**SHARE Museums East Front of House Forum Meeting**

**Chelmsford Museum 11 June 2015**

**10.15 - Welcome: Ian Leonard, Visitor Services Manager, Chelmsford Museum**

**Kathy Moore, Museum Development Project Officer, SHARE Museums East**  
I work alongside Simon Floyd (SHARE Co-ordinator). Simon was unable to be with us today so I am taking his place on this occasion.

Many thanks to Linda Brooklyn for the hard work and all the arranging she has undertaken for today. This is my first Front of House network meeting and the standard of organisation is very impressive. Some of the other SHARE networks are looking at using the same model for their meetings.

Today is about reaching audiences, and engaging with them, both from the stance of the audience and the staff.

There has been a change of speaker - Chad McGitchie, Head of Visitor Teams at Whitworth/Manchester Museums is unable to be here because the Whitworth Museum has been short listed for the Art Fund Museum of the Year and he is required! Chad will be coming along to a future SHARE FOH Event.

Therefore, it is a delight and pleasure to introduce Kerith Ririe, Jaywick Martello Tower Manager, who has been developing and maintaining community involvement through public activities at the Tower.

**10.30 - Kerith Ririe, Jaywick Martello Tower Manager: Jaywick inspires!**  
  
The Jaywick Tower is about reaching and engaging local communities. It was originally conceived as a digital project but this changed as the community developed, and we learnt what they wanted from the Tower.

Jaywick Tower was built as a Napoleonic war lookout post and since then has gone through many uses before being bought by the council.  
  
**The Jaywick community**: Jaywick is the most deprived area in England and the only place in the South of England to appear in the list of top ten most deprived areas in the country. This is not how it is seen by the community, and not just the permanent community, this feeling is shared by the caravanners, the tourists, the dog walkers etc. There are also many active community groups in the locality. The community does question why it is perceived as the most deprived, due to the range of services and groups available, alongside its beach!

The Friends of Jaywick Tower were set up in 2007, constituted in 2012, and now support the council with the managing of the tower. They have a steering group and also assist with guided tours, fundraising, community led projects, events, workshops, upkeep and maintenance, visitor support services and research. Two members of the Friends sit on the steering group, helping to make decisions about its future. This helps the Tower to remain part of the community. Since 2009 the friends have been working on the historical interpretation of the Tower, making it a historical as well as an arts venue. The first thing visitors see upon entering is the children's area, emphasising the family friendly aspect.

There is a £1 entry but this is on a discretionary basis, as well as a suggestions box. This approach is bringing around 95p per visitor - far higher than expected.

Uniforms have been introduced both to assist the visitors in identifying the staff and for practicality in meeting the needs of a constantly cool environment in the building. The Friends are also hoping to get their own uniforms, similar to the staff but with the Friends logo, as this will help identify them to the public when they’re out and about in Jaywick.

Jaywick Towers hosts and organises creative workshops, living history events every 2 years, 2 series of talks a year, Easter events and November events. The Jaywick Martello Tower Fayre was set up by the Friends to raise money for the community. Every few years the fayre moves around Jaywick, hoping to bring the several communities within Jaywick together. This summer will see the 8th annual Fayre, which allows for community engagement with what's happening around them.

Some of the successes have been surprising, such as *Halloween at the Witches Tower*, an evening around Halloween with craft activities run by the friends of the Tower. Having done very simple marketing (a few posters around town) it was not expected to be a large event, but 60 attended the first year and this event continues to grow.

Creative Net holds more formal workshops through the Tower, providing adult activities during the week, and those for children during the holidays. They have been reacting to what the community asks for, e.g. the children’s activities to continue throughout the holidays, rather than a group of four sessions the first week with nothing after that.

Over the summer sessions are held every Tuesday morning, with a wide range of activities.  
They also undertake outreach activities and have worked with local archives to create a resource for teachers. Creative Net ran a community project for the Tower’s 200th anniversary by researching the history of the area - even before Jaywick was built. The purpose was to establish a sense of community pride, as the area has a long history that is often forgotten (Jaywick was not built until 1920s).

The Friends have started applying for small funding, heritage funding, district council funding and Essex county council funding, and are also researching and selecting merchandise for the shop. Their current project is about WW1, digitising letters and postcards sent from the trenches to Tendring, the area in which Jaywick is located. The Friends are to receive specific training for this project, facilitated by funding received. This project is completely organised and driven by the Friends.  
Other activities include funding *Jaywick for Happiness*, a project placing old photos of Jaywick within the streets around the town. This initiative has enabled the community to see what their town used to be like.  
The Friends are further supported with training e.g. visitor services, how to use archives.

**JAYWICK INSPIRES**: The Tower opened to the public 10 years ago with the key objective of helping inspire the community and enable them to take real pride in where they live. The local residents were recently surveyed about the Tower, producing the following information:

*96% of residents think the Tower can help to improve the town’s reputation.*

*How? Holding events, promoting Jaywick, providing good news stories about Jaywick, providing training for local people, giving the local community a voice.  
88.6% thought the Tower can bring the communities together  
86.2% wanted to help the Tower with its activities*  
It might look like a tourist attraction but it's so much more than that, it involves the local communities in its programme and by doing so, it brings them together.  
The Tower has 1 full time staff, 2 freelancers, 14 friends and 20 volunteers.  
  
Jaywick Tower may be near a lot of hard to reach community groups, but the way to connect with them is the same as anywhere: go out into the community, show your face, build trust - people need to get to know you in order to trust and accept you. Make sure you build relationships with other groups in the community. Have conversations with people, it’s not always necessary to arrange a formal meeting - a chat can be just as, if not more, helpful. The key is building on what has proved successful and listening to what people want.

**Statistics**

2014: 7000 visitors: there are peaks with living history events.

1100 visitors to May 2015.  
  
**11.15 - Sana Khan, SOCL Trainee, Cultural cooperation: reflecting diverse communities in the workplace**  
  
Strengthening Our Common Life (SOCL) is delivered by Cultural Cooperation, London, with HLF funding, and its trainees are based at historical and cultural venues around the country.

There is a large focus in the sector around the diversity debate at the moment, particularly with regards to the Muslim community, as it's only linked by faith, whereas background and culture can be very diverse. The bonus of having representatives from different communities is that they bring in those who would not typically visit, as well as further diversifying the workforce.

Sana asked the forum to discuss the following topics and feed back:

* **Definitions of diverse communities?** Gender, ethnicity, sexuality, economic/socio-economic background, disability, age.
* **A single person can represent more than one community**. Diversity is not necessarily obvious/visible. All communities are diverse, but linked, by definition.
* **How can we provide a platform for engagement from diverse communities**? Communication, building trust and relationships

Sana is based at the University of Cambridge Museum of Zoology, and is involved in running workshops, including initiating and confirming bookings, delivering the sessions and evaluating the sessions. She has been working especially with a local home education group (CHEMS - Cambridge Home Education Muslims & Friends).

New audiences have provided feedback for the new displays which will be available to the general public in mid to late 2016. There are so many university societies that they provide useful resource with regard to diversity. These societies are also being consulted regarding the displays and the museum has invited them in to give feedback too.

The SOCL traineeship also involves working with older groups and school children, including SEN visitors. The Museum is now looking at developing workshops for the hearing and sight impaired.  
  
**11.45 - Keynote Speaker: John Orna-Ornstein, Director of Museums, Arts Council England: Attracting Wider Communities.**

Yesterday was a day of museums, starting with a meeting with the Director of UCL museums, which was spent looking at, trying and testing things out there.

This was followed by London Transport Museum, involving a behind the scenes tour of a closed tube station just above the northern line - a very different heritage experience!

The Jewish museum was the next visit, where a talk from a holocaust survivor held a group of 50 teenagers rapt. It was the context as well as the content that gripped their imaginations.  
Finally, an evening event at the British museum, a complete contrast! But all museums, large or small, have the potential for a large impact.

Museums should be all about diversity and engagement. Our museums contain the most diverse collections, often not for the most edifying reasons, but this has given us an unparalleled breadth of cultural artefacts and other items. This allows museums to tackle wide ranging issues and topics. The UK is incredibly diverse itself. It is multi ethnic, multi-hued, providing an incredibly wide audience, as well as visitors from around the world and the cultures they represent.

For museums to be at their best, they must respond to this variety of audiences, using their diverse collections, and particularly, a diverse workforce. The museum audience is growing, in numbers as well as diversity, and the workforce should reflect this change.  
At the British Museum, the stats have not shifted on socio-economics for a long time. A wide ranging survey has shown that UK museums are still serving the same audiences as they were 20 years ago.  
Lots of museums are at least partly dependant on local authority funding/public funded. This surely gives museums a duty to serve the public, in all its diversity. They need to serve their customer base, attracting the widest range of audiences.

The current challenge for local authority funding is that it is continuing to decrease. Local authorities must react to this change by making themselves, and the organisations they fund, indispensable to their community.

**Why aren't audiences as diverse as we'd like?**

There is some debate as to the benefit of charging for entry versus free entry. It's not that simple, and it's not the biggest barrier to entry. If what the museum is offering is relevant and interesting to the audience, they will come and they will pay. This also helps museums gather more information about their audiences.

**Museums need to change more than they ever have before.**  
They need to develop new ways of interacting with their customers. The majority of museums’ collections do not reflect their communities, purely due to the period in which the collection was established.  
The national museum in Wales, despite being focused on dealing with child poverty, built new galleries that were incredibly similar to those built decades before. The challenge is having that high end finish but linking it very strongly to the local community.

It's about the detail, being a great place to visit, for the broadest range of visitors. It's the museums that have shifted their audiences the most that have been working on these details for a long time.  
If we're serious about attracting diverse communities, our museums need to reflect what those communities want.  
  
**12.20 - Summing up the morning: Kate Carreno, Assistant Director, Central Services, Fitzwilliam Museum and University of Cambridge museums.**  
  
This forum is a great example of what Front of House services can be, able to cope with the unexpected as well as the everyday, something they need to be in order to deal with a wide variety of audiences.  
Congratulations to Kerith for her presentations, showing us a project that has transformed a building once designed to repel people into one that is now working with its community, and developing links between all areas of the community, through arts and culture.  
Sana spoke to us about her traineeship and posed challenging questions, about platforms and levers for engaging wide ranges of audiences and the communities they cover. She has made us think about how we engage the local Muslim community, as a large majority are home schooling their children. This was definitely about building relationships through personal conversations.  
John was very honest about museums still having a long way to go, we may be improving on the ethnic front but it's the socio-economic stats that really need to be pushed. One of the beneficial by-products of charging is the amount of data collected about the audience, which provides information about the diversity of the audience. Museums need to look at their staff and their outreach, but it's mostly about targeting the museums’ offer to the local community, which Kerith has done especially well in Jaywick.  
  
**1.30pm - Shelley Mannion, Senior Content Producer, British Museum: What audiences do, and what they think they do.**  
  
Who are our (British Museum) visitors?  
-Once in a lifetime visitors  
-Non-English speakers  
-Tourists  
-Increasingly, Chinese speaking  
  
My current task is to evaluate the audio guide and redesign it. Current marketing segmentation surveys report results based solely on motivation rather than behaviour, and are rarely verified by observation or data. This needs to change in order to create better mobile guides.  
  
By assigning visitors to various categories for behaviour in galleries, the team working on the guide are better able to design it to match behaviours:  
Browser  
Follower  
Completist (visitors that look at and read everything)  
Single-object visitor  
  
The process of working on the new multimedia guide:  
-5 week Agile project  
-Discovery  
-Questions: is there an audio guide type of person?  
-Can we increase uptake rate?

Other museums and similar organisations have been asked about their audio guides, past evaluations have been looked over, sales statistics, surveys and interviews used as well as sample prototyping in order to develop the new guides.  
Several subjects were covered on the evaluations (using scales) as to why people took/didn't take a guide, including their own perception of the amount of time they had, their confidence, authority (external, e.g. the museum, versus self), tools (how likely people are to carry things with them, i.e. phone, camera, guidebook, backpack, selfie stick etc.), movement (through the museum, structured versus unstructured). And aim, weak versus strong, crossed with specific versus loose.  
By monitoring where in the museum visitors move from having a specific aim to another allows the positioning of an audio guide retail desk at ideal locations throughout the museum, rather than at only one point.  
  
**Visitor strategies for their visits, with guides.**-74% of guide users are first timers  
-People spend more than 2.5 hours  
-Most see 21-50 objects  
-With another adult  
-Not a product for locals (this allows for targeting of the content, and planning uptake increases)  
  
Visitor behaviour:  
-In the UK, people turn left  
-Multiple maps cause confusion  
-Impact of staff interaction  
-Heavy use of map plinths (they like the plinths with pictures)  
  
The visitor services are proving very useful when trying to verify/disprove these findings as they are the eyes and ears of the museum.  
Guide users behaviour: code hunting, conscientious consumption, tour following, casual use  
  
Say versus do.  
35% self-report following the tour  
10% were observed taking the tour  
  
Hypotheses about tours on mobile guides:  
Functions as a teaser (a quick overview of the collection)  
High dropout rate  
Switching between keypad and tour  
  
Temporary exhibition guides  
These are high cost and resource intensive without much return so the BM is looking at improving this and the value they add to the temporary exhibits, as well as how they influence visitor flow. Currently there two different formats being tested in two different exhibitions, to analyse the effects each has, using analytics built into the software to monitor usage, how long people use the guides, what don't people like, which options are the preferred etc.  
  
Here is a useful technique, the problem interview, for exploring whether a product idea is viable. E.g. solving commuting problems:  
- describe 3 problems you had getting to work today  
- which was the most serious?  
- would you pay someone to solve it?  
  
“Design like you're right, listen like you're wrong, test like you're curious.” - Jim Voorhies  
  
The focus on the mobile guides at the British Museum is about creating products that are engaging for visitors, improve their experience and encourage them to return.  
  
**2.15 - Ariadne Henry, Communities, Arts and Recreation, Cambridge City Council: Providing the Community Voice**  
  
Exhibitions that are relevant to a specific culture are most likely to attract visitors from that culture. This often proves useful with minority groups, and the 'hard to reach' groups, as they are less likely to visit museums, but would be more likely to attend if there was an exhibition that was relevant to them.

* Several communities and their groups around Cambridge have been invited to the museums, and then to work on projects that come out of ideas that have been brought up in the sessions. e.g. looking at women and head coverings, around the world, in many different cultures. There is a large variance within these groups as well as Asian women’s groups.  
    
  A large proportion of the LBGT community consider themselves to have mental health difficulties, even if not diagnosed. This may be due to discrimination, especially as many won't go out at certain times, to certain places because they are afraid of being attacked. A scheme has been put in place that encourage organisations to sign up and thus sending signals that their organisation is a safe space for those people to come, a place away from whatever is going on around them. Museums in particular are being encouraged to sign up to this initiative, as museums provide a space for visitors to escape from the world around them.  
    
  Cambridge City council have an anti-poverty strategy and part of this is working on opening up the museums to people who would not normally go. A piece of research has been completed recently looking in particular at women, men, disabled people and BAME groups, comparing the places people go and where they feel safe.  
    
  The key to working with hard to reach groups is maintaining relationships, creating trust, allowing people to discover that museums are a safe place for them to go, and building on that. Dedicated volunteer posts for specific communities have proved beneficial, as the volunteers become comfortable with the museums and so bring others from their community into the museum - and of course, offering something to them always helps.  
    
  **3pm - News Roundup with Kathy Moore, SHARE Museums East**  
  The day has been very enjoyable, and gone impressively well.  
  The next meeting will be at Sainsbury centre in Norwich, date to be confined soon. It will be a joint meeting, held with the SHARE retail forum and the Association for Cultural Enterprises.  
  Just to note, today has been filmed and will be going on the SHARE website, in particular Sana's talk as well as the responses from the group.

**News from SHARE**

* The Volunteer Awards ceremony was held on 4th June 2015 at the Athenaeum, Bury St Edmunds. Annette French, the newly appointed manager of SHARE Training East was in attendance. As a result of this successful event, SHARE will be looking for sponsorship in order to host future Volunteer Award Ceremonies.
* SHARE will be reviewing how it supports its networks in the near future. This network will remain funded but the members of the team supporting it may change.
* The Mystery Shopper scheme, a collaboration between museum of London, University of Cambridge Museums and SHARE is progressing well. 18 museums are signed up, on a reciprocal visit basis, and the process includes 93 questions on the audit survey. The data is starting into come back in from the first round of visits.
* The Front of House network, with money from SHARE, sponsored a pilot of 5 places for a targeted NVQ for Front of House Museums staff with Cambridge Regional College. This scheme has been successfully completed and involved staff from Peterborough (Vivacity) and Ely museums.
* SHARE is in the midst of preparing the training calendar, which will be launched early September. Please do keep the ideas for potential training sessions coming, it may not be possible to get them in the calendar for this coming year but ideas from the forum are always helpful.
* Following a request for front of house training, a very successful session was held in April at Ely Museum led by the Visitor Experience Manager, Natural History Museum, London who introduced the idea of VESTs, a program through which back of house staff donate 90 minutes of their time a month to the Front of House team, which comes in very handy for staffing events.  
    
  As ever, hot topic suggestions please!