



CONSULTATION GUIDELINES - Responding to Community Feedback and Ideas

Introduction

The Wilson, Cheltenham's Art Gallery and Museum's collection galleries have been closed since 2019. In 2023 redevelopment of these galleries began, leaving us with fresh permanent museum collections galleries ready to share the stories which are important to Cheltenham's communities.

In 2024 The Wilson received seed funding from Museum Development South West to undertake initial consultation with our communities. This seed funding was used to support the Wilson to obtain further critical funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund and The Friends of the Wilson to start the process of redisplaying and reinterpreting the galleries and reopening them to the public once more.

This project is an opportunity for The Wilson to ensure our new collections galleries are relevant to our communities as inspirational learning spaces - ensuring that the new museum reflects the communities we serve. To do this we will be embarking on a year long public consultation to collect community feedback and ideas.

This document was created to share with Cheltenham's communities the ways in which we will ensure that all feedback and ideas collected throughout the consultation process are properly reviewed, addressed, and integrated into the museum's planning, design, and exhibition processes in a transparent, respectful, and meaningful way. All feedback and opinions will be recorded and processed in the following ways, with the impact culminating in a tiered format.

Responding to Feedback and Ideas

1. Transparent Acknowledgment of Feedback

Summary of Feedback: The Wilson will regularly publish summaries of community feedback—both on the museum's website and within physical spaces like the Test Space/Makers Space or during community events. This transparency allows everyone to see how their ideas are being considered and used in all stages of the process.

Recognition of Contributions: The Wilson will publicly recognise the individuals, groups, and communities whose contributions were central in shaping the museum. This will be through acknowledgment on a "Contributors Wall" which will be displayed in our Makers Space and inclusion on our CBMP webpages and social media.

Analysis and Categorisation of Feedback

Data Collection and Categorisation: Feedback will be collected through diverse methods—surveys, interviews, focus groups/workshops, and informal conversations. This will be categorised to identify common themes, concerns, and ideas. These areas will be:

Exhibition Themes

Collections

Accessibility Needs

Object Preferences

Interactives/Display Components

This way, all comments can be categorised, accumulated and heard as a 'wider voice'. Once gathered in these categories, we will identify key ideas that are coming through. We will also use text analysis to find 'buzzwords' and common threads that will help us to utilise and progress the feedback in a clear way.

Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis: The Wilson will use both quantitative (survey responses, ratings) and qualitative (comments, open-ended feedback) methods to analyse the data. This helps ensure that not only the number of people expressing an opinion is considered but also the depth and reasoning behind it. An external evaluator will be documenting the process and building a report throughout the project which will be available to see after the museum has reopened.

Prioritisation: Feedback will be organised by its importance to the project. While all feedback is valuable, some ideas may align more directly with the project's vision, mission, or available resources. Prioritisation should ensure the most impactful suggestions are given attention, while still considering all ideas.

The Wilson will prioritise the following categories to best aid in the development of the museum exhibitions:

Exhibition Themes

Collections

3. Response and Action Plan

Feedback Loop and Action Plan: After analysing the feedback, The Wilson promises to provide a clear action plan for how the museum intends to respond. This will be in the form of a public report published in a dedicated section of the museum's website, and in a newsletter. This report will include:

- **What We Heard:** Summarise the major themes and ideas shared by the community.
- **What We Will Do:** Outline specific actions the museum will take based on the feedback. This could involve implementing certain suggestions (e.g., choosing particular objects or stories for exhibition), adjusting exhibition designs, improving accessibility, or expanding specific community outreach initiatives.
- **What We Can't Do:** If some key or recurring ideas or requests cannot be incorporated due to practical, logistical, financial, or other constraints, we will endeavour to explain why where possible.

4. Continuous Feedback Integration

Regular Updates: Ensure that the community is informed of changes and developments throughout the consultation process. As CBMP progresses, we will provide updates on how community feedback is influencing the design and implementation phases through digital updates in the Makers Space, museum's website and social media platforms, showcasing how feedback is shaping different elements of the museum project.

Iterative Adjustments: The consultation process should be viewed as an ongoing dialogue rather than a one-time event. As the design and content of the museum evolve beyond the open consultations and Test Space, we will ensure there are continued opportunities for the community to provide input on new ideas, prototypes, and concepts through multiple open workshop sessions and online forms.

5. Creating Feedback Transparency with Data Visualisation

Community-Driven Data: The Wilson will make the data collected available to the public in an accessible format. This will include visual timelines of the consultation processes, online feedback platforms, interactive maps showing areas where the Museum on Wheels has visited, and the kinds of feedback gathered in each location.

6. Involving the Community in Decision-Making

Advisory Committees: Form an advisory panel/community advisory group that include diverse representatives from Cheltenham's communities. This panel will help make shape key elements such as exhibition content, design choices, and the selection of objects for the collections galleries based on the feedback analysis from consultations. The advisory group will meet periodically to review ongoing feedback and guide the museum on collaborative decisions.

Community Votes or Polls: For certain decisions (e.g., choosing between exhibition themes, final object selections, or interactive features), the community will be invited to vote on their preferences through open workshops and online feedback forms and social media polls.

Collaborative Workshops: Involve the community in co-curation workshops to refine the museum's collections, exhibits, and content. This can also include community-led creation of art installations or participatory events that respond directly to the feedback gathered.

7. Addressing Community Concerns and Aspirations

Feedback Q&A: The Wilson will provide a forum at the end of 2025/early 2026 where community members can directly ask questions about the feedback process and the museum's responses. These can be virtual or in-person Q&A sessions where museum staff address concerns and ensure participants feel their ideas are being taken seriously.

Conflict Resolution: There is every possibility that feedback we receive will be contrasting, and that there are disagreements in the importance of ideas and decision making from different community groups. In this instance we will use our processes outlined above to continue consultations and mediate these scenarios to ensure they are fairly explored.

8. Documenting and Reflecting on the Feedback Journey

Community Feedback Archives: We will create a public archive or digital repository where key stages of feedback, along with responses and actions taken, can be reviewed. This transparency ensures that community members can trace how their ideas have shaped the project over time.

Post-Opening Review: Once the museum has reopened, there will be an evaluation carried out by a professional external evaluator of how community engagement has influenced the final museum experience.

Thank you for your time and contribution, you are helping us build a better museum.

If you would like to contact us about our external guidelines for community feedback, please email: bigmuseum@cheltenhamtrust.org.uk