

Museum in the Park Manifesto

Our vision is to provide a museum service that encourages everyone who lives, works or visits the Stroud District to be proud of its past, present and future.

To deliver the manifesto our engagement with people is formed of interactions, audience involvement and the Five Ways to Well-Being¹

Change Lives Enrich people's lives	Spiritual	Connect Give
Create a sense of place Be passionate Be inspirational ;	Emotional	Be Active Take Notice Connect
Be conversational Be imaginative in our approach Strive for quality and integrity Provide learning opportunities	Intellectual	Take Notice Keep Learning Give
Be welcoming and reach out Share knowledge and resources Facilitate relationships, understanding and trust	Social	Connect Be Active Keep Learning Give



¹ The Five Ways to Wellbeing were created by nef (the new economics foundation) for Foresight, the UK government's futures think-tank, as part of the Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing. Launched in 2008.

The Context

The Museum in the Park, as the principle premises of Stroud District (Cowle) Museum Service, is set in the beautiful grounds of Stratford Park in Stroud, Gloucestershire. Situated in a Grade II listed 17th Century wool merchant's house; our collection tells the fascinating story of the Stroud District's rich and diverse history. With over 4,000 objects on display, including dinosaur bones, historical paintings and even one of the world's first lawnmowers, there is something to spark the interest of all of our visitors!

In addition to the main displays in the house, there is a modern extension which houses a small gift shop and café area, alongside a purpose-built art gallery showing a varied programme of exhibitions. Behind this is Stroud's 'secret garden' where the original walled garden has been transformed into an all-year offer of planting, interest, tranquillity, a place to relax along with a contemporary learning building for schools, talks and workshops.

The museum service is provided by means of a partnership between Stroud District Council and the Stroud District (Cowle) Museum Trust (a registered charity). The Council provide the operational management and funding for the service and the Trust are the legal guardians of the collections. Collections not on display are securely held in off-site locations and facilitated access is possible.

The museum has gone from strength to strength making the most of the venue and unique position that the museum holds within the local community. A number of events take place in and around the museum – purely because of the atmosphere and setting. The museum has a beautifully diverse collection which provides a firm foundation to work with those external to the museum in delivering a diverse range of learning opportunities. There are many examples that have shown our ability to deliver significant projects and draw in substantial funding to the District – with a clear focus on community benefits.

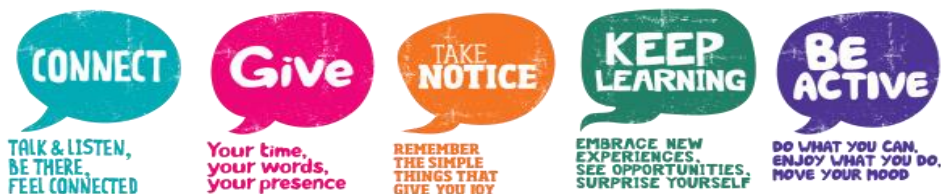
The museum is uniquely positioned in the District to work with partners, and take action ourselves, to address areas such as health and wellbeing, the climate emergency and social inequality.

The museum is much loved by the community with visitor figures that are high for a museum of this size. A frequent remark that is made is 'how lucky we are to have such a wonderful museum' – this needs further exploration, but to some it is that sense of pride about 'their place'. There is however a need to connect with some parts of the community – and to acknowledge that the dynamics of society are changing; to raise our profile – both with existing and future audiences; to develop new working relationships, embrace diversity and ensure the museum maintains its position as a cultural beacon for people of the District.

The museum is many things to many people – a museum with a fascinating social history collection, a place for events and exhibitions, a place for learning, a place to work and volunteer, a cultural beacon, a tourist destination, a heritage site, a place for rest and reflection, a safe and trusted space – the list goes on. Through our vision the museum creates a sense of place helping communities to connect, be active, take notice, learn and give – improving their well-being.

How we work to deliver the vision:

1. Being proud of an area can start with the most basic of approaches, being welcoming, sharing, facilitating and above all building trust. These can help improve quality of life and wellbeing. The collection and setting is well placed to deliver these social aspects. This includes reaching out to audiences who do not currently use or feel the museum is for them. We can achieve this by working with partner community organisations.
2. By bringing people together we can encourage conversation and fire the imagination, this being important to well-being, the World Health Organisation state that “without mental health there can be no true physical health”². Our work will strive for a community focussed offer that provides learning opportunities that are built on quality and integrity. We use engagement, learning and collections to bring people together. We will be mindful of our own cultural experiences and of others we work with to ensure activities are truly inclusive.
3. Pride in an area can mean different things to different people. Ultimately, we want everyone to feel a sense of place and be passionate about the District and be proud to talk about it. We can be an inspirational focal point and help people to understand and learn about the District, where it has been, where it is now and where it is going, including the challenges. For example, climate change; we can work to reduce our footprint whilst supporting work by other organisations to promote a more sustainable way of life. This enables people to contribute to creating that inspirational place. We encourage participation in delivery of the public programme to an increasingly diverse audience.
4. Often pride is associated with being something you achieve yourself or with others – this fits with a truly community based museum. We want people to take pride in what they discover and explore. We want communities to collectively take pride in their area and know the museum plays a role in that pride and their well-being. We provide for individual and communal opportunities that bring people from different backgrounds together. We must continue best practice and understanding of equalities and recognise when we are not best placed to lead but to support or facilitate.
5. The Five Ways to Well-Being provides a relevant framework for our work and we will continue to ensure these are key principles of our working practice. We allow people to:



6. The Stroud District is a proud area, full of people who want to make it a better place to live, work and visit, ultimately enriching the lives of people or even changing lives. The Museum is a cultural beacon for this proud District.

Kevin Ward, Museum Development Manager; v2.0 – February 2022

² Dr Brock Chisholm, the first Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), was a psychiatrist and shepherded the notion that mental and physical health were intimately linked.