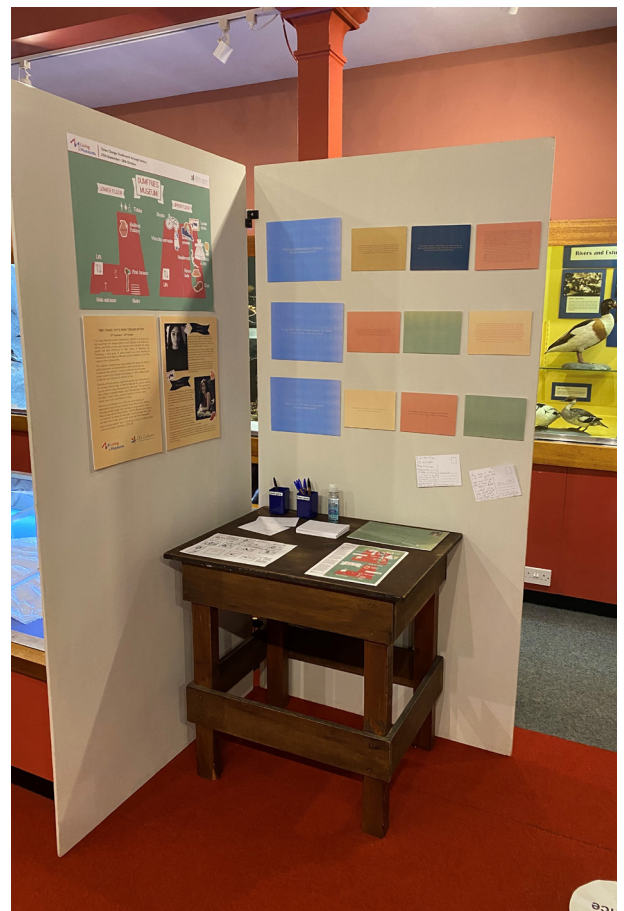
Having a partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Communities supported us to reach a wide range of young people through its youth work networks. Children in Scotland also reached out through local schools, colleges and art organisations. However, engaging with young people in the area on this topic proved extremely challenging. Discussions with our project partners suggested that online engagement was an issue across a range of services within the area.

We worked directly with two young people in Dumfries. Both were interested and engaged in museums and felt the spaces they knew did not reflect them as young people. They felt they were often not interactive enough and did not cover issues they felt were important.

Low numbers of young people participating in the core group in Dumfries and Galloway made it harder to have ongoing engagement between the young people and museum staff. Sessions were delivered by Children in Scotland with museum staff attending where appropriate. This was essential for maintaining a child-led space.

The small group chose to focus on Youth Employment and Unemployment. The group chose this topic because they felt that there was not enough support in the local area for young people to get jobs and because they knew that many people struggled to get a job. They decided they wanted to produce an exhibition within the museum that brought together the current collection and also the views of children and young people in the area.

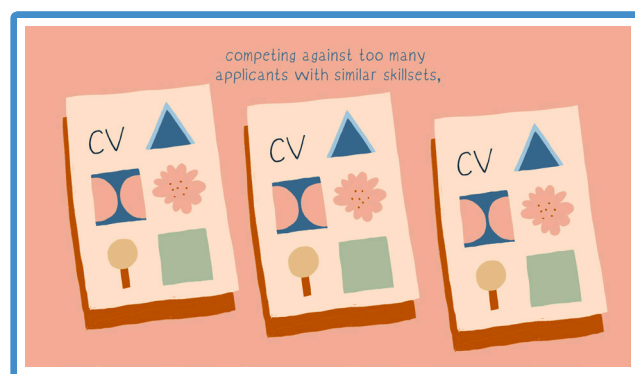
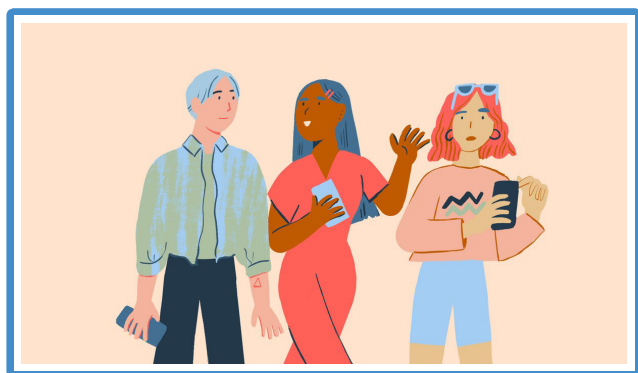
The group worked with museum staff to identify relevant objects within Dumfries Museum including a day robe, shoes, tools and a bicycle. The participating young people wrote their own interpretive labels on the chosen items and created a trail for those visiting the exhibition to explore the items. This exhibition was installed for a month, in October 2021, including the period of the local school holiday.



Exhibition welcome at Dumfries Museum

The young people also developed and delivered a qualitative survey for children and young people to respond to about their experiences of trying to get a job. This was responded to by 20 young people and highlighted a range of key issues including how high numbers of applicants had made it hard to get a job and how this affected people's mental health. While this was a small response the results reflect what was heard in the **10,000 Voices campaign**.

The survey responses were used to develop an animation that was displayed within the museum and was **shared on social media** by Children in Scotland and Dumfries Museum.



Stills from *Living Museums: Youth Unemployment* film by Victoria Geary

“It has been very difficult, especially because of the pandemic. With so many people being left unemployed or having their wages reduced on furlough jobs that usually would go to young people such as retail or fast food are hard to find. I applied for one of four positions that became available in the kitchen at the McDonald’s most local to me. My application was rejected because there was 346 applicants.”

From *Living Museums: Youth Unemployment* film

The exhibition also included a series of interactive elements that the young people involved felt would support engagement. These included a postcard activity that ran throughout the life of the exhibition and a specific day of storytelling and art activities. We received 16 responses to the activity.

Both participants highlighted that they enjoyed being involved in the project through our ongoing evaluation. Participants also told us that it had supported them to gain confidence, develop an understanding of how exhibitions are put together and to feel more likely to engage with museums.

“They were willing to hear your ideas. They would ask what we wanted to do, and they would suggest. They would give input but were keen to listen to us.”

Project Participant

Dumfries Museum have subsequently used the project learning to help with a successful funding bid to re-display the main hall. The project was used as an example of how they could engage with young people going forward.

Stirling

In Stirling the project was delivered in partnership with the Battle of Bannockburn Experience, run by the National Trust for Scotland. We worked with three young people as part of the core project group who were at school or university in Stirling.

Similar to Dumfries and Galloway, recruitment proved extremely challenging in Stirling, despite engagement with a wide range of organisations and a period of open recruitment.

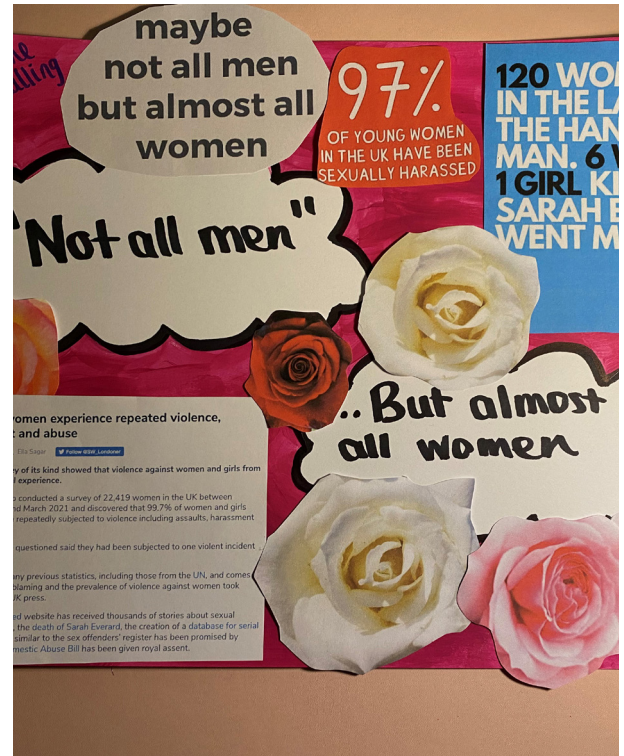
The small group identified at the start of the project that they were interested in history and enjoyed going to museums, particularly when staff were friendly. However, they felt that museums do not reflect the views of young people. They also felt that often museums are not interactive enough. The group members chose to focus on contemporary collecting as a topic for their work as they felt it was important for museums to reflect the issues that children and young people are currently talking about and experiencing.

“Young people have a voice, they are using it to make change and they should be listened to.”

Project Participant

They chose to explore this topic in a final exhibition titled Generation Change. The exhibition explored young people's participation in protests across the time of the pandemic, a topic the young people involved felt strongly about. They also felt there was a relevant link to Bannockburn's history as a site of conflict and protest. They aimed to show museums how they could engage with new or different topics in ways that would encourage young people to access museums.

The exhibition included photos, original artwork and a series of poetry. Artwork was sourced through an open call and also through engagement with local organisations. Work was submitted by young people working with Perth and Kinross Rape Crisis Centre and Toonspeak, among others.



Stirling Group protest artwork



Stirling Group exhibition artwork

The exhibition was launched in August 2021 at an event attended by around 50 people. Invitations to the event were shared with National Trust for Scotland staff, local organisations and also on social media. It has also been captured in two booklets which showcase the range of work on display. You can access the booklets at the links below:



[Click here](#) to download Booklet 1: Generation Change overview

[Click here](#) to download Booklet 2: protest poetry collection

Feedback on the launch event highlighted support for museums covering new and potentially challenging topics such as those included in the exhibition. However, this project also highlighted the vital importance of tackling issues sensitively and ensuring that ideas are communicated clearly.

"It's great to see so many issues being held together in one space, and for these issues to be curated and created by young people."

Attendee at Launch Event

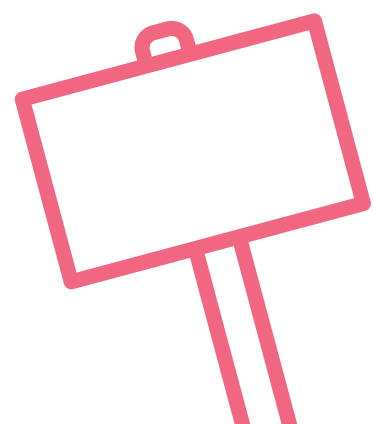
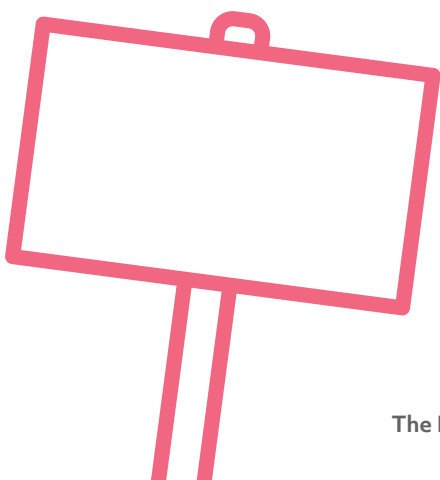
"It was wonderful to see an exhibition put together by young people and focused on issues important to them."

Attendee at Launch Event

The group also contributed to the Kidz in Museums social media takeover and shared a blog on contemporary collecting on the [Children in Scotland website](#).

"By collecting material relating to them now – rather than waiting to assess their long-term cultural and political influence – we will hopefully be showcasing a more accurate and genuine reaction, whilst thoughts and feelings are still fresh."

Quote from Kidz in Museums Blog Post





5. Key learning

5.1 Perspectives from the start of the project

Young People

At the start of the project we held a range of discussions to identify what the participating young people liked about museums and also what limited their engagement with museum spaces. These discussions provided us with a chance to learn about the sorts of issues the young people felt were important and were used as a basis for ongoing dialogue and development of the wider project.

Many of the young people we were working with liked museums in principle, seeing them as places where they could learn new things. They also viewed them as good places for socialising with friends or having days out with their families, as long as they were able to explore them freely.

We also heard how they were particularly keen on museums having interactive elements such as games or quizzes.

There were clearly a number of barriers to engaging with museums that young people felt limited the extent to which they wanted to enter museum spaces. Young people found it off-putting when exhibitions were not relevant to them. They also felt that often exhibitions and collections were too repetitive and as a result there was little incentive to go back.

“They need to rearrange them a bit – it can be boring if you see the same stuff every time.”

Project Participant

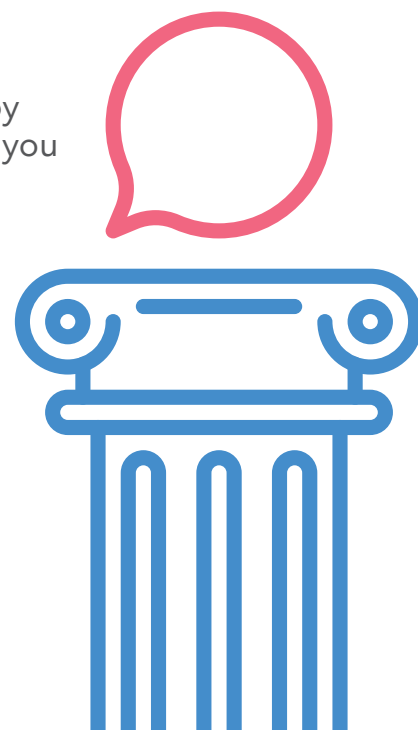
They also expressed some frustration that museums did not use social media well enough to let them know when new exhibits were in place and so they would miss out.

Young people were also put off by prohibitive costs attached to some museums, which could make it hard to access them. They also suggested that when they do go to visit, they can be put off by unfriendly staff and by the perception that they are places where you need to be quiet and not have fun.

“When I was a kid, asking me not to touch things was a bit off-putting. It can feel hostile. Someone saying ‘shh’ all the time isn’t good. It feels like being in a library.”

Project Participant

It was also clear that museums can be very inaccessible spaces for many young people. This was expressed both in relation to the physical spaces and how the information is presented and communicated.



“I like museums a lot – I like learning things. But it can be frustrating because it takes a while to read things. I sometimes have to skip things if because it can take a while to read. People I go with might miss things – I don’t feel it’s fair to hold people back and sometimes I skip things to accommodate.”

Project Participant

Museum staff

In our pre-project discussions we heard about a range of the issues museums felt they currently experienced in engaging with children and young. Some people felt that there was a basic issue with getting young people involved in heritage opportunities and they often did not know what topics these groups wanted covered. However, there was an acceptance that museums needed to be making the effort to engage more actively with young people.

“[In the case of our museum], it’s very much there and we’re waiting for people to come to us. And this age group particularly won’t do that. I think to connect with them, we have to go out, and whether that’s just with social media or whether that’s going out as an outreach to connect, we’ve taken a very passive approach so far and so they’re not coming to us.”

Museum Staff Member

There was also a feeling that museums could be resistant to change and did not want to move towards more collaborative approaches to putting on exhibitions or creating content. There was a desire among many of the staff we worked with to change this approach to offer more opportunities to young people to shape what is on offer.

“We need to move away from defining everything to more co-collaboration and co-creation.”

Museum Staff Member

There was also a feeling that museums were not marketing or advertising themselves well enough to attract young people. They suggested that they could be making better use of tools such as social media to improve things.

However, the museum staff were also clear that there were aspects of their work with children and young people that were going well. They suggested that this worked best when they utilised a partnership approach and worked with other local organisations. They also suggested that work with young people was most effective when they actively took on outreach work and tried to meet young people where they were.

It was also clear that many staff had backgrounds in teaching or working in the community which would support them to work directly with children and young people and there was a desire among some staff to be doing more of this.

5.2 Perspectives from the end of the project

This part of the report focuses on how being part of the project has affected the young people who took part and the museum staff who were involved. We present this under a number of key thematic areas.

Young People

During our end of project evaluation we identified a number of key thematic areas where young people had identified progress, ongoing barriers and ways in which the project had affected them. In some cases this showed improvements on issues we had discussed at the start of the project, however in others it highlighted where issues continued to be a problem.

Young people's views on careers in heritage

It was clear from our evaluation with the participants in the project that they had learned about careers in heritage and were interested in working in the area. This is a positive effect of the project.

Young people valued having chances to engage with the whole museum and the process of developing exhibitions. People had learned about the amount of work required to put on exhibits and about the different parts of the collections that are not always on display. It is clear that the project supported young people to have more awareness of the heritage sector and the roles involved.

Having welcoming and approachable staff also made young people feel that the heritage sector would be a good place to work. Some participants had also been positively influenced by the fact that there were staff in the sector already who were trying to drive change and provide more space for young people.

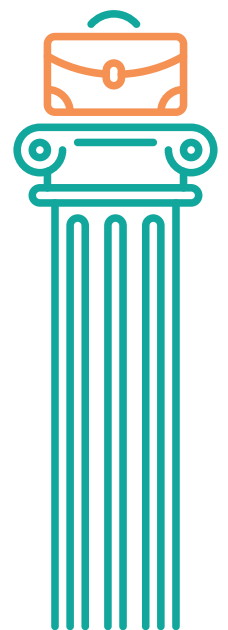
However, it is important to recognise that, for some young people, there was a desire to work in the sector as they wanted to drive change themselves. They felt it was important to work in the sector to help ensure that museums were in a position to have more young person-led content and to share ideas in new engaging ways.

"Be the change you want to see."

Project Participant

Young people's knowledge of museums and heritage

Young people involved in the project told us how they developed their knowledge of museums and heritage across the project. Some felt this was knowledge that their peers would not have. It was also clear that developing this knowledge and having chances to create content was beneficial to the young people as they shared they had a sense of pride at their achievements.



We heard how the project and getting to have regular contact with a museum had given people an awareness of what is going on. Members of the group described how this had moved it from being a vague concept to something more tangible and connected to their current experiences.

“They feel a lot more personal and connected. They no longer have just a feeling of the past but our present too.”

Project Participant

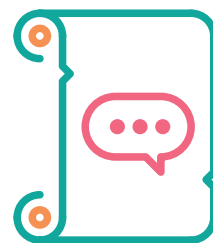
Being actively involved in developing ideas had supported members of the group to feel like museums were more relatable. They had the chance to shape the content and research it further. Some also mentioned that working with other young people on the project had helped with this.

Members of the group also told us about how they had learned more about the process for developing exhibitions and displays. This included the time involved, how content is curated and how to track and measure engagement with exhibitions.

“I viewed museums as about the past, but now I have seen how much goes into it and the people who put on displays.”

Project Participant

We also heard how young people were now more aware of the constraints the sector faced including funding and having to work with lots of people and balance different views.



Empowerment and confidence for participating young people

We also saw examples of how the project had empowered the young people involved and had supported them to develop their confidence.

The young people spoke about how they had developed their own confidence across the project, both in museums and in the rest of their lives. This had come from having a space to talk to other young people and with museum staff, working on ideas collaboratively. Having enthusiastic staff within the museum who had helped create this space was mentioned as a factor in supporting this.

“Having the insight into what is going on behind the scenes. It shouldn’t be that different in others. So I would feel more comfortable in others. I have that comfort zone now, I was involved and listened to.”

Project Participant

The young people spoke about practical examples where their increased confidence had benefitted them such as at university or when talking to staff members within the museums. Anecdotally, staff members working across all the project areas have spoken about how much more confident young people involved in the project seemed. This ranged from their confidence in turning on cameras and engaging in online sessions to how comfortably they worked together when meeting in person.



"I felt like I wasn't part of the museum and heritage. But the project has made me feel more included. I feel like I could make a difference to future exhibitions as I could say how I feel or whether I am being represented."

Project Participant

We also heard how young people felt more confident to engage in heritage opportunities, to be critical when they thought things needed to change, and to have their voices heard. We also heard how people now felt that they were able to make a difference in museums.

"It gives me confidence in myself that we can individually and collectively make a difference."

Project Participant

Young people taking part in the project also told us how taking part had made them feel more seen, welcomed and represented in museums. This had also given people a feeling that they were more likely to be heard in the future. The project had become a safe space where they were listened to and were able to ask questions.

"I feel much more seen by museums, both as a young person and as someone who is dyslexic... The fact our opinions were being listened to. We were trying to figure out something that could be done and we were heard."

Project Participant

The young people spoke about practical examples where their increased confidence had benefitted them such as at university or when talking to staff members within the museums. Anecdotally, staff members working across all the project areas have spoken about how much more confident young people involved in the project seemed. This ranged from their confidence in turning on cameras and engaging in online sessions to how comfortably they worked together when meeting in person.

Skills developed by young people

Young people on the project spoke a lot about the skills that they developed across the life of the project. This included some skills for life and work including working in a team and making group decisions.

Some members of the group also spoke about the different skills that are more specifically related to working in museums. This including carrying out research for exhibitions and displays, drafting content such as labels and developing creative content, such as animations that were used to engage wider audiences. These were all skills that project workers explicitly took time to develop and work on with the young people.



Curating the exhibition in Stirling

Approaches to working with children and young people

Young people also highlighted how the model for delivering the project had supported their involvement and told us how this could also be a way that museums could develop their engagement work with young people going forward.

The more casual, relaxed environment created by staff was seen to have made young people feel comfortable and ready to share their views. People valued doing ice-breakers at the start of the sessions, particularly ones related to the topic as these would then be brought into later discussions.

Taking time to have informal conversations not related to the project was also valued. We know from all our projects how important this relationship-based approach is to working with young people. Members of different groups also appreciated how young people were supported to be involved in sessions and staff made sure that all their voices were heard in their inclusive and friendly practices.

There was some discussion about the importance of using more engaging methods to work with young people. They enjoyed that the project was not just about reading about topics or listening to people tell them about a topic. They liked being able to share their views, undertake activities and have discussions.

Some members of the project also enjoyed being able to talk about issues that affected them and that they were particularly interested in. For some groups this meant discussing topics that sometimes feel like they can be off-limits or challenging such as mental health and issues relating to racism or sexism and colonialism. It was clear that young people valued the opportunity to talk and learn about these topics in a safe environment.

Museum staff and heritage environments

In general, young participants spoke about their overwhelmingly positive experiences of working with the museums involved.

As is discussed throughout this report, young people valued working with staff in museums who were committed to change. They also felt that the staff they came into contact with were positive, friendly and welcoming. This made people feel comfortable to take part and to share their views. It also helped them run launch events confidently.

“Really positive, friendly and welcoming. Seemed like they really wanted to get us involved.”

Project Participant

However, it was also clear that young people have concerns about the wider sector and whether it is as welcoming or as ready for change. They felt that for heritage settings to engage more with young people they needed to be more ready to change and take risks. This meant supporting young people to have open conversations and then to reflect these without putting up barriers.

Co-design and future engagement with young people

Participants were clear that being involved in an opportunity to develop new ideas for museums had been a beneficial one. There was a positive feeling about how the museums had engaged in this, across all three project areas. Members of the groups felt that staff working directly with them had been willing to listen to them and develop ideas collaboratively. They were also pleased that museums were making the effort to be involved and hoped this contributed to long-term change.

We heard how young people had been given free rein to take ideas in new directions from what the museums traditionally focused on. They felt this had allowed them to develop content that was more relatable to young people. Young people valued having this freedom and also highlighted that restricting this could have limited their enjoyment of the project. They also suggested this made museums feel more like places that were meant for them.

“I feel more included and like I can make a difference to what is shown about the past and that I can influence what may be part of the future.”

Project Participant

However, it was also clear across all three projects that young people have concerns about whether this sort of co-design work will be sustained in museums and across the sector. There was a suggestion that working with organisations like Children in Scotland could help make this happen as it would allow them to learn and develop.

People felt that this sort of work was not fully embedded yet and that progress was still required. Many highlighted that they wanted the museums that were involved in the project to continue to work in this way and have spaces for young people to engage. People also suggested that the model should be tried in other museums.

“Everything needs to be collaborative in this sector – they just need to figure it out.”

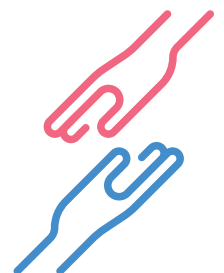
Project Participant

They also felt that engaging with young people and having more content would drive engagement from other young people. They felt this would spread a positive word about museums.

“I would want other museums to do something similar. Get young people in, get their opinion. Once you get young people in, word of mouth can spread and their knowledge can be shared.”

Project Participant

We also heard how all the groups felt it was important for more young people to be given the opportunities that they had to further build the community of young people who felt confident in museums and who were able to contribute to what was displayed. Members of the group suggested that museums needed to push to work with groups of young people with different experiences and they should aim at working with other specific groups beyond just ‘young people’. This included taking an intersectional approach such as engaging with disabled young people or LGBTQI+ young people but also engaging with older people as well.



Accessibility in museums

Accessibility was a key issue for the young people we worked with pre-project and they identified at the start of the project that this was a barrier to engagement. As outlined above, this could be from a physical point of view or with regard to young people's additional support needs. In Perth the group specifically looked to tackle the issue by encouraging the museum to develop a sensory space.

From their work on the project many participants also identified ways in which museums could make their spaces more accessible. This included having better lit spaces and also bigger text on labels to make it easier to read.

There is also clearly an appetite among young people to make exhibitions accessible for those who have dyslexia, or those who are partially sighted or having issues with their hearing. They want language to be written simply and for there to be options like brail and subtitles.

Ideas for the future

At the start of the project, we heard across all the three project areas how the young people wanted more interactive elements to exhibitions. In several project areas the groups explored ways that they could do this, including simple ideas like postcards that people could fill in about their first jobs. People felt these had been good ways to engage with people as they are more fun and interesting. They felt museums should learn from this and incorporate interactive approaches into their future work. There was a feeling that these activities also needed to go beyond trying to engage very young children. This reinforced our learning from Heritage Hunters and Phase 1 of Living Museums that young people felt museums have activities for young children but there is less aimed at teenagers.



They also felt that Living Museums had provided opportunities to explore new issues and stories that are not always included in museums. They felt this had been a key positive of the project from their perspective. We heard how the museums involved but also the heritage sector more widely needed to take this on board and learn from it.

Covid, online engagement and developing the project

Young people also highlighted how the model for delivering the project had supported their involvement and told us how this could also be a way that museums could develop their engagement work with young people going forward.

Other young people identified that while the project worked well online and they were able to build a group dynamic they had preferred when they met in person as it helped them feel more part of something.



Staff

It was clear from our follow-up evaluation work on the projects that staff had identified a range of learning through their involvement in the Living Museums project. They had also identified ways in which the project could support their museums to develop their work in the future. These are outlined below.

Co-design and new ways of working

It was clear that the Living Museums project presented opportunities for the museums and the staff who worked there with opportunities to try new approaches, work in new ways and cover new topics.

“And I think that’s what’s been quite unique about the project is it is an unfiltered discussion.”

Museum Staff Member

Many of the staff involved had been interested in conducting similar types of projects to Living Museums previously but had not been able to do this regularly due to the wider work programme of their museum. Positively, the project seems to have encouraged museum staff to want to embed co-design work further into their work and made them more confident that their museums would be comfortable doing this.

“My whole outlook’s changed, and it’s added more weight to something that probably in the back of my mind I’d liked to have done anyway, but now I can see the benefit of it so I’d like to do more.”

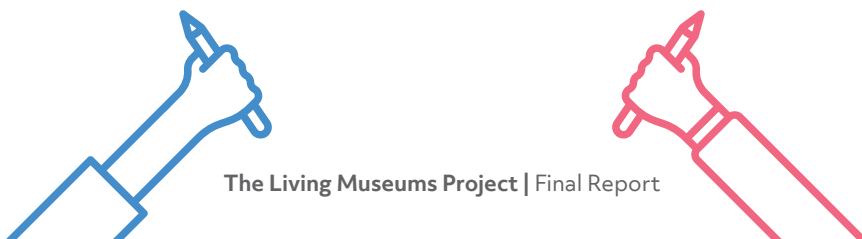
Museum Staff Member

For staff who felt they had a good grasp of working well with young people, they highlighted that being involved in the project acted as a refresher for them, supported them to learn new skills or to expand on the skills that they already had. We also heard how involvement in the project had highlighted to some members of staff that they had been working in a less collaborative way than they had thought.

“I thought I was great. I thought I was the bee’s knees, I work with kids and young people every day. But the project, it was like ‘actually, you’re not all that. There’s a lot more you could be doing.’ So, yeah, very keen to do that. Yeah, very keen to use what I’ve learned from this.”

Museum Staff Member

The project was also seen to have highlighted to some of the museums at an organisational level where they are in terms of supporting co-design projects. Participants at one museum told us that the project had come at a time of wider self-reflection for the museum and how the project had highlighted some of the issues they faced such as a lack of connection with young people. Others reported that the project had identified that their own processes could become more efficient and that they needed to become more streamlined to embed co-design work.



“It’s definitely a period of self-reflection on the museums and how it’s developed rather than the project, and I think it’s exactly right on there, yeah, because we’ve got some way to go but it’s all possible and we know now. We’ve got the people here who know it’s possible, whereas it didn’t really mesh before. I’m sure we could have had more people in but we started from a really low place of not having that connection, so the next time, it’s possible.”

Museum Staff Member

“It’s highlighted the process isn’t succinct enough to be inclusive and actually co-design is the way forward. And when we talk about how we’ve become more inclusive and we do things like that, but we tend to work for people, not with people.”

Museum Staff Member

Staff from across the different museum partners saw the approach used by Living Museums as coming with a deeper level of engagement than they might be used to or had previously experienced. Staff spoke about how this had allowed young people to communicate their messages and identify topics rather than feeding into ongoing work of the museum. There was a clear desire among the staff involved in the project for this work to continue and a feeling that the project had supported them to recognise what was possible within their museum. It was positive to hear about examples of how this was going to be embedded through organisational plans and through other longer-term projects:

“So, obviously it’s a totally different way of working in terms of co-design for the museums, to actually get young people involved in a longer-term project.”

Museum Staff Member

“I’ve found it really, really inspiring. We’d really like to do a lot more proper collaboration in future because what I realised from doing Living Museums is that we weren’t doing proper collaboration before at all, it’s a lot more in depth, it has to be two-way and not just transactional.”

Museum Staff Member

Staff in the different museums felt there was a level of risk attached to working with young people in this way. This was mainly in response to one project having received some negative comments on social media in relation to one of the topics covered, and concerns for the young people involved. Staff acknowledged this but in many cases discussed how the benefits of the approach outweighed the risks.

However, they were also clear about the need to take steps to mitigate or plan for the potential risks that may occur through good project management. It was clear from feedback that staff understood the tension between engaging young people and allowing them to communicate their message while also ensuring steps are taken to keep them safe:

“So, if you’re doing something for the first time, if you’re pushing boundaries then you’re going to get it wrong a few times and you just have to suck it up, like ‘cool, done it’, and then just keep going.”

Museum Staff Member

Museum staff also felt that the project had supported them to bring new voices into their collection, with young people having the opportunity to convey their messages and their stories either about their own content or existing parts of museum collections. There was an acceptance that this could potentially be challenging for some people but that it was important to share different perspectives on topics:

“Yeah, I like that too. When I first read some of them, I thought ‘oh, that’s opinionated’, but I actually quite like that, and again it’s part of that, I wouldn’t have written it like that but I like that they’re saying things like this is misogynistic, this is out of date, and that sort of thing.”

Museum Staff Member

Museum staff also spoke positively of how using a co-design approach such as the Living Museums project could help change the perceptions of museums. In some cases staff were able to identify examples of how this had already occurred. Staff felt the project was helping to change perceptions by communicating new messages and in new creative ways that young people find more engaging. We heard how museum staff felt this could show that they were taking on new approaches and open them up to new audiences. They also shared how this could support new staff to be involved who may be keen to take this work further.

“And part of it is changing how people perceive you as well, and I think doing projects like this is quite helpful for changing that perception.”

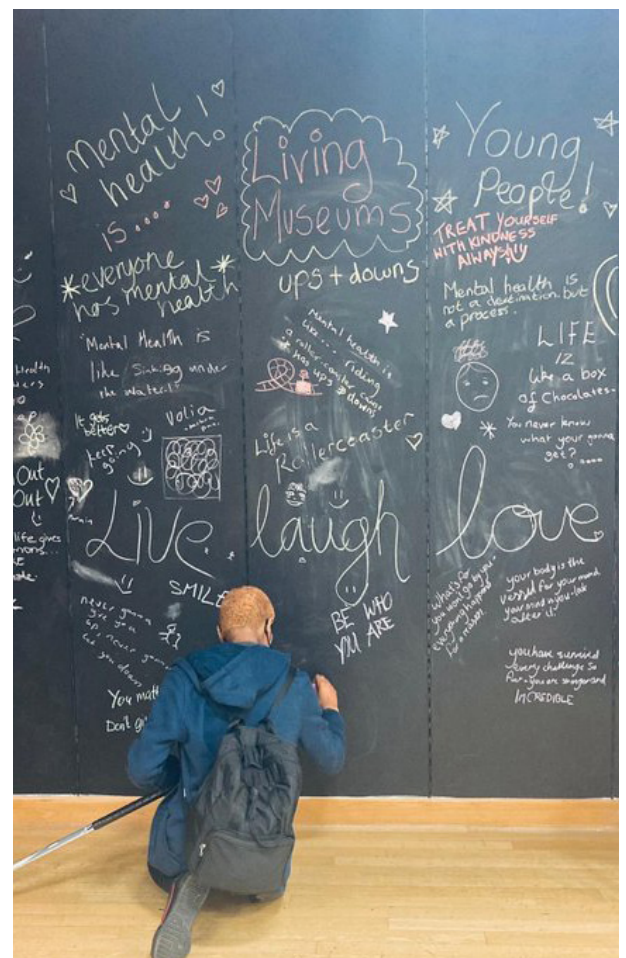
Museum Staff Member

Project staff also reflected on how they could improve co-design opportunities and provide further freedom to young people that they worked with. They felt in future projects they would have more dedicated space for participants to share their work and opportunities to get items out that are not always on display. Staff reflected that many of these opportunities would have been possible within the space and should be considered for future projects.

“I think is it’s taught us that we can do far more in collaboration with people than we can on our own, and the weight behind changing attitudes and shifting perception and things like that, people in the project have seen that actually we can do far more differently as a whole organisation.”

Museum Staff Member

Some members of staff involved in the project wanted museums to give up control over exhibitions and provide young people with the freedom to take work forward. They felt that the project had helped with this as it



A collaborative response to the theme of mental health at Perth Museum

had displayed the benefit of the approach that they could now share with others in their sector. Others spoke about how they wanted to move on from providing learning opportunities to working with young people as more active participants.

"It'll potentially shift how we do engage with some groups. We have tried that in the past on a small-scale community case but we've predefined the group, predefined how much is going to be spent, what the outcome's going to be, etc. Never done it total co-design, set them loose, not knowing what to expect, which I quite like."

Museum Staff Member

"I think it's around the fact that the benefits of this kind of work are so much more than what you get if you're not doing this kind of work, and that actually all of those things that are barriers are worth breaking down to be able to get the outcomes and the benefits from it."

Museum Staff Member

Knowledge and understanding of working with young people

We heard different examples of ways in which the staff had developed their understanding of working with children and young people and of the issues that were important to them. For some staff they appear to have gained a deeper understanding of the complexity of the issues that young people are interested in and the breadth of topics they want to engage with. Importantly, the project also seems to have affirmed to some that young people are keen to get involved in museums.

"I have learned that there are young people out there ready to engage with heritage and culture as it has always been on my mind for the future."

Museum Staff Member

"So, some of the things I've learned more about are the issues that are important to young people, which are all our audience, so I'd like to continue to find out more about what's relevant to all of our audience."

Museum Staff Member

Staff spoke about gaining a new understanding of the timescales required to work with children and young people on this sort of project and to be able to allow young people to develop their ideas. Living Museums appears to have supported this by having a longer running project time and being based on regular engagement with a group rather than one-off sessions.

We also heard examples of staff feeling like they had a greater understanding of how to talk to children and young people, how to give them space to make decisions and how to make heritage objects sound interesting and engaging.

"Just so much more face-to-face contact. Obviously it was online to begin with, but we chose to do every week And also the whole time, the duration of the whole project, you can do a lot more in six months than you can just seeing a class for four hours one random day, even if you come back year-on-year, there's not that continuity with it. Yeah, time, and actual contact."

Museum Staff Member

Museum staff also spoke about ways in which safe spaces had been created that had supported the young people who took part to participate. This included having consistent staff who knew the young people but also taking time to develop group agreements and using ice-breaker games at each session to develop a relaxed atmosphere. This appears to have supported new staff's understanding as well as acting as a refresher for some more experienced staff.

"You need to put the time in to build relationships with the children or young people that you're working with. It's not just a case of sending an email and popping up randomly in their school day and expecting to get everything that you want like ideas and autonomy and stuff like that, you actually have to take the time and build a good solid foundation and then let things go from there."

Museum Staff Member

Beyond this, staff spoke about strengthening their skills in supporting young people to develop exhibitions and produce content. We also heard how staff had improved their digital skills and online engagement techniques that will continue to be important for working with young people.

"Just loads, honestly, I've never done anything like any of this, so every stage of it, especially helping the young people curate an exhibition and then an event as well. So, it was just mad, there was loads."

Museum Staff Member

Longer term plans and opportunities for working with young people

Museum staff identified a range of ways in which the Living Museums project would affect their work in future and identified examples of learning from the project about what they needed to pursue this.

The project had come at time of internal development for all of the project areas. This included sites developing new plans or going through internal restructuring. Some staff felt the Living Museums project had provided evidence that could be shared to inform their developmental work and that would help them going forward. There also appeared to be an increasing confidence that there would be meaningful change towards engaging groups like young people.

We also saw evidence of how museums had more concrete plans to develop the accessibility of the museum and work with young people on this priority. This is at an early stage and is being taken beyond the life of the Living Museums project.



"I do have the confidence with the new structure and people in post that that change will be actioned. If you'd asked me six months ago, I don't know if I would have had the confidence to say that. But I do think now there will be a bit of a shift in how things are done. And I think part of the inclusion of this project will help justify why we want to do things."

Museum Staff Member

We also heard how the project had provided examples of how individual exhibitions could be delivered differently within the constraints that individual sites faced. This included using a thematic approach that engaged with specific topics within an existing collection or trialling more rotating short-term content on specific topics that do not fit neatly within existing collections.

“I think what I really liked about the exhibition is the way it drew out the theme, and I think that’s something like because you’ve got so much, it’s thinking about how do you underline certain things and highlight certain things and say ‘right, at the moment we’re highlighting this theme or this idea or this concept’, and how do you do that through displays?”

Museum Staff Member

We heard evidence of how museums hoped to bring young people into their work. This included roles within programming and developing exhibitions. We also heard examples of project sites thinking about setting up clubs or groups that would support ongoing engagement with young people.

There was also a clear appetite to embed a more relational approach. One site specifically spoke about how they are using the learning to support their relationships with local schools and groups. We also heard how the museums involved wanted to continue the relationship with the young people involved in the project and to find ways to support more ongoing relationships with young people to make it more sustainable.

“I think one of the things for me going forwards would be to think about these young people who have invested a lot of time with us and what’s our continuing relationship with them because that to me is one of the biggest issues with a lot of projects generally: the legacy and sustainability.”

Museum Staff Member

It was also positive to hear how participating museums were discussing how they could embed this type of approach with other groups beyond just children and young people.

It is important to recognise that there was an acceptance that embedding engagement work will not happen overnight. Some museum staff felt that there is an attitudinal change that needs to take place where young people are seen as an asset to museums. Others identified that having a KPI (Key Performance Indicator) model that focuses on the number of young people involved rather than the quality of experience needed to change to allow them to fully embed this sort of approach. Some staff also felt that ongoing partnerships with organisations that consistently engage with children and young people were required.

“The mindset, there’s a mindset that needs to change, and you can’t change other people, you can only change yourself. And I think we can sit here and say ‘why don’t people, why don’t people?’ Well, it’s about what about what we’re doing, that’s what needs to happen, that’s the change that needs to happen.”

Museum Staff Member



Improvements for future projects

Staff who were directly involved in the project identified a range of ways things could have been improved, or barriers that may have limited its impact.

It was identified that, for this sort of project to work effectively in future, there needs to be better communication within organisations and further integration between different departments. Staff identified that this would have helped give greater ownership of the Living Museums project across organisations but also greater continuity when staff moved on from their role during the project.

“I would say get your marketing teams in these organisations involved from the start as part of this process because it creates a more personal approach.”

Museum Staff Member

Staff across the project areas suggested that being involved in the project had facilitated conversations about this and supported staff to think about what they would do differently for future projects.

“I know everyone’s busy and everyone’s got stuff to do, but my perceptions would be that this is a really good thing that’s happened for us as an organisation at this time as well, because I feel like it’s really helping inform me as we look forwards and think about what’s happened before. And to me it seems like there’s been maybe a failure to integrate the x team with the y team who obviously have so much to contribute.”

Museum Staff Member

Staff have also recognised the need for buy-in across all levels of staff. This had been identified as an issue at the beginning of the project with participants observing that not all staff within museums currently appreciate the need to engage more actively with groups like children and young people. However, while staff felt these issues continue following the project, they were also confident that some progress had been made. In particular, having the views of children and young people, and being able to share these, had made a difference to this.

“I suppose it’s also cultural issues within organisations, and you know how it’s been and then not actually how it can be, and I suppose that comes to an aspect of leadership and where are we going, and what’s the forward planning. I think here we’re in a good situation going forward.”

Museum Staff Member



Living Museums project members take a tour of Perth Museum’s archives

Staff time and the focus of their work was also identified as barriers to supporting this sort of progress. Staff identified that they often did not have the time set aside for this sort of project and instead often had to focus on more easily measurable outcomes such as the numbers of young people who had attended the museum, despite this having less of an impact.

“Projects like this don’t make us money. They give us great benefits at the end, but actually being able to tangibly show those benefits to those that are making the decisions higher up is a harder task than going ‘I need this much money from engaging with this many children’, that you can then go to funders and say ‘I’ve engaged with this many children, X, Y, Z.’ It’s an overall structural thing.”

Museum Staff Member

Beyond this, some staff also identified that museums needed to be more willing to give up control once they got involved in projects. This included being more willing to give dedicated spaces to display work but also about not controlling outputs and timescales.

Across a number of the museums involved, there were issues where topics chosen by the young people caused some conflict among different audiences. Staff said part of the solution to this was about making sure that messaging was clearly communicated and in line with organisational values. However, they were also clear that there was a balance to be struck and that they could not always stay away from issues because they may be challenging.

Covid-19

Museum staff identified a number of key ways in which the ongoing Covid pandemic had affected the delivery of the project. Across all areas, staff identified an impact on the number of young people that we were able to engage with. Working digitally was also felt to have slowed down progress as it took longer to ensure young people were comfortable in the online space.



“That’s kind of the pitfalls of trying to do things digitally, I’d say it slowed us down quite a bit because we couldn’t show things, not everybody enjoys Zoom or showing themselves, as xxx mentioned, it takes a long time to develop them to that point that they were comfortable online and in the space and things like that.”

Museum Staff Member

Museum staff also felt that Covid had a specific impact on the project as it limited the amount of face-to-face work and engagement people were able to have with the museum spaces. There was a suggestion that this affected what they understood about the museum they were working with as they were not as familiar with it. Staff across a number of sites also felt that the project would have developed differently had there been more ongoing access to the museum space.

Covid also impacted staffing across the different sites. Staff members highlighted issues of staff being on furlough, difficulties replacing staff when they left positions, the level of interaction that staff could have with young people in the museums and the ongoing impact of some staff continuing to work from home. These all affected the project, the experience for the young people and the museums themselves.



6. Summary and recommendations

6.1 Summary

It is clear that the Living Museums project has had a positive effect on both the young people and the museums that were involved. It should be recognised that across all three of the museums, young people were able to lead and design exhibitions despite ongoing restrictions due to the impact of Covid. This would be a challenge even if the project could have run face to face for the whole period of its delivery, but it was even more complex given the restrictions.

Covid affected the number of young people who got involved in the project, reduced the amount young people could engage directly with the museum spaces, and impacted on their engagement with them when they could visit. Ultimately, it was also harder to fully engage museum staff at some points because of these factors.

The young participants have had an opportunity to develop exhibitions on topics that are relevant to them and they find interesting. These exhibitions have explored how to bring in interactive elements. They have also had a chance to emphasise the social elements of museums that they found beneficial and have had positive experiences with staff. They have had these opportunities all while increasing their confidence, knowledge and understanding.

For museums, staff have spoken about having a better understanding of the issues young people want to see covered in museums. They have had a chance to develop co-design approaches and their relationships with young people. They have also continued to identify some of the structural barriers that are there. Importantly, they have been able to demonstrate the quality of staff and the skills that are in the heritage sector and provide positive experiences for the participating young people.

However, it is also important to recognise that across all three project areas there have been challenges that had an effect on the project. These should not be seen as limiting the impact of the project as a whole, however; across all three museums, staff have used the learning to identify areas for improvement and development in engaging with children and young people. Despite the relatively small numbers involved, we believe this learning will also be widely applicable across the museum and heritage sector.

Living Museums has been involved with three museums during periods of change. We can confidently say it has positively impacted on practice, the ways staff work and hopefully stimulated a desire to continue these approaches. It is also clear that some of the museums were going through periods of restructuring while the project was delivered. This makes it hard to pinpoint the exact impact of the project, however it meant Living Museums had an opportunity to influence these developments. Museums and heritage organisations already have many of the tools to support participation, engagement and co-design. There is a willingness from staff and many already have experience of working with young people. They have interesting collections that can be used to engage people. However, greater priority needs to be given to participation and engagement work with young people.

6.2 Recommendations

Across the project we have identified a number of key learning points that we feel provide insight for future projects and across the heritage sector when engaging with young people.

1. New skills and knowledge

The young people, and staff involved have developed new skills, knowledge and understanding that will benefit them and the heritage sector as a whole.

For young people this included an increased confidence in museum spaces and in speaking to other young people. They also told us about how they now understood museums more. This is a clear positive from the project and shows the value of taking an in-depth approach to participation and engagement within heritage settings. These benefits have been seen even in a situation where face-to-face engagement was limited due to the pandemic.



Exhibition interpretation at Dumfries Museum

"I have had so much fun and feel like I have accomplished so much. If I had this much fun with this then what else could we do?"

Project Participant

Staff within the museums who engaged directly in the project have also clearly developed an increased understanding of how to work with children and young people. Staff spoke about the importance of devoting time in projects to developing relationships and taking the time to create the right atmosphere.

We also received clear evidence of how people had developed an understanding of 'where they were' in their own practice and what they still had to learn. It is clear that having an opportunity to work with external partners who deliver participation and engagement-focused work regularly has enabled them to develop their own practice, learn new techniques and think more deeply about what is possible.

These are clear positives from the project that highlight the benefits of the Living Museums approach. However, this opportunity has only been available to small numbers of young people and a limited number of museums. There needs to be further opportunities for museums to develop projects such as this which support museums to engage with children and young people in a meaningful, ongoing way, to develop staff practice and to increase understanding and appreciation of heritage and culture among young people. Ultimately this will have a longer-term benefit, and the participating young people all spoke about how they were keen to pursue more opportunities in this area.

We also believe the project has highlighted the need for a package of training and development for practitioners in the heritage sector on quality participation and engagement. This should be grounded in children's rights and provide opportunities for practical skills development.

Recommendations:



- Funding bodies in the heritage sector should continue to provide opportunities for museums to engage with children and young people on projects that are led directly by young people and allow them to share their views and experiences. These should be long-term and focused on developing sustainable and embedded approaches.
- A training and development package should be rolled out by national heritage and culture bodies to support engagement and co-design work in museums and heritage settings. (Children in Scotland was recently commissioned by Creative Scotland to deliver training in working with young people to the arts sector. This could be used as a model to develop training for the heritage and museums sector).

2. Motivation, morale and engagement

The Living Museums project has also indicated that co-design approaches can have a positive effect on staff motivation and attracting people to the sector. Staff generally reported enjoying being involved; they found it stimulating to work in new ways and try new things. Some spoke about how it had attracted them to the role when they found out the museum was using the approach.

“Doing something completely new, pushing boundaries, it was well good.”

Museum Staff Member

Young people also enjoyed getting to develop ideas and have said they are more likely to engage with the sector in future. By engaging in similar projects, the heritage sector can and will attract new people to it. It demonstrates a desire to push boundaries and try new things. This should continue.



The Stirling group's exhibition launches at Bannockburn

Recommendations:



- Organisations such as Museums and Galleries Scotland should showcase innovative practice in engaging communities in developing museum and heritage content or exhibitions. These should be shared outside the traditional heritage sector to target new audiences.
- Recruitment for roles in the museum and heritage sector should aim to actively encourage staff with a background in community engagement or participative approaches.

3. Leadership, funding and approach

This project has shown that there is a desire across the sector to engage more effectively with children and young people. There are also lots of young people who want to engage with the sector and to share their ideas.

However, for these desires to become a reality there needs to be a meaningful change in approach within the sector. Co-design projects must become fully embedded across organisational practice and the impact needs to be valued. When projects are delivered all teams should be involved from the beginning to ensure there is cross-organisational buy-in and to make sure that people are aware of plans. People must also be willing to give up space and control so that young people (and other groups) are able to develop content and shape what the museums have to offer.

This requires leadership across organisations and people to champion this work and for it to be given parity with other priorities in programming.

There also needs to be plans to embed co-design within the day-to-day practices of museums to ensure that there is a sustainable approach rather than a series of one-off engagements. This includes ensuring children and young people's views feed into strategies, restructures and planning so that their views inform more strategic work, rather than them being consulted about specific topics. One option for this would be for museums to take on an advisory group model. We also know that the idea of community programming boards is already in use in many museums. It was positive to see museums looking at this already.

There needs to be a shift in emphasis from looking to have engagement with high numbers of young people to a higher quality approach with smaller groups who have a clearer opportunity to shape the work of museums. It also means a move to seeing young people as active participants in the museum who have views that shape its work, rather than as recipients of knowledge.

Lastly, there needs to be a commitment of funding and time for staff to deliver this sort of work. It was clear from staff we worked with that they want this opportunity.

Ultimately, we believe this move towards co-design approaches will have a positive impact on the museum. It will ensure the views of young people are better reflected and in turn that other young people are more inclined to visit. We know from this project that having the chance to share what they see as more relevant content and have more of an awareness of the museum has made the participants more keen to engage with museums going forward.

It is important to reflect that children and young people have a right to engage with cultural opportunities and to be heard in matters that affect that. As Scotland progresses towards incorporation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, it will be a duty for museums to ensure young people's cultural rights are met.

Recommendations:



- All museums should be supported to develop an advisory group or board so that young people can feed into their ongoing work. The approach should be based on the context that the museum is operating in. For example it may make sense for bigger organisations to have advisory groups for museum clusters.
- All museums should ensure that the views of children and young people are embedded in the development of strategic plans, restructures and wider developments.
- Leaders in the museum sector need to push for a change in approach that moves away from KPIs focused on targets of 'numbers of young people engaged with' towards high quality, ongoing engagement.
- All organisations in the museum and heritage sector should develop an assigned leadership role with responsibility for engagement. They should ideally work across departments and be able to bring different groups together to embed participation and engagement throughout.
- Museums should be encouraged to undertake Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessments on their work to ensure they are embedding children's rights and maximising the impact of their work.

4. New ideas and new audiences

This project has highlighted that there is an interest from young people in museums changing their approach and taking on new topics, including areas such as youth employment, mental health, Black Lives Matter, the environment and gender equality.

It cannot simply be for adults to make decisions about which ideas are acceptable to be covered within heritage spaces. However, the Living Museums project has also shown the need to do this in sensitive manner. It is clear that people have different views about who and what museums are for. What is obvious is that the young people we worked with want them to tackle issues that matter to them and to not shy away from these issues.

There is a balance to be found here. It is vital to ensure young people's voices are heard. However, it is also important that museums are sensitive to their wider audience and conscious of any reputational risks. It is also important to be aware of the downsides and benefits of social media. It is clear young people see social media as a key route for engaging others, however it is also a space that can open museums up to challenge, as was the case in one of our Living Museum sites.

Museums should ensure they have a clearly stated social media policy and that all projects have a communications plan to ensure ideas are relayed clearly and appropriately. Staff also need training and support to ensure they get this right.

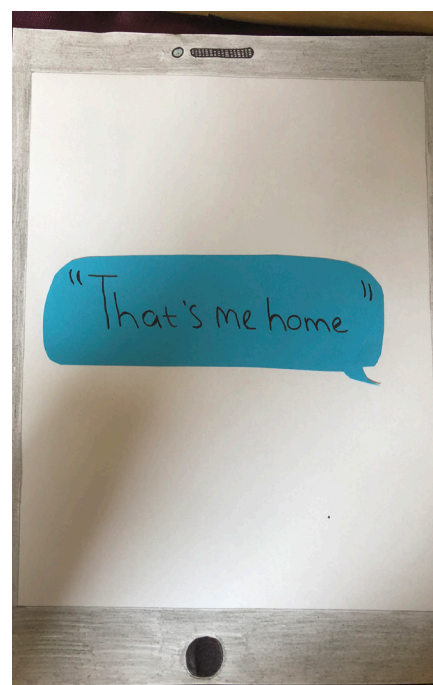
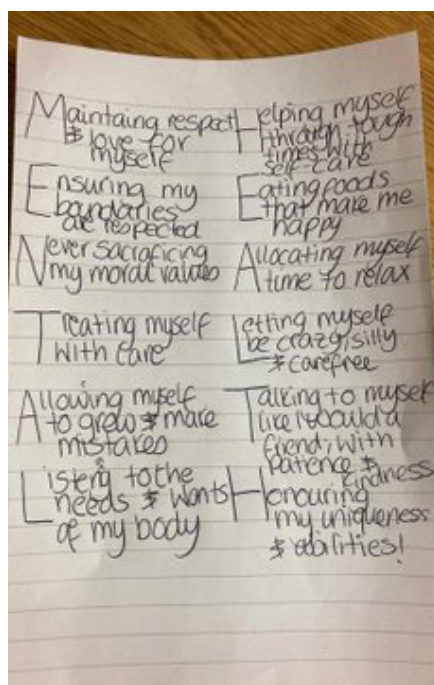
Ultimately, this project aimed to increase museums' engagement with young people aged 14-21. It is difficult to see how this could be achieved without focusing on the issues that they themselves find important.

We believe museums should take young people's ideas forward but create further spaces for discussion between different groups about topics. This could involve a series of intergenerational projects or indeed interactive elements based round co-designed exhibitions that facilitate conversations between different groups.

Recommendations:



- Museums should find ways to explore new or different, relevant issues with young people through co-design projects. These should be built into museum programmes and all relevant teams should be aware. Projects should be supported with a clear project plan and risk management strategy.
- Museums should develop and absorb interactive elements into exhibitions which encourage conversations between different groups and generations to share views and identify common ground.
- Museums should have clearly stated social media policies and staff who share content on social media should be provided with training and support to ensure content is shared in appropriate ways.



Appendix



Table 1 – Young people involved in Phase 1 National Group

Group	Number of Young People
Phase 1 National Project Group	10

Table 2 – Core members of project groups

Project Area	Number of Young People
Dumfries and Galloway	2
Perth and Kinross	10
Stirling	3
Total	15

Table 3 – Young people involved in additional project activity

Activity	Number of Young People
Phase 1 Survey	49
Dumfries and Galloway Project Survey	20
Dumfries and Galloway Storytelling Activities	7

Table 4 – Participants in pre project evaluation activity

Project Area	Young People Involved	Staff Involved	Total
Dumfries and Galloway	2	6	8
Perth and Kinross	11	4	15
Stirling	4	2	6
Total	17	12	29

Table 5 – Participants in post project evaluation activity

Project Area	Young People Involved	Staff Involved	Total
Dumfries and Galloway	2	3	5
Perth and Kinross	7	4	11
Stirling	3	3	6
Total	12	10	22

Table 6 – Total number of sessions delivered for the Living Museums Project

Project Area	Online	In Person	Total
Dumfries and Galloway	13	3	16
Perth and Kinross	12	3	15
Stirling	11	3	14
Total	36	9	45

Table 7 – Project event information

Project Area	Venue	Event Focus	Date	Attendees
Perth and Kinross	Perth Museum	Launch event for <i>Our Lockdown Journey: Facing the Unknown through Creativity</i>	1/9/2021	35
Stirling	The Battle of Bannockburn Experience	Launch event for <i>Generation Change</i>	17/8/2021	50