



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

International
Centre for Heritage

Supporting Wellbeing At Heritage Places

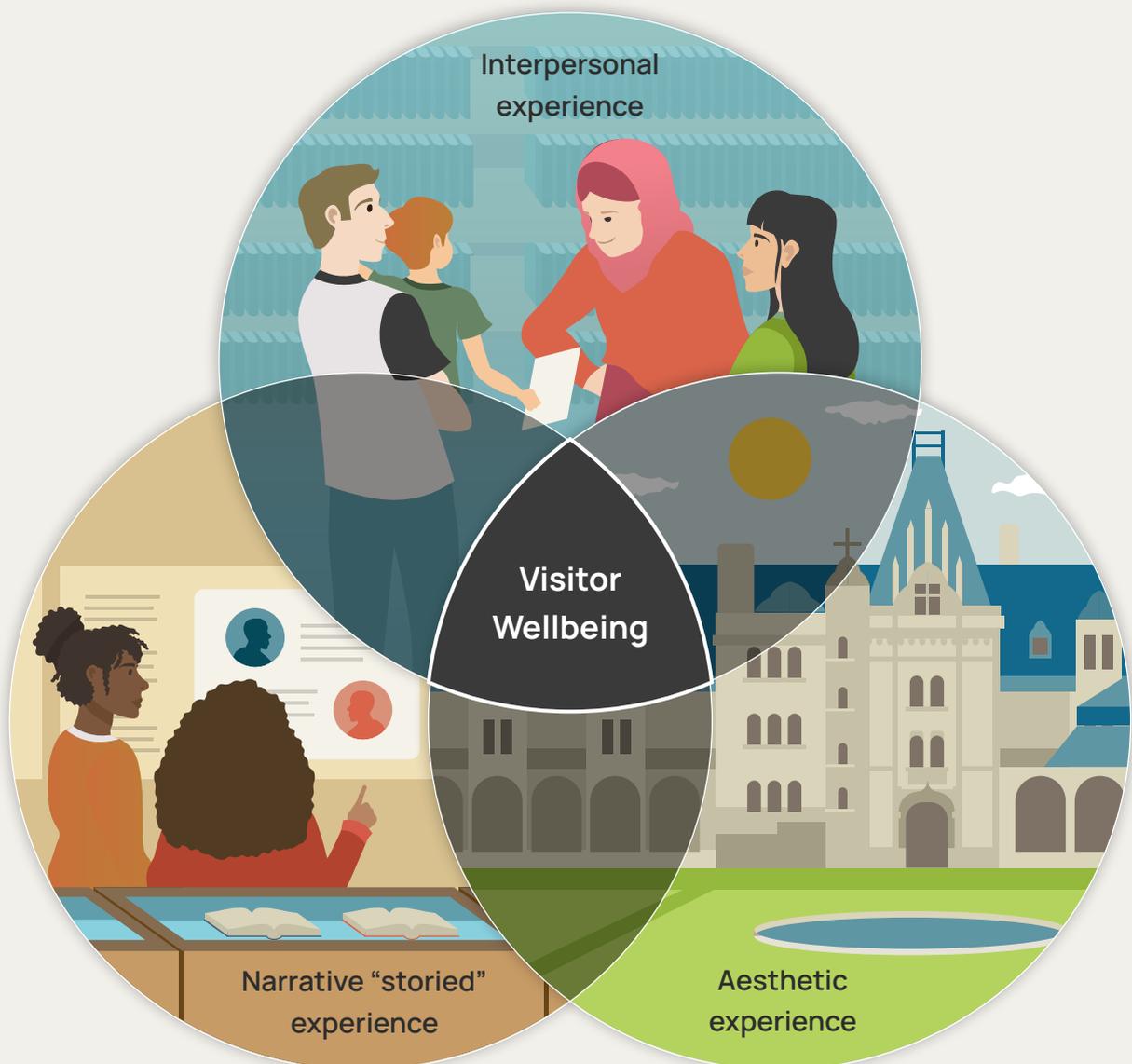


Introduction

This booklet supports heritage organisations and professionals to enhance visitor and community wellbeing and help reduce wellbeing inequalities. It introduces a **research-based visitor experience model**, outlines **practical, evidence-informed interventions** based on behaviour change principles, and **highlights case studies, resources,**

and further reading to inspire and guide action for wellbeing through heritage.

Our research shows that to support visitor wellbeing, heritage experiences should help people **connect with others, discover meaningful stories, and enjoy beauty and creativity** in their surroundings.



Capabilities, Opportunities & Motivators

Our research shows that behavioural science, including tools like COM-B and the Behaviour Change Wheel, can help heritage organisations design interventions that

support visitor wellbeing. This means considering the capabilities, opportunities, and motivations that shape how visitors engage with and enjoy a heritage site.



Physical Capability

Refers to whether a person has the necessary strength, stamina, and physical requirements or abilities to engage in a behaviour (i.e. in the related barriers around fitness and disability)



Psychological Capability

Refers to those factors which are involved in a person's mental functioning which influence the likelihood of a behaviour being carried out (i.e. knowledge, and behavioural skills)



Physical Opportunity

Refers to the inanimate parts of the environment and time, that shape the opportunity to carry out a behaviour (i.e. resources such as time, money, transport)



Social Opportunity

Refers to interpersonal factors (including other people and organisations) that afford opportunity to engage in a behaviour (i.e. social support, culture, norms and modelling)



Reflective Motivation

Refers to motivation involving conscious thought process, which increase the likelihood of engaging in a behaviour (i.e. beliefs, personal and professional identities, plans and goals)



Automatic Motivation

Refers to motivation involving automatic processes which increase the likelihood of a behaviour occurring (i.e. emotional reactions and drives, habits)

7 Steps to Wellbeing Equality

Every visitor's experience is unique. People's backgrounds, identities, and life experiences – including factors such as gender, ethnicity, age, disability, and socioeconomic background – shape how they connect with and experience heritage.

Recognising and responding to this diversity is essential for promoting

wellbeing equality through heritage. By understanding different needs, motivations, and barriers, heritage organisations can create meaningful and inclusive experiences for everyone.

Our research identifies seven practical steps heritage organisations can take to help promote wellbeing equality.

7

Heritage Places

Steps to Wellbeing Equality

1



Be Creative

Provide places for indoor and outdoor multisensory, active, performative and creative engagements, experiences and interactions.

Be Experts

Provide opportunities and experiences for staff, visitors and the community to share knowledge and be experts by experience, to give a voice to their familial and community knowledge.

2

3



Be Challenging

Develop community-led and intergenerational content that tells hidden, untold, complex and ethically sensitive stories. Provide opportunities in narratives to link the past to present societal challenges.

Be Emotional

Tell stories of real people and their lives, and of their challenges. Support visitors to emotionally engage with people from the past through reflecting, remembering and recognising shared emotional experiences.

4

5



Be Inclusive

Treat everyone with dignity, respect people as individuals and show kindness. Create a culture of inclusivity, providing spaces and time for staff, visitors and the community to have conversations, listen, understand and be responsive to physical and mental requirements.

Be Personal

Recognise how personal lived experiences and motivations affect people's visits. Adapt interpretative content, modes of communication, and outdoor and indoor spaces to offer choices in experiences, including places to relax, to connect through play, to learn and to reflect.

6

7



Be Open

Liaise and listen to the local community, respond to their needs, understand the barriers to people visiting, adapt to feedback and build trust. Be open to hosting community events and supporting initiatives to provide free access to spaces.

Behavioural Change Intervention Framework for Heritage Sites

Function/Framework

Intervention Proposal

Education

Physical Capability

Accessibility

Social Opportunity

Personal Interactions,
Interpersonal and Personal
Experiences

Reflection Motivation

Identity,
Belonging and Placemaking

- Educate wider community about the benefit of heritage sites through marketing and online material
- Use creative arts-based community-led interpretations through performance-based narration of storied experiences (photography, audio, moving image and mapmaking)

Modelling

Reflective Motivation

Identity, Belonging,
and Placemaking

- Community access programmes to change perception of heritage places to diverse communities
- Appoint 'community advocates' to highlight social benefits of heritage places

Training

Physical Opportunity

Accessibility

- Provide staff and volunteer training to support communication skills and visitor hospitality, to encourage a friendly, kind and open approach to all visitors

Persuasion

Reflective Motivation

Identity, Belonging,
and Placemaking

- New marketing and media adverts to realign heritage places with social values and as community assets

Enablement

Physical Opportunity

Accessibility

Social Opportunity

Personal Interactions,
Interpersonal and Personal
Experiences

- Free community passes and/or free transportation for local residents
- Develop in-person led inter-generational tours
- Adapt dialogues and narratives to present community driven stories of the hidden histories and different identities
- Co-create opportunities to empower communities to present their history and heritage
- Host socially based community events for visitors, staff, volunteers and community members to come together and share experiences
- Develop cultural activities linked to wider social, environmental, and economic inequality
- Create new engagement activities such as interpretative resources, audio guides, guided tours and storied experiences for visitors

Environmental Restructuring

Physical Opportunity

Accessibility

Social Opportunity

Personal Interactions,
Interpersonal and Personal
Experiences

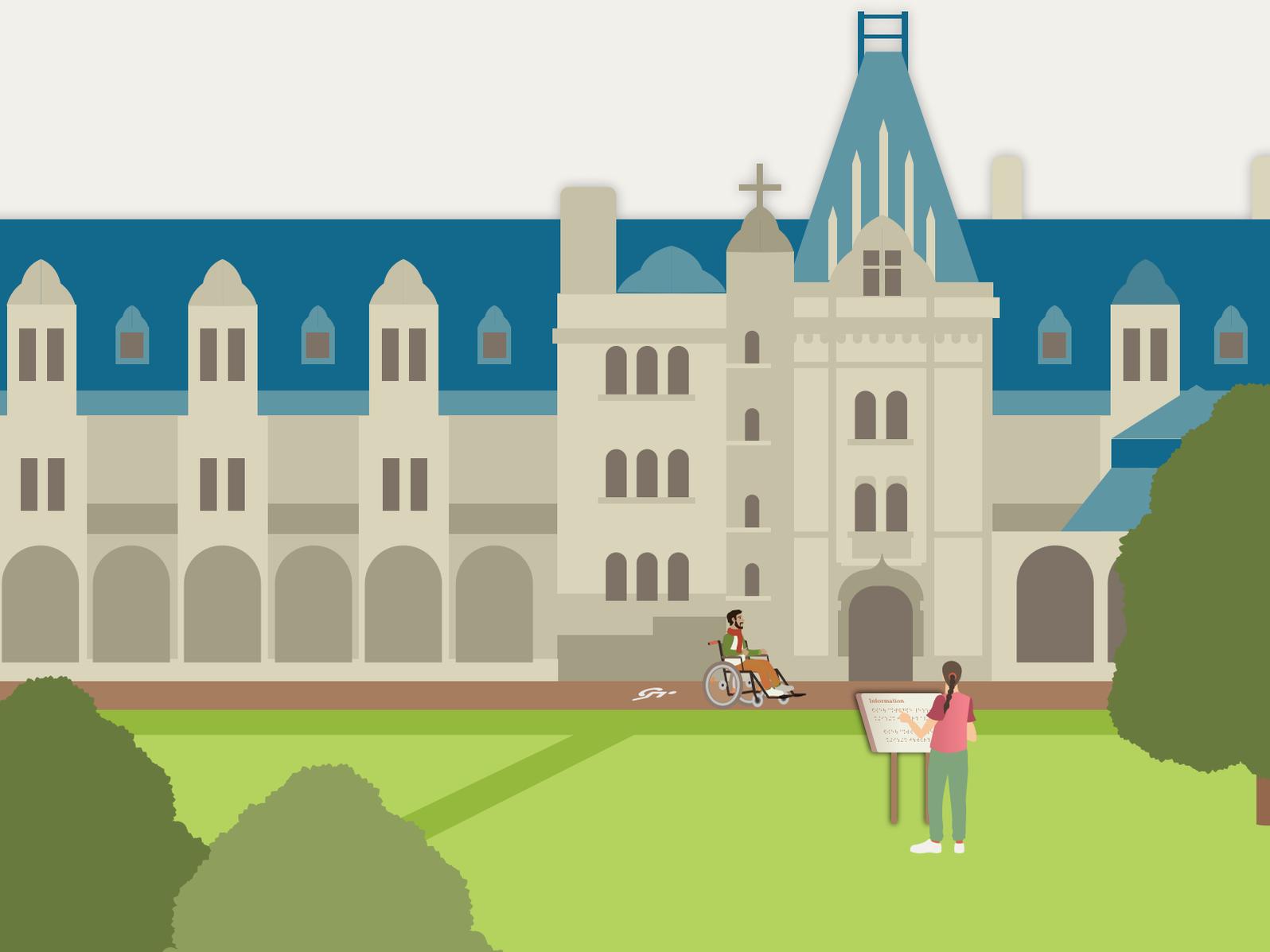
- Through public transport or free electric transport, enable ease of access to and freedom of movement around heritage places (new access routes)
- Provide (if possible) disabled access to enable movement around entire site
- Provide material in different formats that support all individuals' diverse learning and behavioural needs
- Develop comfortable indoor and outdoor spaces, with seating and with views or creative material for people to talk, relax and reflect
- Place diversity and wellbeing at heart of organisational, learning, interpretation and visitor experience strategies
- Develop relationships with the community and community organisations through collaborative partnerships, free access, and playing an active role in regional agendas, including localisation agendas and community cohesion agendas
- Develop spaces that encourage conversations and interactions between employees/volunteers/staff/visitors/community

Case Study

The recommendations in this booklet have been successfully applied in heritage settings and museums in the UK, India, and USA.

One example is 'Heritage Sites and Transformative Partnerships', a multidisciplinary project between the UK and US. The project used a behavioural change model to design localised, culturally relevant engagement strategies,

encouraging more diverse participation at Biltmore Estate. By working with non-traditional audiences, the team uncovered barriers and enablers that supported diverse community members to engage with and benefit from the site. This enabled the team to co-develop and action interventions that increased community engagement and improved visitor wellbeing.



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