

The Great Escape: Online workshop for museums

Tuesday 27 July, 1pm – 2.30pm

If you missed our second online workshop, don't worry – it's one in a series that we will be delivering to share updates about The Great Escape and how you can get involved.

Here's a summary of what we discussed and some of the key takeaways, including who to contact.

Project update with Jo Paton Htay, project director

Key points:

- We have listened to museums, colleagues, and teachers across the UK, and designed a project we hope will be impactful, relevant, imaginative, fun, and easy – we acknowledge pressure, anxiety and lack of resource.
- Arts Council England have awarded a major National Lottery Project Grant to support us, the biggest they've ever awarded to a museum project through that programme and making them our lead supporter. This means we can get to work on defining financial support that will be available to organisations and networks in all four nations.
- Art Fund have assigned funds to the project and are now seeking to confirm further funds from a variety of sources to support the project.
- We're planning to launch the application process for mid-September, with as long an application window as possible.
- Museums can apply individually, collectively, or use this to complement existing activity.
- In September, we can tell you how media and other UK-wide partners will be involved.
- We're working hard to get everything ready for September and are keen to hear your ideas and connect to find out more about existing programmes and projects you are doing.
- If you want to make contact with your schools in time for their first day back, we will have information you can send to them – [please reach out to us](#).
- We will be at REMIX in London and GEM in Derby in September, talking about The Great Escape – please do come along if you would like to hear more and talk to us in person.

There are a number of ways museums can participate:

1. Attach this activity to your existing programme, particularly if your collection or exhibition programme is exploring environmental questions.
2. Promote this activity to your school's network or use it to make new connections to schools in your area – we will provide resources you can use/edit locally, from draft letters to schools, to teacher packs and activities. Our resources will tick curriculum boxes for 7–11-year olds' Science topics, including: living things, habitats, the world around us, planet earth and biodiversity, in all four nations.
3. Suggest a different activity that you'd like to do under The Great Escape banner – one of the major advantages of being involved will be the visibility we will create around the project, so will help you to find new schools and family audiences.
4. Plan school holidays & Earth Day weekend activities with us for 2023.

We asked: *"What immediate ideas do you have for projects now you have more information about the support available?"*

You said:

- Outdoor biodiversity monitoring activities (e.g. bat spotting) with curriculum links
- Engage with families and schools: family trails around collections, virtual drawing sessions with local schools, follow-up to existing workshops with natural history focus
- Focus on migratory species and topics around sense of home and 'native' plants, leading to discussion of food transport
- Collaboration with new artists, artists in residence and engaged artists in the area
- Link outdoor spaces with indoor collections and online content, which can be built upon
- Opportunity for museums to create local collective working groups, share their approach to sustainability with peers, compare notes and make sense of it all!
- Professional development opportunity

Guest speaker: Liam Gifford, Young People's Producer, Play to the Crowd

We know that many museum learning colleagues are already skilled at bringing youth voice into projects. We asked Liam to provide a sector adjacent view on how his theatre puts young people at the centre of decision making for learning programmes, to provide useful content regardless of the level of practice colleagues were bringing to the workshop. Summary of the structure he uses to inform their work:

- Provide - An opportunity to bring people together
- Listen - Dedicate time to listen and gather the strands of information
- Analyse - All the strands of information gathered
- Yarn - Spin a good yarn. Bring through all the strands together into your opportunities/work

We asked: *"What advice would you give colleagues who want to plan school activities that put children's voice at the centre?"*

You said:

- Build relationships with school incrementally, keep talking/thinking about the long term (TGE can initiate a longer-term relationship)
- Set as few constraints as possible within the scope of the project
- Survey local schools and analyse feedback
- Don't assume young people's interests
- Don't overload children with facts to squash their own creativity
- Be conscious of the barriers that exist already to making a visit
- Be patient – you might not see immediate rewards, but it's worth the investment
- Centre play and experimentation and celebrate the outcomes, even if unexpected
- Create time at the start for conversation, provoke and facilitate conversations, listen, and help them listen to each other
- Self-led resources and time give space for children to form opinions and digest content
- Support facilitator's professional development as it is important and tricky

Thanks to all who came to the workshop and contributed to the discussions – we're grateful for your insight and for taking time out of your day to join us. We will vary the days/times of future workshops so more people can join in. You're welcome to join as many or as few as is convenient – we will send notes after each one.

If you have any comments or questions, please contact the team: thegreatescapeproject@artfund.org