

Roots & Branches

Seeds for Action Case Study 2022-23



Festival for the Future

West Cheshire Museums

West Cheshire Museums

West Cheshire Museums is a local authority museum service responsible for:

- the Grosvenor Museum (Chester),
- Weaver Hall Museum (Northwich),
- The Lion Salt Works (Marston), and
- Stretton Watermill (Malpas).

Our sites and collections tell the story of Cheshire's history, people, and places, from prehistoric times to the present day.



The project: Festival for the Future

Inspired by the climate emergency, our natural history collection, and the work of local communities, we organised a **sustainability festival** that toured each of our museum sites throughout July 2022. 'Festival for the Future' presented an exciting opportunity to promote sustainability in a fun, uplifting way, using museum spaces, stories, and collections to explore the climate crisis.

A diverse programme of **activities, workshops, and events** accompanied a travelling **Augmented Reality exhibition** about plastic pollution, featuring items from West Cheshire Museums' collection. **Working with local sustainability groups, practitioners, and small businesses**, our programming combined craft fairs with outdoor yoga and open mic nights; 'climate ceilidhs' with clothes swaps and litter picks; pub quizzes with schools' competitions, eco-storytelling, and specialist talks. We also **collaborated with a local circus troupe**, Barnton Circus, using museum collections to inspire a creative response to the climate and ecological crisis.



Impacts and Outcomes



The project inspired new connections with local businesses, schools, practitioners, initiatives, and community groups.

Introductions to local zero-waste shops, eco practitioners, and sustainability networks have created exciting opportunities for future collaboration. We look forward to nurturing these partnerships and being an active presence at local eco-events, starting with Great Big Green Week in September.



Working with Barnton Circus presented exciting new ways to interpret our collections and tell their stories.

Their 'Scrapyard Circus' routine took inspiration from our recycled collections, using found items to create an engaging, entertaining, and imaginative show. The performance attracted new audiences that wouldn't ordinarily engage with our sites and collections, and brought fresh perspectives to museum stories. We would be very interested in doing more projects like this in the future.



The festival brought new audiences to our sites

We recorded high numbers of first-time visitors to our museums at festival events, and many visitors also reported attending events at additional sites. Our mailing list and our social media following have both grown, and the project has provided a great opportunity to evaluate how and where we promote events.

Impacts and Outcomes



The festival has had a positive impact on sustainability in our local area.

Barnton Circus are looking to embed sustainability into their future projects. Our craft fairs supported small sustainable businesses (including several first-time sellers), and two of our eco-practitioners have received new commissions from the festival.



The project has created new development opportunities for staff.

Members of staff were able to attend Carbon Literacy training, which has brought greater awareness of environmental issues to the museum team. The service has never done a project across all 4 sites before, and the process afforded many different opportunities for staff CPD.



We are sharing our resources with other local museums.

The touring exhibition created for the festival will go on loan to Chester Cathedral and Museums of Cheshire venues throughout 2022 and 2023. This is a great way for us to share our collections more widely, broaden our audiences, and collaborate with other museums.

Challenges and Barriers



Sustainable transport

We were keen to encourage sustainable transport to festival events, but due to the **location of our sites**, this was more difficult than anticipated. Stretton Watermill and the Lion Salt Works are **not directly accessible by public transport**, and there proved to be **no suitable cycle routes** to promote.

For the Northwich event, which was hosted across two sites two miles apart, we **had hoped to advertise walking** between venues, but the route was long-winded, inaccessible, and too difficult to risk-assess.

We encouraged staff to travel as sustainably as possible – for example, car-sharing on festival days, and practitioners travelling long distances were asked to take the train for as much of their journey as possible.



Resources

Video

Find out more about the
Festival for the Future 2022.
(3 minutes 52 seconds)



Resources

Video

This short film explores the impact of plastic framed by items from the museum collections.
(2 minutes 29 seconds)

Film created by Dextra Visual.



The River Dee last froze over in 1963.

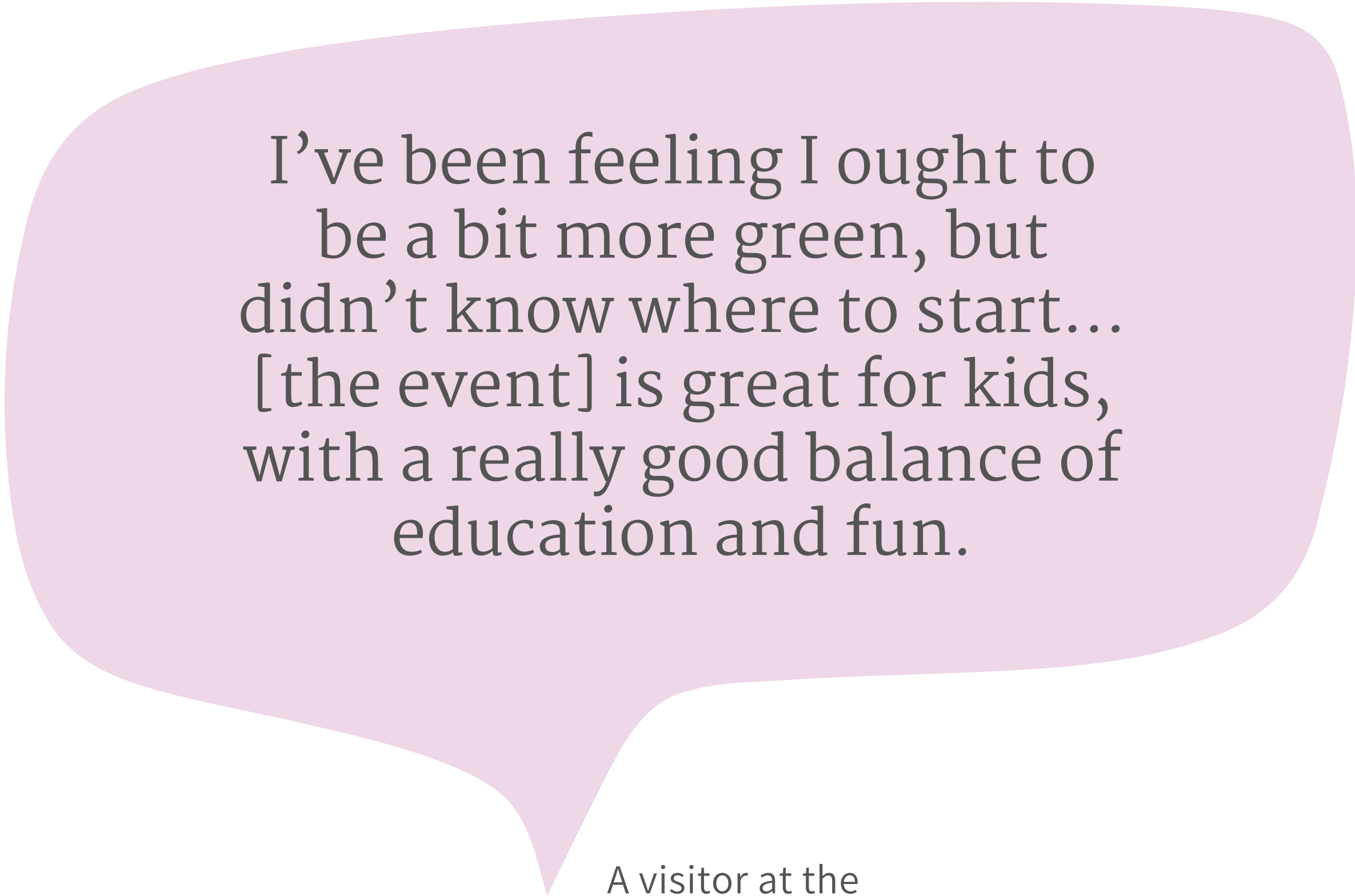


“

A great showcase of local talent, packed with loads of ideas and inspiration for sustainable living... we came away from the Chester fair with some fantastic reusable products, feeling very inspired about how to be more eco-friendly in the future.

A visitor who attended all four events





I've been feeling I ought to
be a bit more green, but
didn't know where to start...
[the event] is great for kids,
with a really good balance of
education and fun.

A visitor at the
Northwich event

Next steps and future climate actions

- We will join **Culture Declares Emergency** and write a **sustainability policy** for the museum. The policy will help to set out our commitment to sustainability, identify our goals, and create an action plan for the museum service going forward.
- We hope to **make the festival an annual event**. Funding permitting, we would like to make the festival an annual celebration of sustainability in our local area, with a different exhibition and events programme every time.
- We will **develop a contemporary collection around climate and sustainability**. Our collections helped to inspire the festival, and we are keen to build a contemporary collection addressing the climate emergency. This will involve working with local communities and sustainability networks to identify items and stories.

Find out more



Public call out for input to the West Cheshire Museums exhibition about plastic pollution and climate change [on their website](#)



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Roots & Branches

Seeds for Action – case studies



The **Seeds for Action Programme** is part of the Roots & Branches project. It aims to connect Carbon Literate Certified museum people across England to develop and build on their carbon reduction strategies and approaches to taking climate action.



By pooling our **collective expertise and resources**, we can save ourselves time and money, and tackle the climate emergency more effectively together. Feel free to **share this case study** with others.



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