



EXPLORING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN MUSEUM CONTEXTS A PILOT PROJECT

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WHAT IS ICOMOS INTERNATIONAL?

- ICOMOS is the International Council on Monuments and Sites, a non-governmental global membership organisation that works for the conservation, protection and promotion of cultural heritage places and intangible cultural heritage.
- It is organised through 110 national committees and has 10,100 individual members in 153 countries
- Its members contribute to improving the preservation of heritage through developing the standards and techniques for each type of cultural heritage property: buildings, historic cities, cultural landscapes and archaeological sites
- Its International Scientific Committees (including the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee), the technical bodies of ICOMOS, are responsible for: international exchange of scientific information, collaboration on major international projects, research and development of conservation theories, practice guidelines, training and charters concerned with encouraging and adopting international best practice
- It is an adviser to UNESCO and works closely with international agencies such as the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

ICOMOS-UK

is the national branch of ICOMOS based in London and offers its membership the following:

- A gateway to connect with an international network of interdisciplinary cultural heritage professionals and conservation practices as set out above
- A forum for all involved in the conservation of monuments and cultural heritage sites in the UK: it facilitates contact between heritage and conservation professionals on specialist and general issues in the UK and abroad

ICOMOS-UK INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE

- It is one of the eight sub-committees at ICOMOS-UK and mirrors the International Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICICH) at ICOMOS, Paris
- It is the only committee in the UK involved in giving voice to all types of intangible cultural practices.
- It brings together bearer communities, civil society, ICH NGOs and professionals engaged in the protection, revival, and promotion of intangible culture.
- Further details are provided in section five of this report.



Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee ICOMOS UK
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FOREWORD



CLARA AROKIASAMY OBE

**CHAIR AND FOUNDER MEMBER
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE
COMMITTEE**

On behalf of ICOMOS-UK Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee (ICHC), I am pleased to present this report of the pilot project Exploring Intangible Cultural Heritage in Museum Contexts. It is a collaborative developmental initiative between the ICHC and Arts Council England (ACE). The Report demonstrates the need for involvement of ICH practicing communities, and of artists as intermediaries between the diverse groups of bearers and cultural organisations, in order to forge an equitable tripartite curation that can make collections and museum spaces alive and relevant to contemporary society.

It also shows why, as a consequence, museums could benefit from reviewing and recasting their physical and practical boundaries. Bearer communities are guardians of our rich and diverse cultural traditions, collective memories, history, stories and rites and ritual practices.

The framework for the project was based on UNESCO's 2003 *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* – an international standard-setting instrument, which provides definitions of ICH for the safeguarding of intangible culture and the role of bearer communities. The interest in translating the 2003 Convention into practice is gaining momentum among the international museum community beyond the 178 countries which have ratified the Convention. The UK is not a signatory but that has not prevented museums here from wanting to explore the integration of ICH into collection management and stewardship in order to keep abreast of good practice and to participate in discussions concerning ICH. Also, more practical examples are needed to match the work being undertaken in developing theoretical contexts.

Exploring Intangible Cultural Heritage in Museum Contexts is an exemplar in this regard.

The ICHC is the only organisation in the UK that gives voice to all categories of ICH practices as laid out in the 2003 Convention.

Four museums, Hastings Museum & Art Gallery, Weald and Downland Living Museum, Museum of Cambridge, and Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery, rose to the challenge and volunteered to be part of the pilot. A bespoke methodology comprising two layers of processes were used to gauge museums' level of awareness and knowledge of ICH, test the use of ICH as an interpretative tool, explore the role of artists as intermediaries to facilitate interactions between the practicing communities and museums, and establish what types of synergies and dynamics the three-way relationship could yield in curating collections in the museums and those held by the bearer communities.



The pilot project's key outcomes exceeded expectations and were far reaching. In particular, it developed an approach to interpretation that involved the merging of different types of curatorial skills emanating from museums and from the art forms and living heritage practiced in community settings. This could empower bearers to lead on the interpretation of collections whether held in the museum or in the community and create a joint ownership of collections which laid claim to the museum space in the process. Additionally, during the process the museum confines were expanded to include the community cultural spaces in the surrounding landscape which generated new ways of engaging with an untapped source of audience – ICH communities. Above all the project has provided a robust methodology for the integration of ICH into future museum practices.

I would like to thank the museums, the artists and the bearer communities who showed a tremendous amount of commitment and goodwill in making this project a success. I would like to thank ACE for its proactive funding of this developmental initiative and Michael Cooke, Relationship Manager and project lead for ACE, for his support.

The project will be showcased at ICOMOS-UK's ICH Committee's next conference planned for the 23rd of March 2019 focusing on safeguarding ICH - the passing on of our diverse living heritages to future generations.

STATEMENT FROM ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



HEDLEY SWAIN,
AREA DIRECTOR SOUTH EAST
ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Although Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) has achieved global importance, having been enshrined in a UNESCO convention, it remains a relatively new field for the UK. And so, it is with immense pleasure that Arts Council England has been able to support ICOMOS-UK's work to develop a framework of best practice for museums in this country.

The museum sector has become increasingly aware of ICH, recognising its importance and potential. However, this has also highlighted that we are lacking the methodology to translate the principles and the language of the 2003

UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage into policy and everyday practice.

This project was designed to give museums an opportunity to explore the parameters of the Convention and to integrate ICH into their policies, strategies and practice. It also provided the Arts Council an opportunity to observe and better understand this important concept. We've seen what it could mean for our own policies, and the implications it could have for collections management and stewardship, and ultimately for our practice and standards.

In addition, the project offered a further opportunity to observe the possibilities for synergies between curatorial practice and the performing and the visual arts. The work also highlighted creative new ways for museums to engage with communities and to facilitate a tripartite relationship between artistic activity, collections development, and community engagement.

We were pleased to collaborate with ICOMOS-UK's ICH Committee to create a body of work that will serve as reference point for further museums work. We specifically chose a range of smaller and medium-sized museums across the South East area whose collections had links to particular ICH Domains and which afforded artists freedom of interpretation and form. The aim was to create feasible case studies whose documentation of the process was just as important as the end-product.

We welcome the ICHC's expert guidance and astute project management and the determination and hard work of all the project's participants in delivering a complex project and putting together this publication. It will serve as a permanent guide for future activity, as well as a testament to the work of all those involved.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

DEFINITION OF ICH

Through the development of declarations and several binding international instruments, UNESCO has set standards in four core areas relating to culture: cultural and natural heritage, moveable cultural property, intangible cultural heritage and contemporary creativity. The 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter referred to as the “2003 Convention”), which came into force in 2006, is one such instrument.

Article 2 of the Convention defines intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the following terms, with six criteria indicated by highlighted numbers (inserted by the author of this report for ease of reference):

The ‘intangible cultural heritage’ means **(1)** the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, **(2)** transmitted from

generation to generation, **(3)** is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and **(4)** provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, **(5)** thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is **(6)** compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.

Article 2.2 of the Convention categorises ICH into the following five Domains or Specialisms:

- “(a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;;
- (b) performing arts;
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- (e) traditional craftsmanship.”

Each Domain comprises a wide range of ICH elements or genres and examples are listed in each of the case studies in section six. There are no strict boundaries between the Domains. Often, they overlap.

Article 2.3 of the Convention defines safeguarding as:

“... measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage”.



A key tenet of the 2003 Convention is that ICH takes a **bottom-up approach**. In other words, the bearer communities decide what should be revived and/or safeguarded.

Although the UK is a State Party of UNESCO and has ratified a number of its other Conventions, it has yet to ratify the 2003 Convention.

ICOMOS-UK INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE

ICOMOS-UK's Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee (ICHC) was launched in November 2012 on the basis of evidence gathered from a roundtable meeting in February of the same year. It is the only organisation in the UK which takes a holistic approach to the safeguarding and promotion of intangible culture in the UK. Its membership to date has included representatives from a variety of organisations which are either involved in the safeguarding and promotion of particular Domains and genres or wish to learn more about ICH in order to enhance their work or services they provide. These organisations include:

- Arts Council England (ACE)
- Counterpoints Arts (CA)
- English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS)
- Heritage Crafts Association (HCA)
- Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)
- Museum of English Rural Life (MERL)
- Museum of London (MoL)
- Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI)
- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (RBGK)
- The Folklore Society (TFS)

- The Society for Storytelling (SfS)
- The Women's Library (TWL)
- Universal Zulu Nation (for Hip Hop Art) (UZN)

The committee's work is guided by definitions and guidelines for practice set out in the 2003 Convention. However, committee members are mindful that UNESCO's definition may not include all ICH traditions found in the United Kingdom (UK) because the 2003 Convention is relatively new and the understanding of ICH and implications of the operating directives are constantly evolving in response to the bearer communities' feedback in the 178 State Parties which have ratified the Convention. Also, as the UK is not a signatory to the Convention, it therefore has not had the opportunity to feedback on UK's diverse ICH to inform and influence direction on definitions and directives. Consequently, ICOMOS-UK's Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee has sought to be open to new and/or different thinking in this regard, and, more importantly, to allow the 'bearers' (who are also referred to as 'practising communities') to define their living traditions as they see appropriate until a decision is made by the UK on ratification of the 2003 Convention.

The key purpose of the committee is: "to create an awareness and understanding of the 2003 UNESCO Convention and ICH Guidelines among ICOMOS-UK and its membership, heritage partners engaged directly or indirectly in the understanding and safeguarding and promotion of heritage across the UK."

The committee meets four times a year and works to a three-year strategy and an annual work programme. The ICHC has undertaken a significant amount of work since it was established. However, two achievements in particular are worthy of mention for their critical role in raising awareness of ICH in the UK.

First was the successful national conference held at the Museum of Docklands in London in September 2014 and supported by ACE, MoL and the RAI. The event was the first of its kind to focus exclusively on ICH in the UK. It combined theoretical contexts with practical examples aimed at raising awareness of the different types of ICH, both rural and urban, as practised by the UK's culturally diverse groups of people. It was a seminal event in bringing together many of the ICH practising individuals and NGOs representing the various bearer communities – often working in isolation – a range of heritage agencies and practitioners, academics, and funders to share and explore definitions, key issues and challenges relating to the safeguarding and transmission of living cultural expressions to future generations.



Feedback from the conference revealed strong support for more similar events targeted at:

- raising awareness among local communities
- an in-depth exploration of the five Domains in order to properly understand definitions
- safeguarding and transmission
- strengthening museums' knowledge of ICH associated with objects and collections and their local bearer communities.

The conference has helped to catalyse co-ordinated working between the various stakeholders and to generate specific activities. These have included the Heritage Lottery Fund's roundtable meeting on ICH in 2014 and its subsequent literature review and stakeholder interviews by a consultant in 2016 and EFDSS's "Musicians in Museums" (an artist in residence project) which involves "exploring creative links between the tangible culture and history of the museum's collections and artefacts and the intangible culture and history of folk songs and tune" starting in 2017. The conference also placed the issue on conservation and museum agendas.

In September 2016 the ICHC secured £15,000 development funding from ACE to deliver its second achievement: a pilot project entitled "Exploring Intangible Cultural Heritage in Museum Contexts" in South East England, carried out between

October 2016 and July 2017. This collaborative project was a response to the two organisations' complementary needs. ICOMOS-UK was looking for project opportunities (following feedback received at the conference) to further awareness and practice of ICH, while at the same time, ACE was trying to identify an opportunity to develop a methodology for interpreting museum collections and audience engagement through the use of ICH.

The following sections in this report set out the methodology, project objectives, case studies and lessons learned from the projects implemented by four museums and next steps.

'EXPLORING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN MUSEUM CONTEXTS' PILOT PROJECT

TYPES OF METHODOLOGY

There were two layers of methodology used in the development and implementation of the project – an overarching layer for the whole project and a sub-set for the museums. ACE was consulted on formulating the methodology for the overarching layer and the processes comprised the following:

- producing a justification for such a developmental project
- identification and agreement on a set of objectives as benchmarks for measuring outputs and outcomes and to guide the implementation of the project

- identification of criteria for selection of museums to participate in the project
- the production of an Implementation Plan (IP) by ICOMOS-UK as a tool for participating museums for implementing their local museum projects
- an independent evaluation to review of output and impact and lessons learned

The second layer of the methodology were developed in consultation with the participating museums and was made up of the following:

- developing criteria and specifications for the selection/commissioning of artists
- a desk research by artists in conjunction with the museums on local ICH and genres and their bearer communities that matched the Domain allocated to them
- a review of the IP with ICOMOS-UK to suit the museums and local bearer communities' needs.

The museums and artists identified the following processes

- a review of museums' collections to identify appropriate objects associated with the Domain allocated
- semi-structured interviews and focus groups with bearer communities to identify genres for exploration, and the matching of collections with the bearers ICH and interpretation
- a review of impact

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The five key objectives of the project were to:

- (i) facilitate museums' exploration of the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage as defined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage
- (ii) explore intangible elements in museum collections and identify how these new dimensions could be used as a catalyst for audience engagement and participation
- (iii) facilitate interaction and collaboration between specialist ICH communities of interest, curatorial staff and arts practitioners in discovering and documenting ICH elements in museum collections
- (iv) explore appropriate methodology for the use of ICH as a means to promote wider community engagement and participation
- (v) facilitate sustainable relationships between museums and existing ICH communities of interest and practice.

ICOMOS-UK, as the grant recipient, was responsible for:

- overall project management and delivery to meet objectives set out in the grant application on time, to high quality standards and within budget. This included a programme of evaluation and publishing a summary report

- ensuring a collaborative process between ICOMOS-UK, participating museums, artists, local ICH communities and relevant local/regional/national NGOs
- providing a bespoke common framework for the preparation and implementation of workshops with room for variations in response to the ICH Domain selected for use by each museum
- ensuring that three rural and two urban (city/town/seaside town) museums would participate in the project
- enabling each museum to demonstrate the evolved and/or evolving nature of ICH/living heritage.

The museums involved were expected to:

- link collections to past and present ICH practices in the community
- raise awareness among museum staff and the community of ICH attached to collections and the potential to use it to engage with wide-ranging audiences
- work with an artist to facilitate community curating of ICH and participation in workshops
- and be willing to provide space for meetings and hold workshops in their premises or in community venues.

PROJECT PROCESSES

The processes used for this project can be grouped into six stages: selection of museums, initiation, development, implementation, evaluation and dissemination.

STAGE ONE: SELECTION OF MUSEUMS FOR PARTICIPATION

The funding was originally for five workshops – one per museum. Two key criteria underpinned the selection of museums: overall: they should comprise a mix of small to medium sized urban and rural institutions diverse in characteristics and which were likely to hold collections reflecting local communities, and each should be allocated a Domain by ICOMOS-UK rather than selecting its own. The latter was considered necessary to prevent museums selecting the same Domain and crucially it was a way to test out all five Domains listed in the 2003 Convention. Though different in characteristics, the final sample comprised one rural and three urban museums, Museum of Cambridge was the only small museum. It was difficult to identify smaller rural museums with sufficient capacity to take part in the project within a short timeframe; also, the limited project funding could not be extended to deliver detailed capacity building to enable them to undertake the quantity and quality of work required for the project. Two of ACE's Relationship Managers in the South East region worked with ICOMOS-UK's Project Manager (PM) on the matching of museums and their collections with Domains.

In total, directors from seven museums were invited to participate in the pilot project, five in October 2016 and a further two in January 2017. All were enthusiastic but two from the first tranche eventually declined due to ongoing major internal organisational changes. They were replaced by two other museums in January 2017. MERL, which was undertaking a separate ACE-funded ICH project relating to the Domain of 'traditional craftsmanship', could not implement a workshop within the ICOMOS-UK project's time frame. Consequently, only four of the Domains were tested in four different geographical locations. MERL reported on its project separately.

Figure 1 below provides details on museums, Domains and elements/genres, and start and finish dates. The timeframe for implementation was determined by the funding agreement with ACE. The participants were given approximately six to seven months to develop and deliver a project. Given the newness of the topic

and the short notice, museums found the original completion date of March 2017 challenging, resulting in a small slippage.

STAGE TWO: INITIATION

Each museum was issued with a bespoke Implementation Plan developed by ICOMOS-UK's PM as guidance for developing its individual project. The IP comprised background information, project objectives, roles and responsibilities of ICOMOS-UK and the museums, process/methods, format, content, timeline, and finance. As it was a pilot project, this broad, common approach to development and implementation was considered necessary for maintaining a degree of consistency in terms of design, delivery and evaluation; but it allowed room for jointly agreed variations between ICOMOS-UK and the museum to accommodate local need as and when appropriate.

The IP formed the basis for discussion at the first planning meeting with each of the participating museums. Once the content – including any revisions – was agreed, the document became a contractual agreement to measure progress and achievements. The PM's meeting with each museum was attended by the director or a trustee, a senior curator and, where available, education or outreach or development staff. Extensive discussions encompassed the definition of ICH, the allocated Domain and examples of genres within it, local cultural traditions and the practising communities and civil society engaged in their safeguarding, the collections within the museum, and the landscape around it which sometimes took in neighbouring towns and villages.

Museum	DOMAIN EXPLORED	GENRE/ACTIVITY	START AND END DATES
Hastings Museum and Art Gallery	Social practices, rituals and festive events	Visual Art and Oral History	10/2016 - 06/2017 (7 months)
Weald and Downland Living Museum	Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe (song)	Singing	01/2016-05/2017 (7 months)
Museum of Cambridge (formerly Cambridge & County Folk Museum)	Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage	Poetry	01/2017 - 06/2017 (6 months)
Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery (Vivacity)	Performing arts	Singing	01/2017 - 07/2017 (7 months)

Figure 1. Domains allocated to participating museums, the genre/activity selected by museums, and time frame for start and end of projects

A project lead for the museum was identified and the museum was responsible for recruiting a local artist and designing a workshop, with the assurance that ICOMOS-UK's PM could be called on for support and advice whenever necessary. This offer was taken up by all participants. The PM provided advice and guidance in particular on concepts of ICH, commissioning of artists, and other enquiries, and acted as a sounding board, at regular intervals, throughout the life of the project.

STAGE THREE: DEVELOPMENT

A key objective of the project was to test synergies in curatorial practice between museum and arts practitioners. Additionally, performing and other forms of art have always been an integral part of ICH and are still used to express many customs, practices and traditions. Hence, it was decided to employ artists to lead on the projects so that they could draw out the arts components and thereby enhance the heritage element, for which the museums were responsible. The artists were expected to:

- undertake desk research to locate local ICH practices and bearer communities engaged in safeguarding genres relating to the museum's allocated Domain and associated collections
- empower and guide practising communities to take the lead (independent of the museums) in identifying the ICH genres they wished to explore through the museum collections

- act as an interface/intermediary between the museums and the communities
- bring alternative perspectives to interpreting and documenting practices that were not bound by museums' policies and practices
- enable the museums and communities to co-curate appropriate and quality projects within the timescale.
- enable bearers to understand ICH terminologies and project objectives and identify a genre they wished to safeguard in line with the 2003 Convention's key tenets
- design and deliver workshops co-curated between the bearer communities and the museums.

Employing local artists was considered desirable as it was envisaged that they would have an awareness of the local landscapes, their histories, and the spirit of the places, as well as links to individual bearers, ICH community groups, civil society, the museum/arts' sectors and the wider public – all of which would give them a head start in developing the projects.

The museums were responsible for the employment and management of artists. Once the artists were in place, the PM met with each of the museums along with their artists individually to clarify the artists' roles and responsibilities and discuss their proposals. Changes arising out of the meeting, which were small, were noted in the IP.

With the support from the museums and communities, the artists employed a variety of methods to gather data. They ranged from a review of the museum collections for connections with local traditions to informal meetings with experts and/or scholars specialising in particular areas of ICH and civil society, and to advertising for information from source communities or to field research involving semi-structured and qualitative interviews.

The artists then identified and engaged with new bearer communities to capture their views on genres that could be developed into projects and the collective memories associated with the origins of those traditions. They also worked with communities to explore how these practices have evolved over centuries or decades, and the reasons why the bearers wanted to safeguard them. This research helped to shape the content and format of the projects and the final workshops, with full involvement from the ICH communities, museums and outreach/development staff.

STAGE FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION

The practising communities could choose to hold their workshops in the museums or in community spaces. Three out of the four final events were held at the museums and the fourth in an angling club on the beach and near a fleet of fishing boats, in Hastings. Weald and Downland Living Museum's workshop was the only full day event hosted on a Saturday. The others took place during weekday afternoons or early evenings, lasting between three and four hours. Though the events were co-curated, the practising communities took the lead in developing and/or presenting the workshops with help from the artists and supported by the museum staff. The audiences ranged from staff, bearers, the wider public, cultural and local authority agencies and local political figures. ICOMOS-UK's PM attended all events and ACE's project lead attended the planning of the catches event at Weald and Downland Living Museum and the poetry workshop at the Museum of Cambridge.

STAGE FIVE: EVALUATION

Wherever practicable, the museums applied their own standard practices for capturing feedback from participants at the events and ICOMOS-UK undertook an independent evaluation of the whole project. All four museums, artists and representatives from practising communities, ACE and ICOMOS-UK contributed to this process. The findings are presented in section seven of this report on 'Findings and Lessons Learned'.

The project was evaluated by Cultural Runner who employed three key methods:

- (i) collation of data from each of the participating museums including ICOMOS-UK's IP distributed to museums, museums' project plans; documents relating to commissioning of artists and contracts between artists and museums; notes of meetings between ICOMOS-UK's PM and the museums and artists.
- (ii) semi-structured interviews with twelve individuals directly involved with the initiative including key staff at the museums (e.g. director, senior museum manager, collection managers, curators), artists and community leads working for the museum sector or bearer communities. At least one person from the museum (and in most cases two) were interviewed. ICOMOS-UK's PM, and the project lead at ACE, were also interviewed.
- (iii) a post-project completion group discussion presented as a 'sharing event' for all key participants facilitated by Cultural Runner. The session allowed the participants to respond to the preliminary evaluation findings, and to discuss their personal and organisational experiences of the planning and implementation stages and the impact of the projects on the museums and bearer communities.

STAGE SIX: DISSEMINATION

A key aim underpinning the funding of this catalyst project was to share the results of the pilot with ACE, other museums and bearer communities and the wider arts and heritage sectors. This document has been produced with that purpose in mind. Additionally, as ICOMOS-UK is part of an international network of heritage professionals across the globe, the project is also accessible to audiences beyond the UK.

CASE STUDIES



“HASTINGS FISHING FLEET PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE EXPLORING OUR INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE”



BACKGROUND: HASTINGS MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

Hastings is a town on the East Sussex coast with a population of around 87,000. There is evidence of human settlement from prehistoric times and the town gave its name to the famous battle nearby won by William the Conqueror in 1066. From the later medieval period it fell into decline but found new fortunes with the development of the seaside tourist industry from the late eighteenth century. Today it has an increasingly diverse community and its festivals, music and arts scene enjoy a good reputation. However, the town also has significant issues of social deprivation, educational underachievement and low levels of employment. As a result, the regeneration opportunities that heritage and culture can provide are particularly relevant.

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery is run by the local authority and first opened to the public in 1892. Over the past 126 years, it has developed a diverse collection of around 100,000 objects that encompasses:

- **Local history**, including artefacts from every period since the earliest human settlements, and extensive photographic and document archives. These are displayed in two exhibitions:

“Before Hastings” (Late Palaeolithic to Saxon) and “The Story of Hastings in 66 Objects” (1066 to the present). Key figures associated with the area include James and Decimus Burton, who created the neighbouring Regency New Town of St Leonards-on-Sea; Robert Tressell, author of *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*; and John Logie Baird, who made his breakthrough in the invention of television whilst living in Hastings.

- **Fine and Decorative Arts**, including a large collection of drawings, watercolours and topographical views of the town, and examples of ceramic traditions from around the world.
- **World Cultures**, including the fine collection of Annie, Lady Brassey, a Victorian traveller, writer and collector, which was donated to the museum on the death of her husband in 1919. These objects include a rare Hawaiian feather cloak and the magnificent Durbar Hall, a two-storey carved structure created for the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition in South Kensington, London. There is also a significant collection of Native North American art, developed because of the town’s association with the



Canadian conservationist Grey Owl. He was born in Hastings as Archie Belaney and lived there until adulthood before migrating to Canada to pursue his fascination of Native American peoples. There he took on a First Nation identity claiming he was part Native American and part Scottish and became involved in conservation.

- **Natural history**, numismatics, archaeology, geology and fossils.
- **Objects** linked to the fishing community can be found in most parts of the museum’s collection. For example, “The Story of Hastings in 66 Objects” features a medieval barrel and fish hooks, wood from the town’s Elizabethan harbour, a smuggler’s barrel and revenue officers (customs officials) man’s pistol, and a nineteenth-century capstan and model

lifeboat. A significant acquisition in 2006 was a watercolour by JMW Turner of Fishmarket on the Sands, Early Morning (1824). This complements a good collection of early nineteenth-century watercolours, drawings and prints of the fishing beach.

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE DOMAIN

Hastings Museum & Art Gallery was allocated the ICH Domain **“social practices, rituals and festive events”**.

This Domain represents the habitual activities that structure the lives of communities and groups, and that are shared by and relevant to many of their members. They are familiar or known to the community in question, even if not everyone practises them. Their significance lies in how they reaffirm the identity of their practitioners as a group or a society, in public or in private. Such activities are closely linked to important occasions and may help to mark the passing of the seasons, events in the agricultural calendar or the stages of a person's life. They are also closely linked to a community's worldview and perception of its own history and memory. Such practices, rituals or events can vary from small gatherings to large-scale social celebrations and commemorations.

The Domain encompasses a huge variety of forms: worship rites; rites of passage; birth, wedding and funeral rituals; oaths of allegiance; traditional legal systems; traditional games and sports; kinship and ritual kinship ceremonies; settlement

patterns; culinary traditions; seasonal ceremonies; practices specific to men or women only; hunting, fishing and gathering practices; greeting ceremonies; gift-giving; and many more. It also includes a wide variety of expressions and physical elements: special gestures and words; recitations; songs or dances; clothing; processions; animal sacrifice; and food.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The museum was invited to participate in ICOMOS-UK's pilot project in October 2016. It was chosen because of its fishing heritage and the contrast that the seaside community offered to the other participating museums.

Hastings fishing fleet forms an important part of the town's heritage. It was one of the original Cinque Ports, which began as a loose association of five towns who shared an interest in the herring trade. Important for their strategic position on a coast constantly open to attack, and with no Royal Navy, they were the only source of ships when required by the monarch for defence. In return, the towns were granted a number of special privileges including self-government and control of taxation. A Royal Charter of 1155 formalised this arrangement and specified the number of ships and men that had to be provided and for how many days a year.

The written records of Hastings fishermen date from 1580. Queen Elizabeth I gave the fishermen irretrievable rights to draw up their nets and boats on an area of beach known as The Stade, a tradition that continues today. The 1947 Deed of Compromise embedded this exclusive right in an agreement by the Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society (HFPS) to pay 1 shilling annually to Hastings Borough Council. The twenty-five fishing boats on The Stade currently comprise the largest beach-launched fishing fleet in Europe.

Links have been made between the museum and the fishing community through previous activities, such as the commissioning of a bespoke rope banister for the borough's separate local history museum (now closed). Hastings Museum & Art Gallery's enthusiasm for ICOMOS-UK's project was primarily due to the potential that it offered to develop a stronger partnership with the bearer community that could enhance understanding and interpretation of the museum's fishing-related collections, as well as to capture the bearers' experiences, knowledge and ICH. Key to formulating this approach and testing its viability was the partnership with the HFPS which represents the fishermen's community. This group recognised the value of embedding their community's voice in a public collection belonging to the town.

A mixed-media visual artist was commissioned to facilitate the exploration of the concept of ICH and how it could link to the museum's existing collections. The artist identified bearers, then researched the history of the fleet, its sense of place, the language used on the beach by the fishing community, and links between the historic objects and current fishing practices. Once the project was underway, it became obvious that it would not relate to a specific genre in the Domain allocated to the museum – **“social practices, rituals and festive events”** – but rather to ongoing regular social, industrial and environmental routines.

At the planning meeting held in March 2017, representatives from the museum, HFPS and ICOMOS-UK, along with the artist, explored the various ICH elements listed within the Domain in order to identify a local tradition on which the workshop could focus. The group discussed how the location of the museum in the centre of the borough could illustrate the link between the Hastings fleet, the largest beach-launched fleet in Europe and the oldest in the UK, and the wider community. The chair of the HFPS, a member of one of the oldest families still engaged in fishing from The Stade, shared his knowledge of the daily ritual of boat launch and retrieval – a unique tradition still practised in Hastings. Several other local ICH practices that had potential to relate to the local museum collections were considered. They included net and rope making, the

‘blessing of the sea’, trawler races and fish festivals. Given the unpredictable weather, tide times and safety considerations, some of these activities were impractical for a daytime audience in this project. A timetable of activities was devised after much discussion between the partners, and was based on the artist's proposal to record the voices of Hastings' fishermen and women.

Hasting Museum & Art Gallery's aspiration was to develop audiences through engagement with the bearer communities and new methods of interpretation, and to understand how ICH could relate to its objects. The fishing community wanted to make its customs and traditions better known. This allowed the artist to meet the objectives of both stakeholders.

A number of annual festivals locally showcase the fishing story as part of their programmes but they provide only a limited exposure of the fishing community's culture and lifestyle, and are not designed as a safeguarding measure of past and current knowledge and experience for future generations. The ICOMOS-UK ICH project, on the other hand, presented a unique opportunity for the museum and the local community, jointly for the first time, to focus exclusively on the fishermen's lives, incorporating customs and traditions that had been lost and/or had evolved. Rather than selecting one particular genre, the practising community seized the chance to tell as wide a range of their stories as possible.

To help achieve this ambition, the artist facilitated the staging of an informal event at which several generations of local fishing families could interact freely with a range of material from the past 100 years, including many of the items which they had no contact with before and which had been sourced from the museum, HFPS and local people. This format had the potential to support a more meaningful exchange between the three groups, in a welcoming atmosphere that fostered learning and reciprocity and provide a nuanced awareness of how the local fishing community related to its collection.

THE WORKSHOP

This event, advertised as a ‘strawberry tea’, was held in May 2017 at the East Hastings Sea Angling Association. It was a two-hour informal gathering of the fishermen and their family members, museum and local authority staff, and other groups and individuals representing heritage and ICH interests in Hastings.

The primary objective was to explore the local communities' responses to opportunities to safeguard their ICH of Hastings fishing fleet, and, in particular,



those intangible elements that had not been systematically recorded. It was also an opportunity to acknowledge the bearers and others in the community for loaning their collections and classifying and interpreting them. Those attending shared their personal experiences, views, stories and memories directly associated with the objects on display. The project was supported by volunteers from the HFPS and MA students from the University of Sussex attached to Hasting Museum & Art Gallery. A professional photographer, who has been photographing the fishermen community in Hastings for over twenty years, provided services free of charge. Through their direct involvement in the project, bearers could experience first-hand how their knowledge of history, the significance of their geographical location and their cultural traditions could enrich the museum's collection.

Historic material used at the event included archive photographs, particularly those taken by the Victorian photographer George Woods, who spent a lot of time recording the seafront and fishing community at work and rest in the 1890s. Other items on display from the museum included:

- a range of twentieth-century photographs showing developments on The Stade
- reproductions of watercolours by the artist E Leslie Badham, who was commissioned by the museum to record the changing townscape from the 1920s to the 1940s, including a topographical record of streets adjacent to the fishing beach

- artefacts (mostly nineteenth-century) from the museum's handling loan box, such as a horn lantern, net needles, laces and a section of net, weights and scrimshaw (decorated ivory or shells) contemporary photographs taken over the past twenty years as part of an ongoing record of the fishing industry
- edited sound recordings made by the facilitator during her time spent on the fishing beach.

With support from the museum and the HFPS, the artist created engaging visual displays from the various objects, documents and images assembled. These 'creative visual conversations' were designed to encourage the sharing and capturing of oral histories. The artist created the soundscape 'Fish Tales' from recordings made for the project, reflecting four themes:

- Fishermen at Work
- Heritage and History
- The Knowledge
- Families

In addition, the artist facilitated the design of a barrier tape featuring selected fishermen's family names and nicknames. This was printed in rolls so that it could also be used as cordon barrier at future events. Samples of the tape have been distributed to the fishermen and the local community. Creating a "barrier" reference the historic fight to keep the fishing community's rights to The Stade.

AUDIENCE

There were approximately seventy-seven participants involved in the workshop. They were drawn from the local fishing community or had strong family links to the industry. Representatives from other agencies such as Wessex Archaeology, and officers from the local authority's communications and regeneration departments, also attended.

The event particularly appealed to the women and older members of the fleet community. This may be because women and older people are often the holders of family/community stories and memories and therefore key transmitters of culture and traditions in many communities. A sizeable number of visitors heard of the event via word of mouth, and at least a further twenty-five regular users of the Angling Club asked to view the display the following day, thus demonstrating interest in ICH and further similar events.

The workshop was the first time many participants had encountered the term "intangible cultural heritage" and heard of UNESCO and ICOMOS-UK and their role in safeguarding intangible culture. But the universal accessibility of the fishing community's heritage, stories, festivals and traditions, reflected in the items assembled, provided an avenue to explore ICH and make it meaningful within a local context.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

The main achievements of the project were the development of new partnerships; new links with local communities; and insights into how local ICH could enhance the museum's understanding of its collection, its interpretation and curatorial strategies, and its relationship to the wider community.

The project was a catalyst in enabling the museum to partner with the HFPS, which helped them to build stronger and deeper connections with people they were keen to work with. ICH thus emerged as an innovative tool to examine the relationship between the museum as custodian of heritage and the local bearer community as its guardians and transmitters.

NEXT STEPS

The ICOMOS-UK pilot project provided the impetus for the partners to develop a further project to continue and extend its work. This new initiative would focus on collecting and sharing the stories of fishermen's wives, and cataloguing oral history recordings as part of the museum's collection, but will need to be the focus of an external funding bid.

Additionally, in exploring ICH generally, and the UNESCO Domains more specifically with ICOMOS-UK and the local community, the museum will be able to identify ways of further incorporating ICH community voices and UNESCO guidance into its interpretation, curatorial and engagement strategies.

“OUR PLACE IN NATURE AND THE UNIVERSE: “UNI-VERSE = ONE SONG: A WORKSHOP OF SINGING TRADITIONAL SONGS RELATING TO NATURE AND THE LAND””



BACKGROUND: WEALD AND DOWNLAND LIVING MUSEUM

Weald and Downland Living Museum is a museum of historic buildings in the South Downs National Park in West Sussex. It comprises 40 acres with more than fifty historic buildings dating from 950 AD to the nineteenth century. These buildings were rescued from destruction and moved from their original sites in south-east England to be re-erected.

The buildings range from a reconstruction of a Saxon hall house to working buildings of the late 19th century. They are complemented by a collection of fixtures and fittings as well as larger structural elements and materials used in construction and building conservation. There is also a working watermill, blacksmithing in the Victorian smithy, traditionally managed woodlands and a working Tudor kitchen. Several of the houses are furnished to give an idea of what life was like in them, and six period gardens are planted with vegetables and herbs that the original inhabitants would have known.

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE DOMAIN

Based on its collection of vernacular architecture and associated landscapes, the Weald and Downland Living Museum was allocated the UNESCO ICH Domain of **“knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe”**. The museum’s interest in participating stemmed from its desire to share its collections and related work with a larger audience and from its general interest in ICH.

This Domain comprises knowledge, knowhow, skills, practices and representations developed by communities through their interactions with the natural environment. It represents ways of thinking about the universe and how these are expressed through intangible means such as language, oral traditions, feelings of attachment towards a place, memories, spirituality and worldview. These aspects also strongly influence values and beliefs, and underlie many social practices and cultural traditions. These practices and knowledge are in turn shaped by the natural environment and the community’s wider world. Obvious examples of the ICH represented by this Domain are traditional

healing systems and knowledge about local flora and fauna; traditional ecological knowledge; festivals; rites; shamanism; language and visual arts. Many of these are increasingly threatened by the following:

- climate change and the destruction of habitat;
- cultural homogenisation caused by globalisation;
- the movement of people, for example: young people who move away but don’t learn or retain the knowledge, or for whom it has no relevance, or conversely by tourism that leads to a dilution/adjustment or ‘folklorisation’ of ICH practices for the purpose of entertaining tourists and economical gains. Elders who carry this knowledge die without being able to successfully pass it on.



This Domain was particularly appropriate for the Weald and Downland Living Museum not only because of its physical collection but also its representations of the skills and traditions that evolved around vernacular architecture and landscape, and of the communities and ways of life and work that developed and supported them.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Weald and Downland Living Museum was invited to take part in the ICOMOS-UK project in October 2016, and the IP was discussed in November 2016. The museum staff already had some knowledge of ICH through previous activities. The ICOMOS-UK project, therefore, offered a good opportunity to focus on exploring ICH through the museum's collections in collaboration with local communities, and on how to use it to engage with bearer communities and develop new audiences.

ICH practices relating to wood and land (e.g. coppicing and wood burning) were discussed as obvious examples for potential exploration. There are communities still practising these aspects attached to some of the museum's collection, albeit in an evolved form. Furthermore, there are local interest groups committed to safeguarding the practices, which are relevant to the whole of south-east England.

A call for an artist to facilitate the project was circulated via email, the museum website and social media. The advertisement gave artists the freedom of choosing any one of the genres listed in the Domain allocated to it and were signposted to UNESCO website for information. One particularly interesting proposal related to "song and singing". Following interviews, the museum staff with ICOMOS-UK's support chose this particular application.

The artist chosen specialises in English folk song, teaches singing and leads the South Down Folk Singers, and thus already had access to a community involved with this form of ICH.

In discussion with the practising groups, the museum and ICOMOS-UK, the artist developed a proposal to explore ICH through the medium of "old English catches". A "catch" was a type of singing round, some of which were collected as early as 1580. Catches were also known as "freemen's songs" because they originated among rural poor people. These songs and way of singing give a unique insight into the communal singing of people who would have lived and worked in both the rural landscape and some of the types of buildings represented in the museum's collection.

The artist had been working with two experts who specialised in this genre: one of them had rediscovered ancient catches through his research in surviving ancient manuscripts. The second expert, based in West Sussex, had, been researching

human origins and evolution for twenty years. His particular interest is in how music, sound and speech have evolved yet still retain basic principles common across all periods of history that relate to humanity's place in nature and the universe.

In addition to teaching the South Down Folk Singers, the artist facilitator was also involved in another practising community, the Natural Voice Network. This group practises and teaches songs about the land and provides singing workshops in schools aimed at passing down this tradition to children. The aim of the project was therefore to explore, with members of such groups, this kind of singing within the landscape and buildings in which it would have first developed. The project also sought to raise awareness of and engage new audiences in ICH generally and in this particular genre specifically.

The delivery format comprised two workshops over two consecutive Saturdays. The first was a planning day organised to attract new individuals and/or groups to take part in shaping the structure and content for the final workshop. This one-day exercise involved discussing the use of song as an experience of ICH, exploring the catches and their origins, and looking at the spaces and buildings within the museum's collection to consider how best to use them in the final project workshop. Both events were promoted via the museum's social media and website. Flyers at the museum advertised both activities to not only regular visitors and supporters but also new and one-off visitors.

Planning-day attendees were provided with background information on ICOMOS-UK and ICH and explored various aspects and questions that could be examined over the following weekend. These questions or areas for exploration included:

- the ICH practice being explored and the key reasons behind the practising community's wish to revive and safeguard it
- the idea of "our place in nature and the universe"
- how the museum may benefit from the use of some of its buildings by this particular ICH-practising group, and how this could be integrated into the future work of the museum.

Representatives from ACE and ICOMOS-UK attended and helped with the discussion about the purpose of the overall ICH project and information on UNESCO's 2003 Convention.

The artist explained the old songs, their origins, subject matter, the different types of catches and rounds, how they were collected, and how they came to be available in the present day. She also facilitated discussion about why singing without musical accompaniment and without written music and words is so valuable to the experience of this kind of ICH. These songs, she explained, can be recognised as being born directly from people's experiences of the land, the rhythms of nature and their sense of place within it.

In addition, the artist performed a number of catches and the group then learned and sung them together, so encountering them as a present and living craft. The group also identified suitable spaces among the buildings in which to sing.

THE WORKSHOP

The final workshop took place on 28 May 2017. Participants comprised a varied group, some of whom had sung catches before and others who were interested in discovering them.

The day's programme started with a short description of the project for those who did not attend the planning day, held in the museum's Upper Hall, a building originally from Crawley. A practice session of some simple catches followed before the group moved out into the landscape of the museum and its building collection, which is laid out to represent different rural and village settings. The group spent time singing in different spaces in order to experience the kinds of environments in which these songs would have been originally composed and performed. Each space has its own atmosphere and resonance. At one point during the day, the sound of rain drumming on the roof and on the trees outside complemented the singing. Singing around the fire in Bayleaf Farmhouse¹, for example, added to the feeling of the catches' timelessness because fires are communal and ancient; and provide a focal point for thought and attention. This alone encompassed much of the day's aim.

Participants learned more catches over the course of the day; about six seemed to be the optimum number. Other visitors, both young and old, were drawn to whatever building the singing was coming from, and either joined in, or just watched and listened, sometimes for quite a long time.

AUDIENCE

The artist was already teaching a fifty-strong group of singers, the South Downs Folk Singers, traditional folk songs and old English catches, some of which dated back to the 16th century. This group regularly performs in local pubs and other venues, and is keen to keep the tradition of such singing alive. The ICOMOS-UK project offered them the opportunity to expand on their interest and to sing these songs in traditional settings. Other types of visitors targeted for participation were:

- regular visitors, who would have their experience of the museum enriched by the participatory experience of singing folk songs in a traditional setting



¹ Bayleaf is a timber-framed Wealden hall house from Chiddingstone in Kent; it has two phases - 1405-1430 and additions dated to the early sixteenth century (<http://www.wealddown.co.uk/explore/buildings/further-reading/bayleaf-wealden-hall-house/>)

- those who had a particular interest in singing but who were not regular visitors or had not visited the museum before
- those who had a particular interest in learning about and performing the catches, and who would enjoy the unique opportunity to sing them in the types of building in which they would have been traditionally sung.

Between fourteen and sixteen people attended the planning day and the workshop, though not everybody attended both. The attendees included both experienced singers who had volunteered and those who had come out of interest; they ranged in age from 30 to 60 years old, though families with children who were visiting the museum also joined in. All had a genuine interest in and appreciation of the heritage being presented, even if they did not recognise it as ICH per se, or have any real concept of what ICH is.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

Overall the project fulfilled the key objectives. It gave the museum an opportunity to explore an aspect of ICH of the people originally connected to the collections. The project not only involved a specific ICH-practising community, but also engaged people who had no knowledge of ICH and/or who had not visited the museum previously. These included participants in the workshop as well as visitors to the museum.

The workshop was also successful in terms of developing a methodology to explore ICH as a means of wider community engagement and participation. The artist worked with participants not only to revisit the old songs but also to take them on a journey to get them to sing in the old buildings and thereby bring the museum collections alive. The workshop has provided a foundation for similar future activities exploring ICH. It was evident that singing catches is a very accessible way in which people of all ages can have a real encounter with their cultural customs and traditions. The artist noted that

“After we had sung in Bayleaf a man came up to me who had been listening for quite some time with his two children. He said how moving he had found the singing and how he had been drawn to it by hearing the sound from quite far away. His children had been still and quiet, just listening, which had struck him as they are usually not still for so long. He thanked me and us for a most memorable experience.”

Participants rated the event as “excellent” and as exceeding their expectations. They requested that the singing component be increased and considered “learning about ICH” to be most helpful or interesting.

The workshop itself was so successful that a series of subsequent, more informal, workshops were arranged at the museum during the summer. These were well attended by both members of the original group and others who had heard about the them. Again, these were open to members of the public to come and participate as they explored the museum. The delight and satisfaction gained by sharing in the singing was tangible, and enabled people to understand that they were participating in a living part of their cultural heritage.

NEXT STEPS

The museum touches on ICH through its practice of various crafts and skills in the maintenance and development of its collections. Only one Domain was the focus here, but the other four could be brought together to add a completely different dimension to the experiences of the museum. The museum plans to develop the new connections and links generated by the project with the practitioners of such ICH. The participating community expressed great interest in further exploring both ICH in general and the singing. Given the willing participation by visitors, the museum is considering the delivery of specific workshops for adults and children.

“CAPTURING THE STRAW BEAR”



BACKGROUND: MUSEUM OF CAMBRIDGE

The Museum of Cambridge is a small independent museum and registered charity, and has been run by volunteers since January 2018. It is funded by Cambridge City Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund, and supported by the Friends of the Museum of Cambridge.

Formerly known as the Cambridge & County Folk Museum, it is one of England's oldest social history museums. It is housed in a Grade II-listed, seventeenth-century timber-framed building that is a former coaching inn. The inn, originally called the White Horse, closed in 1934.

The museum's social history collection contains over 20,000 items covering a 300-year period, all of which relate to the city and county of Cambridge. It includes objects from domestic and agricultural life, and folklore traditions. They are displayed in room contexts reflecting the former use of the building as a public house.

The work of the folklorist Enid Porter, who was the longest-serving curator (from 1947 to 1976), characterises the museum's approach to the collection. Porter strove to preserve Cambridgeshire heritage for future generations and shaped modern English folklore studies with her unique method of being objective in her interviews and recordings. She did not impose her own views or interpretation or censor 'impolite' objects she was presented with. More recently, the museum has sought to revive Porter's ethos through projects that celebrate the contemporary and diverse heritages of the area, reflecting and exploring the changing social landscape.

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE DOMAIN

The Museum of Cambridge was allocated the UNESCO ICH Domain of **"oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage"**, which has a direct relationship with the collection and Enid Porter's legacy. Additionally, ICOMOS-UK's project objectives were similar to those of the museum's own project, "Tracing Traditions", funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund and delivered by the Museums Association. The focus of

"Tracing Traditions" is on modern folklore and new tradition-making – an extension of Enid Porter's ethos of preserving ICH.

The Domain of oral traditions and expressions includes a huge variety of spoken forms. Among these are proverbs, riddles, nursery rhymes, legends, myths, epic songs and poems, charms, prayers, chants and dramatic performances. They are used to pass on knowledge, cultural and social values, and collective memory. Also, they play a crucial part in keeping cultures alive and are particularly dependent on language, including the survival of specific languages written and/or spoken by the community in question.

As with most forms of ICH, some types of oral expression are common across entire communities, while others are limited to particular social groups, for example only men or women, or older people. In many societies, performing oral traditions is a highly specialised occupation and professional performers are held in the highest regard as guardians of collective memory. They can be found in communities all over the world, ranging from griots and dyellis in Africa to professional storytellers in Europe.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

In January 2017 ICOMOS-UK and the Museum of Cambridge met to discuss the project IP and explored links between the collection and the practising communities.

A poet with a particular interest in the themes of community, memory and tradition-making was appointed as the external artist for the project. She had previously worked with the museum and was familiar with its collection.

The planning meeting in April 2017 highlighted the uniqueness of the museum and its relationship to the wider community, and discussed local traditions that mark the passing of the seasons. These include the Ely Eel Day, the Straw Bear in Whittlesey, the Wisbech Rose Fair and the Strawberry Fair in Cambridge. Such festivals were part of the old trade fairs and agricultural calendar celebrating shared local cultural heritage. All were closely linked to the community's worldview and perception of its history and memory and continue to be practised to day in evolved forms. Furthermore, each event occurs at a special time or place.

The Whittlesey Straw Bear tradition was chosen as the focus of the project due to its large local following and active practising community. The Straw Bear is a folk custom practised only in a small area of the Fenland on the borders of Huntingdonshire and Cambridgeshire, where it has about 20,000 followers. Traditionally it occurs on Plough Tuesday,

the day after the first Monday after Twelfth Night, at the beginning of the sowing season. The "Straw Bear" is a man covered in straw and led from house to house where he dances in exchange for money, food or beer. At the end of the event the costume is ceremonially burnt. The custom died out in the early twentieth century but was resurrected by the Whittlesea Society in 1980. The Straw Bear festival is an important part of preserving and safeguarding a Cambridgeshire ICH. The custom has evolved with time, and today women are not excluded from taking part as Straw Bear.

FORMAT OF THE PROJECT

Suggested formats for the project included:

- a creative writing workshop in the museum exploring the history of the festival in collaboration with the practising community
- school visits enabling students to develop poems about the festival
- an online collaborative poem
- a workshop involving a re-enactment of the Straw Bear.

The museum focused on delivering interesting creative outputs with the potential for future further development, reviving traditions and preserving ICH, and practical delivery, including existing connections with the practising community.

The artist's engaged a variety of groups in her research, which covered areas of the region beyond those with which

the museum had previously worked. It involved an initial review of the museum's objects database for items related to the Straw Bear. In addition, the artist contacted a wide range of people who regularly engaged with the festival, namely organisers and participants, local poets, morris dancers, musicians and the Whittlesey Museum, which holds a collection relating to the Straw Bear tradition. Work was undertaken with the bearer community to establish the history of the Straw Bear festival and its place in contemporary society. The information gathered from this research was used to identify potential ICH themes as the basis for the workshop activities.

THE WORKSHOP

The artist – with support from the museum staff – delivered an interactive workshop that explored the oral tradition of the Straw Bear festival in June 2017. A mixed group of twelve participants attended the half-day session. Poetry and artefacts from the museum's collection inspired participants to write their own poems related to the agricultural seasons, transformation, transfiguration, myth



and encounter. Participants explored the various aspects of the Straw Bear tradition, creatively imagining its origins as a mythical, historic, folkloric and ritualistic figure.

The workshop emphasised the oral traditions surrounding the history of the Straw Bear, mixing folklore with historical documents and exploring the intersection between myth, legend and truth. By sharing the poetry they produced, the group could investigate the voice, musicality and emotion of these oral traditions, not as an inert historical fact but rather as a living expression of local ICH.

The workshop was structured around six themes: history and origins; transformation; music; mythical aspects; imaginative descriptions; and editing text for performance resulting in the following activities. Participants were invited to examine relevant objects, texts and images at each stage.

Warm-up Exercise: Participants were given piles of straw to touch, smell and feel. The artist explained that the best straw of the previous year's harvest was traditionally saved for making the Straw Bear. The group was asked to think of as many descriptive words for straw as possible, and these words were used to create short poems.

Origins: The participants investigated the history of the Straw Bear tradition through objects, photographs and images from the museum's collection. They then focused on one object as an imaginative starting point for descriptive writing, either poetry or prose.

Transformation: The modern Straw Bear costume weighs over 5 stone (70 lbs/31.8 kg). It is made by attaching the straw to a sturdy garment, with the "head" supported on a metal frame on the shoulders. Participants discussed photographs of the Straw Bear being helped into his costume, and were asked to imagine the physical and emotional experience of being inside the suit. They were encouraged to think about the smell of the straw, the feel of the frame, the sounds of rustling and the sense of being cut off from the world, but also the freedom of being disguised and anonymous. Each person was then asked to write a short poem about this transformational process from real individual to mythical figure.

Music: The group heard an eyewitness account of the traditional Straw Bear procession – a reminiscence from a local who saw it in 1909 – and a recording of the "Straw Bear march" which was composed in the 1970s. They were then given the task of writing a short poem or story about meeting the Straw Bear. Suggestions for this piece included depicting the Straw Bear dancing at the festival, or perhaps doing something more contemporary such as shopping in a supermarket or having a pint in the local pub.

Ekphrasis art (a description of a visual work of art): The group discussed photographs and drawings from the Whittlesey Museum Archive. They then wrote a poem or story based on one of the photos or drawings from the perspective of a character within it, or as an observer of the event depicted.

Performance: At the end of the workshop all participants worked together to edit and refine the short pieces of writing they had produced and discussed how they wished to perform the finished poems. These were then presented in front of invited guests including representatives from ICOMOS-UK and ACE, plus members of the ICH practising community.

AUDIENCE

The research activity and the workshop brought the museum into contact with a variety of new audiences. The artist's knowledge of the region and her attendance at previous Straw Bear festivals enabled her to form links with key people in the practising community, many of whom had no previous connections with the museum.



Twelve people participated in the writing workshop. The two men and ten women ranged in age from 19 to 65 and older. Some were well-versed in writing and others were interested in heritage. Two members of the bearer community attended. One was a participant and the other was a guest at the performance after the workshop. Many of the participants had not encountered the term “intangible cultural heritage” as defined by UNESCO before, but by the end of the session they felt confident in their understanding of it.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

The workshop provided an ideal vehicle to extend and re-imagine the work of Enid Porter in documenting, safeguarding and disseminating ICH practices. It also broadened the museum staff’s knowledge of ICH as tool for interpretation and deepened understanding of the local ICH practising communities.

The project was broadly successful in achieving the ICOMOS-UK’s project objectives. The workshop’s key purpose was to explore the Domain “oral traditions and expressions” through the museum collections. The artist, the museum staff, and the practising communities explored a long-established folklore tradition using artefacts, documentation and memories. For the first time, poetry – a multi-dimensional and multi-faceted expression and one of the many genres of the Domain – was used as an interpretative tool in the museum.

The workshop also provided a means of exploring the concept of preserving and disseminating knowledge of the Straw Bear as an expression of ICH and as an important aspect of Cambridgeshire heritage and identity.

The Museum of Cambridge developed a new connection with Whittlesey Museum, which already holds a Straw Bear collection, and is now involved in the local Straw Bear festival

However, the project’s main success arguably was its ability to add value to the relationship between the community and the museum’s collection. It introduced new expertise and ways of working with objects and different people, including ICH practitioners. These skills and knowledge could inform the museum’s existing approaches and projects.

The workshop provided a meaningful understanding of the relationship between cultural heritage and peoples’ rights to practice, protect and transmit their rituals, cultural traditions and customs to future generations enshrined within the UNESCO Domains of ICH.

NEXT STEPS

The success of the project supported the direction of the museum’s work and continues to inform the “Tracing Traditions” project. The museum has since undergone changes to become a volunteer-run organisation. It is hoped that future work will further investigate how ICH practices, arts and creative writing can be used to explore relationships with local communities and to connect them to the museum collections.

“THE QUIVERING SCALE: TRADITION AND FUSION OVER THREE GENERATIONS OF MUSLIM WOMEN’S SONG”



BACKGROUND: PETERBOROUGH MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery is located in the centre of the city and holds collections illustrating the history of Peterborough to the present day. It is managed by Vivacity, a charitable trust that runs cultural and leisure facilities. The museum's collections date back over 100 years and have largely been collected reactively through donations given by the general public as they are offered, rather than through targeted collecting. Although Peterborough has changed dramatically over this period from a largely rural area to the multicultural city it is today, the museum was not strong in collections that represented the city's changing population. It therefore wanted to look at contemporary collecting to strengthen its relationships with Peterborough's new and diverse communities.

Despite having rich object collections, the museum has very little recorded material reflecting the ICH of Peterborough and the cultures of new communities that have come to the city. This particular area had received relatively little attention from the museum and its staff and there was no knowledge of UNESCO's 2003 Convention relating to the safeguarding of intangible culture either until the approach from ICOMOS-UK's ICH Committee. This was

one of the key drivers for Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery wanting to participate in ICOMOS-UK's project. It presented an opportunity to engage with communities under-represented in the museum's collections and thereby widen its audiences.

Intangible Cultural Heritage Domain Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery was allocated the Domain of **"performing arts"**, because both the museum collections and ICH practices in the area were considered to be suitable for exploring genres within the Domain. This Domain comprises music, dance and traditional theatre (including vocal and instrumental music), pantomime, puppetry and sung verse. The performing arts include many cultural expressions that reflect human creativity. This ICH Domain reflects aspects that are also found within the other Domains.

The most obvious example of the ICH represented by this Domain is music, which is present in every society. Another important component is the traditional artefacts and spaces that support performing arts, for example musical instruments, puppets, traditional make-up and body paint, and costumes.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

The museum was invited to participate in ICOMOS-UK's project in January 2017. Definitions, Domains and genres of ICH as set out in the 2003 UNESCO Convention, their application locally and a framework for implementation were discussed with ICOMOS-UK at the planning meeting soon after. The meeting considered the suitability of various performing arts practices for this project. These ranged from the enactment of the Whittlesea Straw Bear in Cambridgeshire and a lively performance poetry scene to the intangible cultural traditions among a number of settler and culturally active groups such as the Italian and Muslim communities.

Following further internal discussions, the museum chose to work with Peterborough's long-established Muslim community, as it was under-represented in the collections. The Muslim community comprises 9.4% of the city's population, compared to 5% nationally. Peterborough is also home to two large mosques. Although there had been some contact between Vivacity and the Muslim community through a sculpture project

with the Iqra Academy - an all-girls Muslim school in 2016, there had been little contact between this community and the museum. The ICOMOS-UK project provided the opportunity to bridge this gap.

Vivacity's priority was to find an artistic facilitator with a strong cultural understanding and the ability to scope an ICH project in consultation with the community. A local poet and researcher engaged in organising cultural events was appointed. She had a sound knowledge of, and existing connections with, the target community. A practising Muslim herself, the artist had worked with Vivacity and knew of the museum.

The artist's initial research focused on the cultural traditions and practices that the Muslim community regarded as important, and how they may have changed through the generations. The findings underpinned the decision to explore and celebrate Muslim song.

As in every culture, Muslim people regard singing and/ or music as important in some form. The project was specifically aimed at documenting the shift in style of traditional Muslim song inherited and performed by women. It aimed to explore the adaptation of the musical scale and to take into account the different cultures and social needs that influenced the shared spiritual music over the generations.

In addition to the information gained from her meetings with museum staff about their collections and the target community, the artist gathered critical data from community sources to gain insight into the heritage of song. The key groups consulted included Muslim residents, the Iqra Academy and the Mini Munshids Choir (a children's choir). Because of the newness of the topic of ICH, the short timescale and the demographic composition of Muslim communities in Peterborough, the focus was initially on participants from the longest-settled Muslim communities - those who had migrated from South and East Asia and East African Asians. The project was nonetheless expected to enable exchange with other, more recent migrant communities of Arabic, Kurdish and West African origins.

A series of 21 one-to-one interviews and small focus groups were conducted among representatives from three generations:

- the first generation, who had migrated from Kashmir, India and East Africa to Peterborough (represented by six women)
- the second generation, who were born in the UK and live in Peterborough (represented by six women and one man)
- the third generation, whose parents were born in the UK (represented by seven girls and one boy).

The last group was encouraged to interview their parents and grandparents, creating shared ownership and understanding.

The artist explored with each group how the history and heritage of song had been passed down from mother to daughter in the Muslim communities of Peterborough. The tradition of folklore songs, for example religious poetry such as Saif-ul Malook, Naats and Nasheeds, Mushaira (to-ing and fro-ing of poetic lyrics in a competitive or banter fashion between singers) and traditional wedding songs are all embedded among the first generation. The project also examined the methods of transmission of these ICH traditions, the fusion between the old and modern, and the differences between the older generation's version and the modern one. It specifically looked at the following three themes:

- **Cultural norms of female song:** the understanding of the tradition of song amongst women today (where, when and how do women sing, using which instruments and in which language?) and of the women of the time of the Prophet Muhammad (570-632 AD)



- **Tradition and change – our generation:** the songs and traditions that they have inherited from their mothers (or other female family members such as aunts) versus the songs and practices that they have adopted separately (also looking at where, when and how these are performed, the language and the instruments used) and the tradition of song as they understand it from the time of the Prophet Muhammad
- **Tradition and change – the next generation:** what do they perceive the next generation doing differently? What have they successfully passed on? Which traditions still persist from the time of the Prophet Muhammad?

Regular meetings with ICOMOS-UK helped to keep the project on track and provide a framework for delivery.

THE WORKSHOP

A concert by the Iqra Academy and Mini Munshids Choir at the museum formed the final stage of the project and was held in July 2017. It was entitled “The Quivering Scale: Tradition and Fusion over Three Generations of Muslim Women’s Song”

The evening started with a performance by members of the first generation and an emotive raga scale from the Indian subcontinent. Next was the Peterborough-native second generation and their penchant for sociable group-song using classical Arab music in an accessible maqam scale. The performance

culminated with the third generation, who are fusing the English heptatonic scale with Arab and Indian scales to create musical pieces in a choral style with a twist. Singers played the duff during the performance of the second- and third-generation pieces, showing how this instrument was introduced with the second generation of Muslim song in Peterborough. The traditional songs that illustrated the ICH element of each generation were interspersed with interviews with group members explaining these changes and why the songs were important to them as a community. The content and structure of the final performance shaped by the research identified clear changes in each generation.

The concert was complemented by a temporary exhibition of musical artefacts associated with Muslim song. A particular feature was musical instruments that are traditionally used to perform the songs: the dholki (instrument of choice for the first generation) and the duff (instrument preferred by the second and third). The exhibition also included information on the story of the ICH project, and was extended to run through the summer holidays to raise awareness and reach a wider audience. The museum hopes to be able to acquire more items of this type for the collection.

AUDIENCE

Two key groups formed the target audience. The first was the Muslim community in Peterborough, in particular women and children and their extended families. They were reached through the Iqra Academy, the Masjid Khadijah and Islamic Centre and their existing children’s choir group, Mini Munshids. The other key group was the arts and heritage staff who benefited from learning about ICH in general, about the relevance of it within a museum setting, and about ICH traditions within the Muslim community.

The project’s focus was on the mother/daughter relationship and the cultural tradition of songs being passed through the female line. However, both participants and audience at the final workshop were mixed in terms of gender, age and ethnicity and included local politicians, among others. Approximately sixty people attended the evening concert. Participants and visitors had the opportunity to explore the museum and the exhibition and meet museum staff. For some, it was their first visit to the venue and experience of ICH within a museum setting.



The Muslim community historically had not engaged with the museum due to feeling that there was nothing in the museum for them which reflected their life, histories and cultural values. The lack of objects relating to this community also may have hindered the museum in forging direct engagement with Muslim residents or in gaining an understanding of why local Muslims rarely attended museum events or activities. The ICOMOS-UK project enabled both groups to overcome perceived barriers and demonstrate that local communities' ICH could be used to promote and sustain community engagement and audience development. ICOMOS-UK's project, the project artist, and Vivacity's arts development officer, played a critical role in enabling new partnerships between the museum and the Muslim community, in particular with the Iqra Academy and the Masjid Khadijah & Islamic Centre.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND REFLECTIONS

The outcome and impact of the project far exceeded expectations. Fulfilling the overall objectives, the project provided the museum with a means to explore the concept of ICH, something it had not done previously. There is now greater understanding and appreciation of ICH among staff at all levels.

The Domain of "performing arts" facilitated successful interaction and collaboration between an ICH-practising and previously unrepresented community in general and Muslim women and

children and their music in particular; it effectively gave Muslim women a greater voice and an opportunity to lead. The project gave participants more confidence and recognition within a wider public space, not just within their own community.

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The artist used desk research, and quantitative and qualitative interviews as a methodology for successfully promoting wider community engagement and participation. The community has gained greater confidence and pride in its own ICH.

Working with an artist who is part of the community to facilitate the project has opened up communications and introductions for the museum staff with the ICH-bearer community. The project has also strengthened a good working relationship with the artist who could be engaged in developing future ICH projects at the museum.

The Mayor and local council representatives attended the concert and welcomed the initiative as a positive way of building a more cohesive community and intercultural dialogue in Peterborough. The project provided a positive forum to showcase the type of partnerships museums can achieve through the exploration of cultural traditions within communities.

A feature page on the museum's website highlights the project and gives examples of the types of music included in it, making this ICH more readily accessible to a wider public audience.

NEXT STEPS

The museum has been able to start developing its own holdings of ICH with an archive of the interviews and concert, and there are plans for a permanent display of the musical instruments used in the concert. It has also developed its policies to include ICH. This is a first step to incorporate ICH more in its work and to engage with new audiences within this sphere. Such developments will help to address the large gap in the permanent collections representing such communities. It is hoped that the museum will be able to acquire similar musical instruments and related items for the collection.

Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery and Vivacity are now exploring ways to embed the learning and connections made via the project to enrich the museum's work in other sectors. To avoid accusations of tokenism, Vivacity is keen to continue with a programme of ICH-related activities that take an inclusive approach. For example, there are plans for the gallery to develop more culturally diverse and internationally representative programmes (in terms of artists and artistic practices) that take ICH into account.

KEY FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Feedback from the museums, ICOMOS-UK PM's observational analysis and the findings of a formal evaluation show that the bespoke methodology was effective and project objectives were met beyond expectations.

The summary of the independent evaluation report concluded that ICOMOS-UK's project

“enabled the exploration of intangible heritage, collections and their connection to local communities. From capturing the stories of fishermen in Hastings to the Muslim Choirs in Peterborough this project has unlocked the creative potential of using ICH in museums”.

It has encouraged museums “to look again at what stories are being told and how they are telling them” and to demonstrate links between people, places and histories. Key achievements during the project and identified after it was completed can be summarised as following:

- Museums, artists and audiences have been able to develop a greater awareness and understanding of ICH as a concept and learn about the role of UNESCO and the 2003 Convention in safeguarding ICH practices.

- ICH has been used as an interpretative tool and as a means of connecting audiences with collections successfully.
 - Each museum has established new partnerships and relationships with bearer communities, civil society and other relevant individuals and agencies.
 - Artists as intermediaries facilitated a seamless interface between the museums and community cultural spaces in the surrounding areas where intangible elements are practised, protected, revived and promoted.
 - The project created synergies between the traditions of museum curatorial practices and the use of arts (performing and visual) as a medium for interpreting museum collections.
 - The involvement of community development or outreach staff enhanced the quality of outcomes.
 - The ICOMOS-UK project has proved to be a successful change agent. It has stimulated participating museums to start reviewing their policies, strategies and practices to reflect lessons learned from the ICH museum projects.
- Testing innovative projects such as this one which aim to introduce new concepts and ways of working within

an established area of practice, in this case management and stewardship of museum collections and curatorial practices and audience engagement using ICH, is never without challenges. The text below expands on the successes and challenges experienced by project participants and ICOMOS-UK in relation to meeting the main project objectives, the implementation of the IP, achieving the right outputs and impact on museums and bearer communities. It also outlines lessons learned for the future.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation report states that museums found the bespoke IP “clear and useful”, “knew what the structure was” and understood the objectives, activities and outputs expected of them. However, they needed some clarification regarding the final outcome, that is “what type of event had to take place”.

The IP gave the participating museums a framework that was flexible enough to suit their individual needs in achieving the project objectives. The document set out clearly and in some detail roles and responsibilities of each participant and the activity/output and associated

content/outcome. This enabled the museums and artists to progress fairly smoothly and quickly against a tight time frame. It proved to be an effective tool for ICOMOS-UK in co-ordinating four disparate museums in four different locations (including their surrounding landscapes and the diverse communities within them), and exploring four different Domains, in a consistent way. As a shared implementation framework, it aided a collaborative spirit and effective communication between all key players and efficient and effective management of the projects on each site.

There were, however, a few limitations from ICOMOS-UK and the museums' points of view. The key ones related to timescale, funding, outcome and selection of Domains.

TIMESCALE

In their feedback, the museums stated that they would have "appreciated more time to develop and implement the projects, so that they align to activity within their forward/business plans". The museums had to reorganise programming priorities and staff time to accommodate the ICH project as it was an unplanned and challenging intervention. Given the low level of awareness of the topic among the key stakeholders, and significant level of collaboration needed with ICH communities, it was surprising that there was only a small slippage in project completion. As it was the first time they had engaged with ICH exclusively, the

museums, artists and bearer communities showed a tremendous amount of goodwill and commitment and were prepared to make extra efforts to ensure that the projects were given adequate time and attention and were successfully implemented.

FUNDING

ICOMOS-UK too had to invest more time than originally envisaged. The PM spent a significant number of hours on visits to the various sites for meetings, events, monitoring of progress and the provision of guidance and expert advice on ICH to museums and artists. This was the case not only in project delivery but also subsequently, in gathering information for the publication. The funding, in particular the in-kind contribution, agreed by ICOMOS-UK at the application stage more than doubled by the time the project and the subsequent documentation of the methodology and lessons learned were completed. This investment from ICOMOS-UK is in addition to the in-kind contribution each of the museums were expected to give in the form of offers of space at the museum for meetings and events, recruitment and management of artists, management of the process and provision of refreshments at the final workshops.

Collaboration with ICH communities is time and resource intensive, especially for serious capacity building among bearers to learn about ICH and for them to assume an equitable partnership with museums in participatory practices, such as this project.

The integration of ICH into museums' collection and programming policies should help overcome the critical issues of time and funding in the long term. In the meantime, ACE and other funders should take note of the resource implication for developmental and/or museum ICH projects of this kind so that adequate budget and time are allocated in the future.

OUTCOME

As for what outcome the final event should deliver, ICOMOS-UK's expectation was a workshop or some kind of activity which demonstrated some or all of the project objectives. Additional deliverables which the museum events were expected to produce included the following:

- a dynamic and creative workshop using art as the key medium for developing interactions and engagement between museum and audiences
- maximum participation from ICH community and other audiences
- a template for similar workshops in the future
- increased understanding and confidence among museum staff to be able to use ICH as an interpretive tool for other collections in the museums

The PM did not wish to be prescriptive and gave the museums the freedom to design the format and content of their events based on the artists' research of the collections, local ICH and bearer communities and the latter groups' views and directions with advisory support from the PM as and when necessary. As the

case studies demonstrate, the museums managed the process remarkably well. All four final events were different in terms of research methodologies and design and content. Additionally, they demonstrated the six criteria set out in the definition of ICH in the 2003 Convention.

CHOICE OF DOMAINS

The museums would have preferred to have had a choice in selecting their ICH Domain. For example, the Weald and Downland Living Museum felt that it would have been more appropriate for it to explore “traditional craftsmanship”, as a significant amount of its work involves historic crafts. ICOMOS-UK acknowledges this as a valid point on the grounds that this museum had to work harder to identify appropriate genres and artists with relevant expertise to create a project illustrating the Domain of “knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe”. However, ICOMOS-UK’s approach did produce some benefits. For example, it prevented museums from selecting identical Domains or similar genres resulting in repetition of projects. Additionally, it challenged the museums to explore ICH and audiences in the widest context possible, taking into account the changing landscapes and populations and their stories. This approach contributed to the following achievements and outcomes, almost every one of them a first for the museums.

- Weald and Downland identified singing of “catches” as an ICH with a strong connection to its buildings collection
- Hastings and Peterborough museums were able to identify gaps in collections

How familiar were you with the concept of Intangible Cultural Heritage as defined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage?

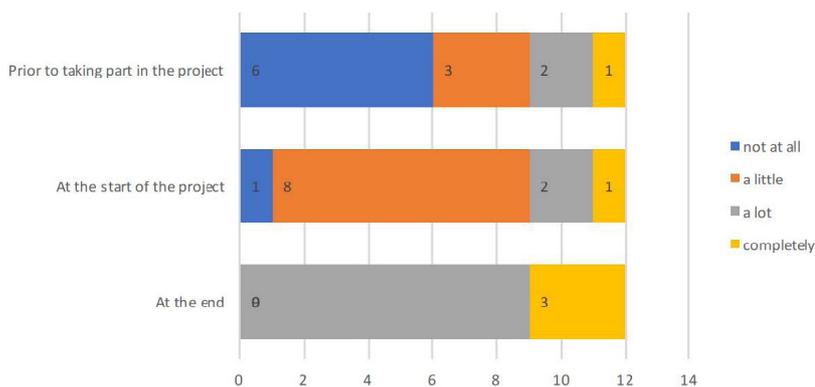


Figure 2. An analysis of responses from the twelve interviewees about their knowledge of ICH prior to being involved in ICOMOS-UK project, at the initiation stage, and post completion of projects. Source: Evaluation Report by Cultural Runner

and/or interpreting policies and secure loans of objects from their local ICH communities

- Museum of Cambridge was able to connect with an important folklore, revived in the 1980s and which promotes a strong local identity and is supported by twenty thousand followers.
- Peterborough found an opportunity to engage with a community with which until then it had not had any contact.

MUSEUMS’ UNDERSTANDING OF ICH

Although this was a short-term, concentrated project, it offered for the first time all four types of participants – museum staff, artists, practising communities and wider public audiences – the opportunity to explore definitions

and concepts, terminologies, examples of genres or elements and the role of bearer communities and UNESCO in safeguarding intangible culture in greater depth. Doubtless, this intense focus helped to raise markedly the general low level of awareness and in some cases complete lack of knowledge among museum staff by the time the final workshops/events were delivered.

Figure 2 shows, the gradual improvement in the knowledge of concepts of ICH by museum representatives (including artists and community/outreach staff) with six of the twelve interviewees (50%) not having heard of ICH prior to becoming involved in ICOMOS-UK ; eight (67%) developing a little knowledge by the start of the project; and nine (75%) achieving a lot of understanding and three (25%)

“complete understanding” by the end of the project. One person summed up the improvement in her personal development as: “it brought me to a new viewpoint on a lot of things that I’ve worked on before, it gives (it) a name and definition”.

Museum staff also learned about the following:

- The geographical spread of some of the evolving or revived local customs and traditions, the bearers responsible for safeguarding them and the methods of transmission or inheritance of those practices from one generation to the next.
- The value of ICH as a useful interpretative tool that connected the guardians and their collective memories with the museums’ collections and their custodians; and the potential for this relationship to result in co-curation and participatory practices and thereby enhance interpretation within the museums or community spaces that reflect local histories, stories, sense of place, globalisation, migration and identities.
- That ICH generally exists within the community and therefore museums need to take their surrounding landscape and its peoples into account when creating or reviewing collection, interpretation and audience development policies.
- Museums can play a critical role in the safeguarding of ICH through research, documentation, promotion and transmission of ICH embedded in local bearer communities.

Though the artists came with some knowledge of the topic, their research activity and engagement with the museums and collections, bearer communities, NGOs, scholars and experts further increased their understanding of it and its value to collections. Working on the project also enhanced their artistic skills in interpreting objects in museums using ICH expressions as was demonstrated at the Museum of Cambridge and Weald and Downland, and interpreting collections and/or intangible culture held within the community through ICH as was the case in Peterborough and Hastings.

Outreach/development staff and the artists noted that the terms “ICH” and “UNESCO”, and UNESCO Guidelines, at times came across as “bureaucratic and ministerial” with potential to “cause confusion” for them and for the communities who had not encountered these expressions previously or regarded their work, practices or interests as ICH. User-friendly definitions, terminologies and explanations had to be developed to communicate the concept of the project and secure bearer’s interaction and participation. Difficulties associated in understanding and applying the formal or technical language was a shared concern among all who were involved in the project.

The final workshops/events began the process of learning about ICH among the non-bearer audiences representing the wider communities who were curious about and interested in gaining knowledge on the topic.

2. How well did the course meet your needs / expectations?

Very well as
introduction to ICOMOS and
ICH!

Figure 3. Standard evaluation of event by an audience member. Source: Evaluation Report by Cultural Runner

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

As communities are the embodiment of intangible cultural expressions, local people’s direct participation was therefore paramount in interpreting the collections associated with their ICH practices at each museum. Unlike the usual passive consultee role communities tend to assume in many community engagement and audience development exercises – including some that aim to provide communities with equitable status but find difficulties to achieving it in practice – the practising communities were active participants in this project. They were empowered by the artists to lead on interpreting their intangible culture and adopt an equitable role in co-curating the workshops with the museums in a variety of ways. For example, they contributed to the research and documentation process, helped to curate the final events, narrated and performed the traditions and loaned the museums objects/artefacts to start a new collection or improve on existing ones.

The participating museums supported the principle of a **“bottom-up”** approach, the cornerstone of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, right from the outset. They translated this commitment into practice by providing artists with access to their collections, assisting with reviews of artefacts in order to try to match objects with local ICH Domains and genres, and offering spaces for activities. They also shared relevant data about the local landscapes and people.

The audience engagement processes adopted for this pilot project brought museums closer to audiences who previously would not have considered their intangible culture to have had any kind of relevance to local museum collections. It also enabled bearers to assume a new role and authority in interpreting museum collections. Under-represented or marginalised communities who had previously resorted to expressing their cultural heritage within the confines of their community (e.g. community halls, places of worship, homes, etc.) were able to claim the museum space: three out of the four events were held at the museums, creating a seamless cultural space between the museums and the local landscapes. In addition, the practising communities were able to draw attention to the limited (or lack of) collections pertaining to cultural traditions of the diverse and evolving populations and landscapes; they thereby steered the museums to review their existing collection policies with a view to replacing them with a more inclusive approach.

As Figure 4 shows, 90% of the staff and artists felt that their ICOMOS-UK ICH project proved to be a strong catalyst for audience engagement and participation. One senior manager remarked that the catalyst value of his museum project for community engagement was more effective than the museum had expected. During the evaluation, a curator noted that “communities were not represented” in the past and this project “helped to start the initial engagement”.

The role of arts development or outreach staff, where they were available and in the employ of either the practising groups or the museums proved to be extremely useful. These included the community/outreach officer working with the Hastings Fishermen’s Protection Society, and the Vivacity arts development officer in Peterborough. Their existing links to key local and regional individuals, community

groups and agencies (e.g. places of worship, schools, faith schools, local and central governments, industries, etc.), and their knowledge of community facilities, the landscape and the socio-economic and political position of people were invaluable in assisting the artists in accessing key actors and organisations within the ICH communities at local and national government level and among and civil society. They were also useful in providing insights into local social, political and cultural nuances in the public domain.

All of the final events attracted a significant number of people who were neither part of the ICH communities, nor had they visited the museums previously. They comprised general visitors on the day or others who had heard about the events and decided to come along to learn about intangible culture.

To what extent has the project been used as a catalyst for audience engagement and participation?

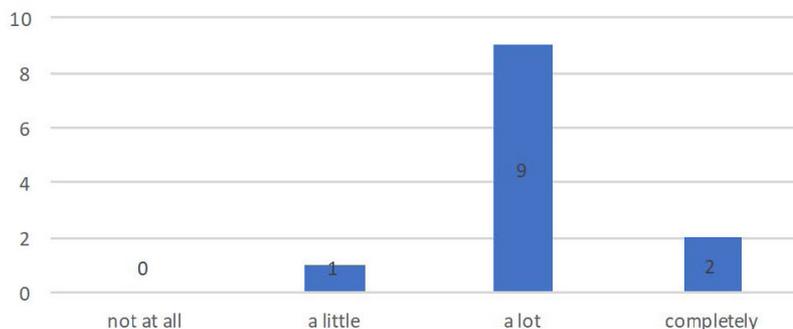


Figure 4. Museum’s perception of the extent to which the project was a catalyst for audience engagement and participation. Source: Evaluation Report by Cultural Runner.

The “Exploring Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Museum Contexts”

project has revealed ICH communities as an untapped audience. The project has demonstrated how the museum sector could increase and diversify its primary audience base if it integrated ICH into all aspects of its activities, in particular its collection, documentation, interpretation communication, and marketing policies. There was also evidence of a secondary audience base made up of researchers, specialists, artists, activists and civil society, and NGOs across the UK, some of whom were consulted by the project facilitators for advice. Given the universal nature of intangible heritage, museums could attract audiences from across the globe as well. For example, many countries have traditions relating to fishing, land and farming, folklore and Muslim song. Numerous cultural traditions are shared heritage, such as the folklore “Straw Bear”, morris dancing and carnivals versions of which are practised in continental Europe and beyond and among the British diaspora.

Participants and audiences were mixed in terms of gender, socio-economic groups, ethnic/cultural background, disability and age. No groups were targeted specifically, suggesting ICH is attractive to all sections and layers of the population regardless of whose heritage it is.

Many of the cultural traditions and customs in the UK are living heritage performed regularly as part of everyday life in the home, socially, in the workplace and as seasonal rituals or religious activities. Some of them have evolved over time, while others are being revived and documented by the practising communities as part of their efforts in safeguarding and transmitting their values, memories, stories and identities to future generations. Therefore, museums need to explore how they could redefine their space and cast their nets wider to take in the surrounding landscape where the intangible elements are rooted, and create new opportunities for collaborative safeguarding activities with the bearers of ICH and other interest groups. Working with bearer communities would prevent museum collections from becoming fossilised as exhibits or ICH being presented merely as peoples’ stories associated with collections, rather than as practising and living cultures that are constantly evolving and adapting; those practices could breathe life into museum’s tangible objects so they are relevant to present-day communities. This approach would recognise that the ownership of the artefacts is shared between the community and museums. Broadening the museums’ spatial boundaries would provide the freedom

for ICH communities to interpret, narrate and relate stories from their point of view in their own settings, using loaned collections to enhance the experience, as was demonstrated by the fishing community in Hastings.

A combination of support and curatorial freedom for practising communities to interpret ICH associated with museum collections and for museums’ functions to incorporate the safeguarding of ICH in its natural and community environment – the landscape and its people – would enable an equitable and seamless participatory practice with mutual benefits for both constituents.

THE ROLE OF THE ARTISTS

The artists delivered their key responsibility – acting as intermediaries between the museums and practising communities, – with ease and confidence and maintained the interest and respect of both groups throughout the life of the projects. This may be in part due to the fact three of them had worked with their museums previously on other projects; and all four had a strong connection with the local people, either because they were part of the local community or had worked with them previously.

The artists' skilled facilitation in matching the museums' aspirations with community need during the project development stages and the final workshops was unique and creative. It aided the development of new methods and experiences in tripartite collaborative curating between heritage, arts and ICH elements. Their contractual obligations to the museums did not hinder their artistic talent or freedom. There was mutual respect for one another's roles, responsibilities and professional capabilities which produced a seamless connection between the museums and bearers.

As Figure 5 shows, all interviewees (100%) agreed that overall the project facilitated interaction and collaboration between the two main stakeholder groups, with 41% curatorial staff

quantifying it to be on the low side against 58 % stating that they achieved high level of collaboration.

It was interesting to note that oral tradition genres (singing, poetry, oral history/stories) were chosen as modes of expression by all four projects. Accepting that there are usually overlaps between the five Domains – for example, singing is an oral tradition as well as a performing art and a ritual or social practice – the exclusive focus on oral tradition (albeit of different kinds) may have been due to the artists already being proficient in this area; it therefore made sense for the artists to play to their strengths, especially with the short timescale for the project development and execution. The artists at Weald and Downland and Peterborough had been involved in promoting catches and Muslim songs respectively; and

the Cambridge project was led by a poet, supported by the team, working on the museum's own project **"Tracing Traditions"** which documented modern stories and traditions in Cambridgeshire. Similarly, Hastings opted to tell stories of the fishing community spanning three generations.

Oral history projects and programmes tend to have been the mainstay of community culture and heritage across the UK, encouraged for many decades by dedicated arts and entertainment funding by local authorities. They have been targeted at promoting community development and cohesion, spirit of place, racial equality/cultural diversity, and sustainability. More recently, funders such as the Heritage Lottery Fund have offered small grants to communities to celebrate their cultural heritage. Perhaps a longer lead-in time and the opportunity to choose their own Domains may have given the museums and artists the option of exploring other modes of expression. This is an area that needs further consideration in the future by ICH communities, museums and funding agencies and others engaged in the promotion and protection of intangible culture.

ICOMOS-UK's project has highlighted a huge potential for artists and the arts sector to raise awareness of and to be actively involved in the interpretation of collections through intangible culture and in the safeguarding of ICH among practising communities, either unilaterally or in partnership with museums and the wider heritage and/or other sectors.

To what extent has the project facilitated interaction and collaboration between specialist ICH communities of interest, curatorial staff - heritage

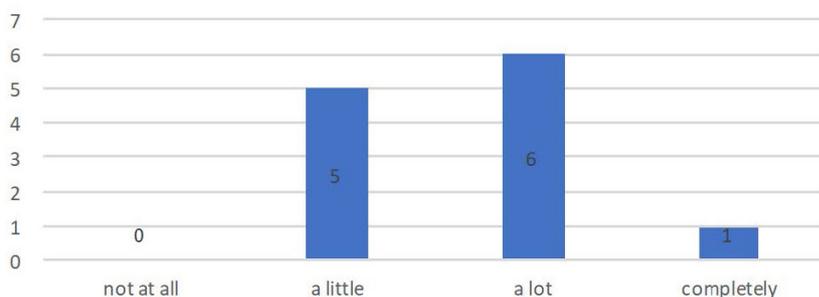


Figure 5. Level of collaboration between museums and ICH communities
Source: Evaluation Report by Cultural Runner

SUSTAINABILITY

In his speech at the Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery ICH event, the local Mayor acknowledged the benefit of ICH in promoting “community cohesion and intercultural dialogue” – key ingredients for developing sustainable communities. These two elements were integral to the ICOMOS-UK’s ICH projects. For the first time in the UK, these museum projects helped to build relationships between cultural agencies and bearer communities and the wider public through developing and harnessing synergies between tangible collections and intangible narratives from outside the museum spaces.

The projects also demonstrated the following:

- evolving or revived traditions associated with sustainable livelihoods (e.g. fishing traditions in Hastings; the connections between people, landscape, environment and the structures in them at Weald and Downland Living Museum) and
- Sustaining diverse and shared heritages and identities (e.g. passing down of a singing tradition in settler/migrant community and the fusing of English Heptatonic scale with Arab and Indian scales in Peterborough; the revival of an old folklore tradition relating to agriculture and harvest that embodies a strong local identity made relevant to modern communities in Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire).

Immediately following the completion of the projects, each of the participating museums embarked on actions aimed to sustain the progress made, and considered longer-term responses that would build on the foundation laid by their engagement with ICH.

EXAMPLES OF SHORT-TERM MEASURES

- All museums were keen to continue with the relationships that had been established with bearers and their community-level structures and other local museums
- Based on the success of the initial workshop, Weald and Downland Living Museum invited the artist to run further informal “catches” workshops for the wider public and visitors during the summer. Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery stated that it would consider working with the artist in the future.
- Two of the museums started mutual loaning of objects. Hastings Museum & Art Gallery loaned objects for the ICH event and agreed a home for some of the objects donated to the event by the fishing community. Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery started a new archive comprising interviews with the Muslim community and the final concert. It was also considering a permanent display of the musical instruments donated by the community.
- Museum policies were reviewed against the lessons learned from the ICH projects, especially those pertaining to collections, interpretation, audience development, community engagement and knowledge development among staff.

KEY MEDIUM-TERM GOALS

- The museums are committed to embedding lessons learned from ICOMOS-UK’s pilot into their long-term strategic planning processes while continuing to strengthen the relationships formed with the existing bearers, new audiences, and community agencies. There are plans to identify new partnerships with other ICH-practising groups.
- Weald and Downland Living Museum is seeking to explore the four remaining Domains, which it considers are also relevant to the crafts and skills used in the maintenance of its collections. Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery and Vivacity are exploring ways to embed the learning and connections acquired from the ICOMOS-UK’s methodology in other sectors. Additionally, Vivacity is keen to continue to promote inclusion through ICH-related activities to ensure the pilot project does not become a token gesture.
- Energised by ICOMOS-UK’s pilot project, Hastings Fishermen’s Protection Society, along with local partners, wish to continue with ICH work and plan to undertake another project which would concentrate on the documentation and sharing of stories of fishermen’s wives and the cataloguing of oral histories for the museum collection. It would be the focus of a bid for external funding.

NEXT STEPS

On the basis of the evidence gathered from the four case studies, ICOMOS-UK's ICHC believes that the methodology tested in this pilot project is robust and flexible enough to deliver ACE's original ambitions. Namely, to:

- improve museums knowledge of the concept of ICH and the principles underpinning UNESCO's 2003 Convention
- translate intangible culture into practice in the management of collections and their stewardship and audience engagement
- understand the dynamism and synergies produced by the three-way co-curation process between museums and bearer communities, supported by visual and performing artists
- align ICH with ACE's development priorities, policies, strategies, practices at corporate and local levels.

ICOMOS-UK also believes that the embedding of the new methodology derived from the pilot project in the South East region (and beyond) is essential to:

- sustaining the significant investment the four participating museums, local authorities and other agencies, and the diverse bearer communities have made during the pilot period, and the

short- and medium-term plans they have made for further progress.

- enabling ACE and the wider museum sector to keep abreast with developments nationally and internationally through informed participation in discourses and practices associated with the integration of ICH into museums' work and the synergies between tangible and intangible heritage
- informing ACE's strategic direction with regard to development of the museum and arts sectors and audience engagement

Additionally, feedback from the four participating museums during evaluation shows that they were keen to continue with the work they started during the pilot period (this is borne out by information provided in the case studies). They went on to indicate that there was "relevance for this activity (pilot project) beyond the museums who took part in the pilot".

The ICH Committee strongly supports the dissemination of the methodology across the South East region and the rest of England. However, it recommends that any plans to roll out the pilot project to the regions in the future should consider the following points.

- The methodology should be refined to incorporate the key findings and lessons learned in collaboration with the ICH Committee
- There is a tremendous need for capacity building among museums to improve their understanding of ICH and the 2003 Convention and its relevance for the management of collections. The production of a manual (tool kit) and a training programme for museums to learn about ICH and to assist them with the design and implementation of ICH projects would be a pre-requisite to a general roll out of the pilot.
- Participatory practices involving bearers (individuals and communities) are resource-intensive and should not be dependent on the goodwill of professionals and communities. Bearer communities should be strongly encouraged to access funding for capacity building in order to enable them to understand and safeguard ICH and to engage with museums.
- Small independent museums are usually located at the heart of ICH-practising communities. They are in an ideal position to take the museums and collections to the communities and to support bearers' efforts to safeguard

their practices in situ. They form a critical group in the promotion of ICH through participatory methods. However, their staffing, finance, knowledge and skills capacity need strengthening and would benefit from a capacity building programme.

- Exploration is needed of how ACE's museum and arts development and other grant programmes could be expanded to include a definition of ICH and its relevance for the museums and a justification for the funding of ICH as an entity.
- There should be greater promotion of the role of ICH as a means to foster better collaboration between artists and museums and other cultural services for which ACE is responsible (e.g. arts, dance, music and libraries).

It is the intention of ICH Committee to continue with the partnership it has established with ACE, and there are plans for showcasing the "Exploring Intangible Cultural Heritage in Museum Contexts" project case studies at **ICOMOS-UK's next conference scheduled for March 2019**. The focus for the conference will be "transmission"- the passing on of cultural traditions to future generations as part of safeguarding ICH in the UK.

Finally, there is a further key issue that is worthy of mention here. During the implementation of this initiative, there was a significant level of interest among all participants and many bearers as to why the UK has not ratified the 2003 Convention.

The UK's heritage is a rich, diverse, vibrant, dynamic and constantly evolving but also complex, tapestry with many layers of shared heritages resulting from its history of invasions, empire, colonisation, migration, and involvement in globalisation. The UK's "super diverse" communities have practised their customs and traditions within their local environment for centuries, and in the last five or more decades, at least, local governments, ACE, HLF and other funding agencies have been promoting them, in the main successfully, through the funding of small grants for community arts, entertainment and heritage projects with varying degree of ICH content, and without labelling it as ICH.

There have been calls for ratification of the Convention from bearers, politicians, civil society, arts and heritage practitioners, and others since 2003, when the Convention came into force. There have also been concerns in some quarters that some of our heritage could be lost forever due to the lack of national policies on ICH and a belief that ratification would provide the necessary policy framework to prevent that happening. However, there are others who argue that ratification would create a hierarchy of cultural practices, some would be seen as worthier of protection and promotion than others and who question whether it would be feasible to safeguard all ICH practices. Also, inscription of ICH to the World Heritage List may lead to the 'folklorisation' and/or commercialisation of ICH for tourism and prevent it from evolving.

Furthermore, we cannot ignore those ICH elements that promote negative practices such as inequalities between genders, racial discrimination, stereotypes and nationalism leading to violence and oppressive behaviour towards some individuals and/or sections of society. There is an increasing concern that there is a lack of focus on modern traditions which are being lost at a rapid rate, and need safeguarding for future generations.

The response to the Convention has varied between different parts of the UK. Scotland is totally committed to ratification and Wales would support ratification too; however, the UK Central Government's response as recorded in written answers to Parliamentary questions on ratification and on plans for safeguarding ICH (Hansard 17 and 21 May 2012 respectively) is vague.

Much of the discourse on the UK's ICH to date has been confined to the academic community which has been researching and writing about it in conjunction with counterparts from other parts of the world, at least since 2003.

There is a need for a more coherent approach to debating the key issues identified above; bearers who are the carriers of ICH have to date have had very little involvement. They need to take a central role in future discourses and debates. ICOMOS-UK ICHC's work has and will continue to pave the path for the promotion of ICH and the collaborative exercise between ACE and ICHC – "Exploring Intangible Cultural Heritage in Museum Contexts" – is an exemplar action in this regard.

GLOSSARY

EXPLANATIONS OF ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND OTHER TERMS USED IN THIS REPORT.

ACE

Arts Council England.

artist; facilitator

Terms used interchangeably in the context of this specific project: the artist was employed by the museum to facilitate community engagement in the development and delivery of an ICH project.

bearer/bearer communities; ICH communities; practising communities; specialist communities; followers; practitioners

Terms used interchangeably in this report to refer to individuals, groups and communities who are engaged in practising and safeguarding intangible cultural heritage practices (see 'elements; genres' below).

civil society

Non profit-making organisations or 'NGOs' (see below) representing individuals and communities who are engaged in practising and safeguarding customs and cultural heritage.

Domain; Specialism

Terms used interchangeably in this report to refer to the five Domains or Specialisms listed in the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The 'elements' or 'genres' (see below) are grouped under each of the appropriate Domains or Specialisms.

duff

A circular musical instrument with one of its sides covered in leather. Some examples have metal discs around them. It is used as an accompaniment for performances of folklore songs including religious poetry.

dyelli

Dyelli were bards (griots), as well as spokesmen and masters of ceremonies for the king usually in West Africa. As guardians of oral traditions, they narrated stories about the kingdom and other aspects of life. They were also courtiers who advised the king.

elements; genres

Defined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention as 'practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage'. UNESCO refers to these as 'elements' and ICOMOS-UK has used the term 'genres' simultaneously since its ICH Committee was established in 2012. All lists of elements/genres are not exhaustive.

griots

Traditional storytellers, musicians and praise singers found usually in West Africa. Their origins date back several centuries.

HFPS

Hastings Fishermen's Protection Society.

ICCROM

International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property

ICH

Intangible Cultural Heritage.

ICHC

Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee (of ICOMOS-UK).

ICOMOS-UK

International Council of Monuments and Sites – United Kingdom.

IP

Implementation Plan.

IUCN

International Union for Conservation of Nature.

maqam

A system of melody types found in Arabic, Persian and Turkish classical music. It comprises a complex set of rules which provide the framework for composing and performance.

MERL

Museum of English Rural Life.

MoL

Museum of London.

NGOs

Non-Governmental Organisations.

participatory practice

In museums and community development, this term refers to communities taking an active role so that they have status equal to that of the formal agencies seeking to engage with them. The engagement could take place in the museum or externally within community spaces.

PM

Project Manager.

project participants

This term is generally used to refer to museum staff, artists and outreach or development staff in the employ of the museums or practising communities.

raga

A pattern of notes in most Indian classical music. It is different to the scale or melody of Western music. Every raga has a particular ascending and descending pattern reflecting time, mood, season or a special occasion.

seamless interface

In the context of this report this phrase means the smooth interactions between the museums and the ICH communities which breaks down separations caused by structural, professional and practice boundaries.

Straw Bear march

The traditional music to which the Straw Bear processed around the streets, along with its master and musicians and followed by many visitors and dancers.

UNESCO

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Whittlesey; Whittlesea

Both these terms refer to the same place in Cambridgeshire. Whittlesey is the old version of the name, and the Museum of Whittlesey continues to use this spelling. The Straw Bear Festival describes the place as Whittlesea.

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