

Casson Mann
Nick Bell Design

**The Great North
Museum: Hancock**

DBA
Design Effectiveness Awards 2010

The Great North Museum: Hancock



Project title: The Great North Museum:
Hancock

Category: Museums, Galleries and
Experiential Environments

Sub category: n/a

Client Company: Newcastle University

Design Consultancy: Casson Mann / Nick Bell Design

Current date: Tuesday 8 June 2010

Executive Summary

"The Museum has been an incredible success, with visitor figures approaching 3 x the annual predicted level and a 98% visitor satisfaction rate. The project has contributed significantly to the region's tourism and economic impact targets, and is currently the most visited attraction in the North East. The Design Team have created a series of galleries that communicate to the visitor, engaging them within environments that are seductive and compelling. The Museum is extraordinarily effective at highlighting the unique collections in a spectacular and accessible way".

Steve McLean, Senior Manager,
Great North Museum

Target annual footfall: 310,000 reached within 3 months

- **852,522 visited in the first year (almost 300% of target)**

Display design made the collections more accessible:

- **visitor ratings for quality of displays: 9.1/10**

Design improved educational experiences across a spectrum of ages / needs:

- **95 % of visitors thought the museum was good or excellent**

The Museum is regarded as a valuable educational destination:

- **45% of visitor's motivation for coming was 'educational'**

More visitors from outside the region attracted:

- **23% of all visitors come from the wider North East of England or beyond.**

Effective design of key areas:

- **gift shop revenue increased by £187,500 p.a (increase of 75%)**
- no congestion within the museum despite 3x more visitors than expected

Design is coherent:

- **average visitor rating for signs / labels providing information about exhibits: 8.9/10**
- average visitor dwell time is 29mins longer than at other Tyne & Wear museums

Design is popular:

- annual visitor numbers have risen by 776,002
- **97% of visitors are likely to recommend**
- visitors rate value for money: 9.8/10

170 words

The Great North Museum: Hancock

Project Brief

- to attract 310,000 visitors in the first year
- to improve visitor access into the building
- to make the collections more accessible through engaging and informative displays
- to improve the educational experience across a spectrum of ages and needs
- to be regarded as a valuable educational destination
- to attract more visitors from outside the region
- to develop the core regional audience
- to combine 3 museums into a single, coherent and popular visitor attraction without overwhelming the visitor or alienating its current audience

Description

Since it opened in 1884, the Hancock Museum was always an important part of local heritage, with a core audience of families.

However the valuable collections were spread across 3 different sites and display space was limited as a great deal of space was taken up by inadequate storage. Displays were out-moded, out of date, and pedestrian. The building was costly to maintain due to the glass roof, whilst antiquated heating systems made it difficult to create an appropriate or comfortable environment for visitors, and made adequate conservation of the collection difficult. Accessibility was limited and particularly difficult for wheelchair-users or families with pushchairs.

"The roof leaked. We didn't have the facilities visitors require in this day and age. Visitor figures were in decline and we couldn't compete. Without a complete refurbishment, it was hard to see how the Museum could survive"

Steve McLean, Senior Manager, Great North Museum.

The project did have its fair share of risk: Would the redevelopment succeed in turning a well

recognised cultural venue, but a very much under utilised attraction, into something truly special and worthy of the people of the North East and the wider audiences it hoped to attract?

Overview of the market

The Great North Museum must be viewed within the context of the developing role of NewcastleGateshead as a city tourism destination. As recently as ten years ago Newcastle hardly registered on the UK's city tourism map, but the city's tie-up with Gateshead to exploit the Millennium and the Capital of Culture bid brought about significant change. New attractions such as the Gateshead Millennium Bridge, the Quayside development, Centre for Life, the Discovery Museum, the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and the Sage Gateshead have enhanced original assets and the city's cultural reputation.

Rather than acting as a competitor to these existing attractions, it was always intended that the Great North Museum would complement these attractions, and have a role in tourism growth, as well as satisfying its cultural role in the North East.

The primary target markets for the Great North Museum were:

- Day visitors (from Tyne & Wear and the wider North East region) - building on this established market for the former Hancock Museum
- domestic and international tourists
- Schools, universities, colleges and academics

Project launch date: 23 May 2009

Total Budget: £27 million

Design Budget (exhibition build): £6.1 million
£2100 per square metre
(approx 2850 meters squared)

The Great North Museum: Hancock Design Solution

Objective: improve visitor access to the building

Solutions:

- the original building was opened up and re-designed to expose collections and animate areas that were previously hidden or inaccessible
- creation of new central vista to improve orientation
- all four original staircases used to release circulation between all spaces, and improve access
- ramped pathways and an external lift fitted

Objective: make the collections more accessible through engaging and informative displays

Solutions:

- each gallery contains a rich diversity of communication tools eg. immersive spaces, films, projections, interactives and live animal displays, yet these are all seamlessly integrated through coherent graphics and meticulous detailing, to create a holistic, digestible experience
- engaging stories, with varied rhythms and pace mean visitors do not tire or get bored too easily eg. The first gallery – Living Planet – allows visitors 'breathing space' in a vast and visually dramatic vertical arrangement of animal exhibits

Objective: combine 3 museums into a single, coherent and popular visitor attraction without overwhelming the visitor or alienating its current audience

Solutions:

Exhibition graphics

- word count kept as low as possible to avoid information overload
- illustrations and images used instead of text - these can be read by children or visitors who do not speak English

- moving elements used to make displays enticing and to keep reliance on text minimal
- contemporary, newly-designed sans serif font used - it is easy to read, particularly for people with dyslexia
- light levels, font size, viewing distances and contrast all designed to meet the DDA requirements
- seamless integration of interactives with graphics

Way finding and directional Signage

- signs located on thresholds so they do not compete or interfere with the exhibition generally, and specifically displays
- signs designed to seem 'invisible' until needed
- signs are high contrast, black on white to be easily legible and DDA compliant.

Objective: improve the educational experience across a spectrum of ages and needs

Solutions:

- Learning implemented through the provision of purpose-built learning spaces for visitors with different requirements:
 - Under Fives Exploration Area
 - 'Explore More' learning space where visitors of all ages can get involved in a hands-on experience of collections, working with museum specialists.
 - teaching garden with a planted area and pond
 - specialist research libraries

Objective: to be regarded as a valuable educational destination.

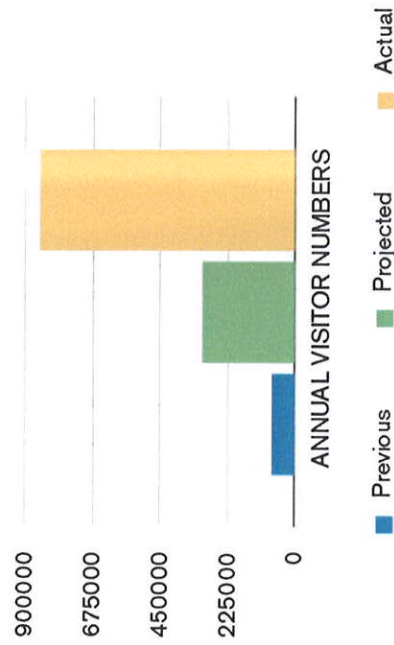
Solution:

- three unique, specialist research library collections made available to the general public for the first time
- best objects from the collection selected and presented in imaginative and exciting ways



Summary of Results Core Results - charts

INCREASE IN FOOTFALL



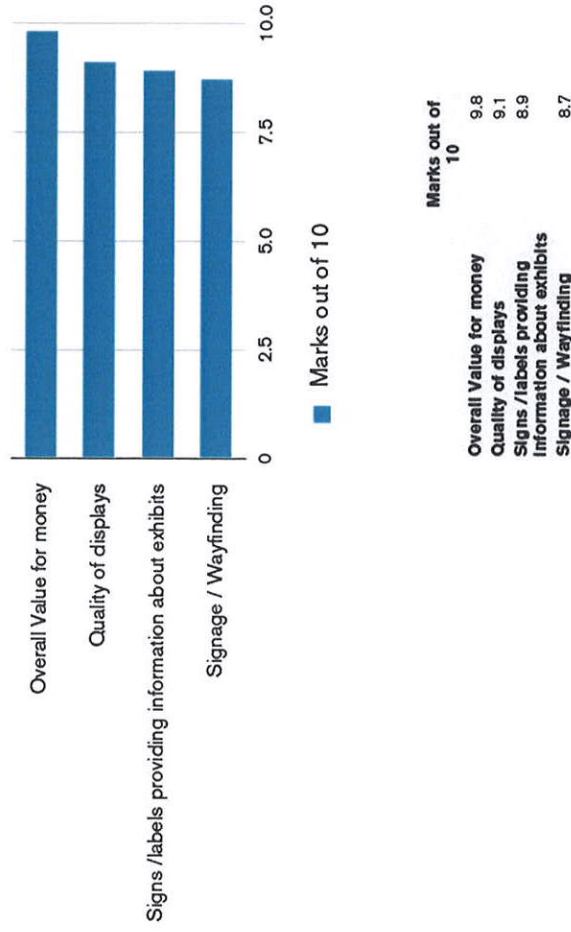
ANNUAL VISITOR NUMBERS

Previous	76500
Projected	310000
Actual	852522

- Target projected visitor numbers were based on annual visitor numbers for other Tyne and Wear Museums.
- The target was reached within the first 3 months of opening.
- Visitor numbers were sustained throughout the year giving a final annual figure of 300% of initial target.

CHANGES IN PERCEPTION

VISITOR DESIGN EFFECTIVENESS RATINGS



Marks out of 10

Overall Value for money	9.8
Quality of displays	9.1
Signs /labels providing information about exhibits	8.9
Signage / Wayfinding	8.7

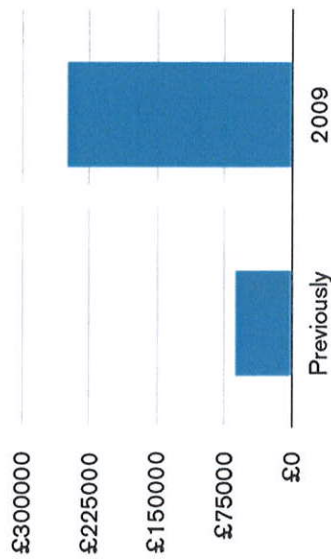
- Visitor ratings tend to be extremely high and above averages to other Tyne & Wear museums as a whole
- overall average visitor rating of design effectiveness and value for money is 91%

Summary of Results Core Results - charts

n.b please note that 'All Museums' refers to Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums

INCREASE IN SALES

VISITOR SPENDING AT THE GIFT SHOP

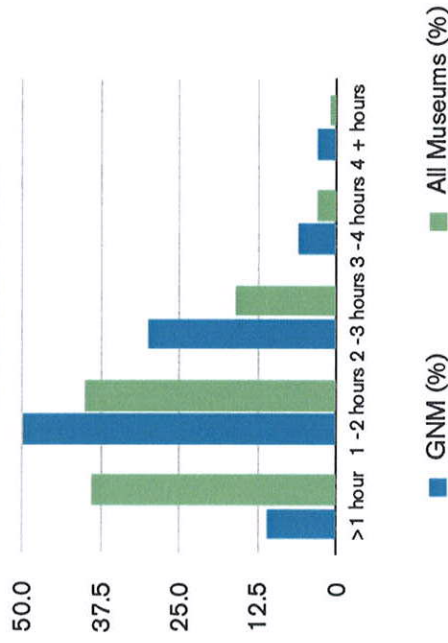


Year	Value (£)
Previously	62500
2009	250000

- Sales at the gift shop have increased by **75%**.
- Average amount that each visiting party will spend in total during one day is **£24.13**
- This means annual revenue to local area of nearly **£5m** (based on each party having average of 4 people)

CHANGES IN PERCEPTION

INCREASED DWELL TIME



GNM (%) All Museums (%)

Dwell Time Category	GNM (%)	All Museums (%)
>1 hour	50	11
1-2 hours	37.5	50
2-3 hours	25	30
3-4 hours	12.5	6
4+ hours	0	3

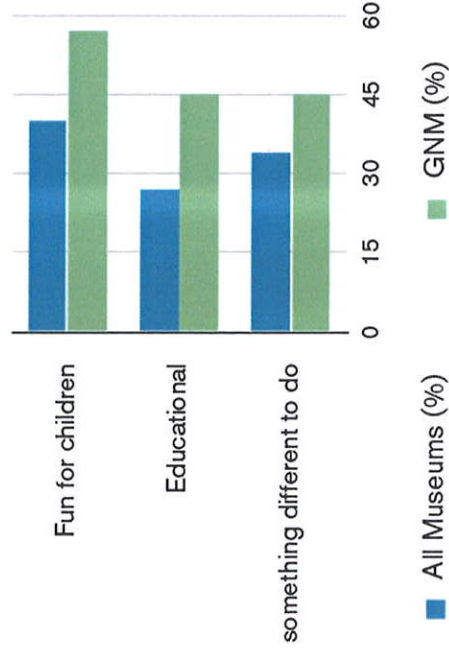
- Average dwell time at all other museums = 1 hours 10 mins
- Average dwell time at GNM = 1 hour 39 mins
- This is **40%** higher than all other museums.

Summary of Results Core Results - charts

n.b please note that 'All Museums' refers to Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums

CHANGES IN PERCEPTION

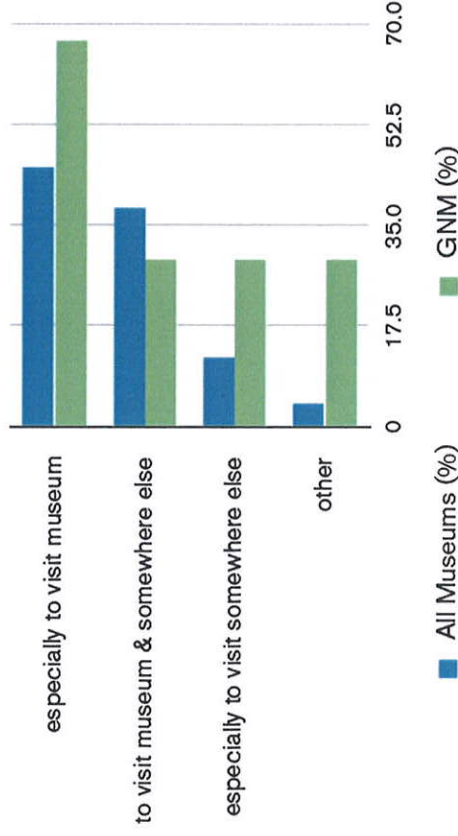
MOTIVATIONS FOR VISITING



	All Museums (%)	GNM (%)
Fun for children	40	57
Educational	27	45
something different to do	34	45

- Being 'educational' for children was important for 45% of visitors (18% more than at other Tyne & Wear Museums overall) – including 16% who cited this as their most important motivation (vs 8% at all other museums)
- In terms of engagement, GNM was particularly strongly rated compared with other Tyne & Wear museums across the 'learning' dimensions, particularly 'children can learn things here that cannot be learned in the classroom'

PURPOSE OF OUTING



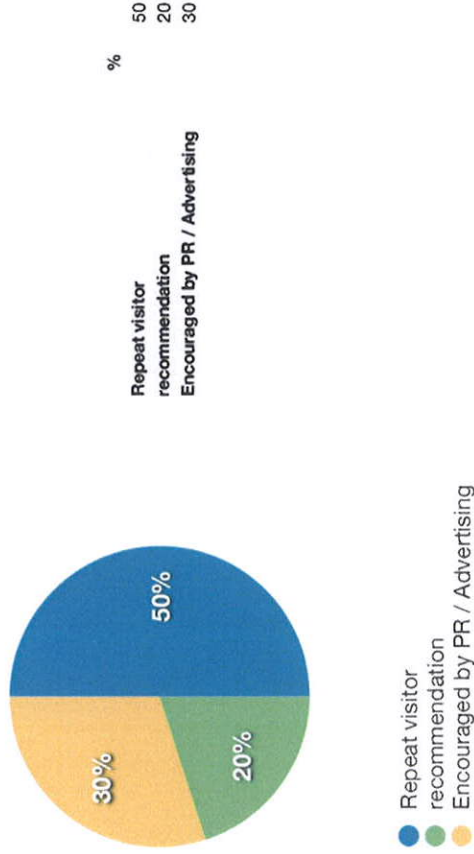
	All Museums (%)	GNM (%)
especially to visit museum	45	67
to visit museum and somewhere else	38	29
especially to visit somewhere else	12	29
other	4	29

The Great North Museum is perceived as a destination in itself. **22% more** other museums.

Summary of Results Core Results - charts

CHANGES IN PERCEPTION

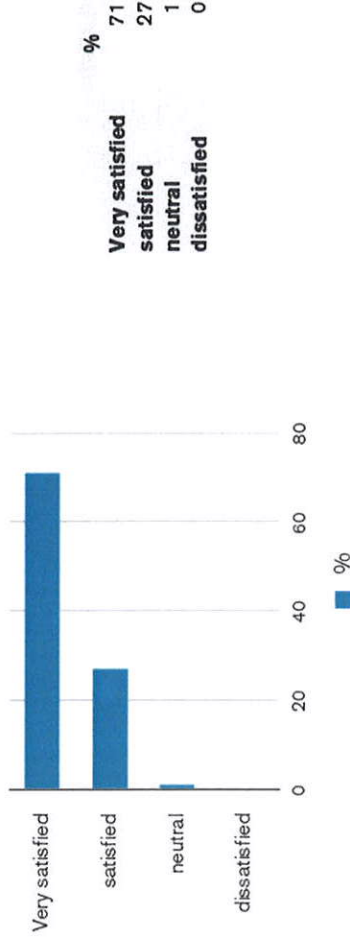
REASONS FOR VISITING



- 70% of all visitors are either repeat visits or recommendations
- 85% of visitors would definitely recommend, with another 12% who probably would. This is a total of 97% likely to recommend overall.

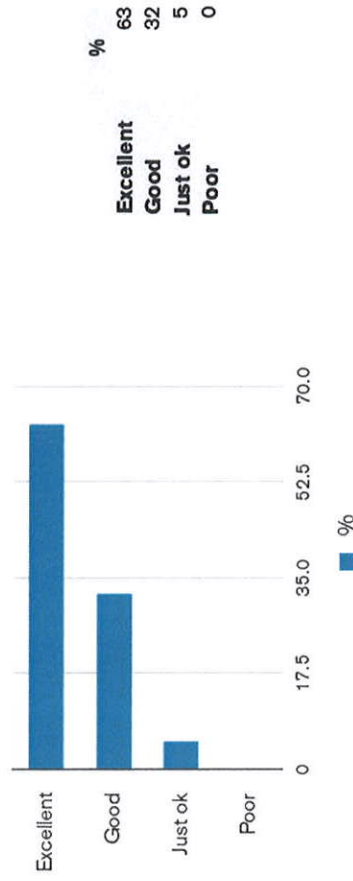
CHANGES IN PERCEPTION

VISITOR SATISFACTION



98% of all visitors are either satisfied or very satisfied.

VISITOR EXPERIENCE RATINGS



- Overall, enjoyment/appreciation and satisfaction with the GNM are all well above the average for Tyne & Wear Museums as a whole
- Enjoyment/appreciation (63% excellent versus 55% overall)
 - Satisfaction (71% very satisfied versus 62% overall)
 - 95% of visitors thought the museum was either good or excellent

Summary of Results Awards

British Interactive Media Award 2009

Design Week Awards 2010: Commended

Renaissance Museum Award 2010

Arts Fund Prize 2010: Nominated

Guardian Family Friendly Awards 2010:
Nominated

NAS Design Partnership Awards: Commended

RIBA Award 2010 - Winner, North East



Research Resources

The Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums Benchmark Survey

Carried out by BDRC (<http://www.bdrcc.co.uk/>) the UK's largest independent market research consultancy.

1947 Face-to-face exit interviews were conducted with visitors at all 11 Tyne & Wear Museums. The annual visitor benchmarking was conducted between 25th July and 1st October 2009

These charts compare 2008 and 2009 data for Great North Museum: Hancock against the combined 'all Tyne & Wear museums' results for the same time period.

BDRC ensure that their results are 95% accurate.

Other influencing factors

Was it because of marketing / advertising / PR campaigns?

Approximately £150k was spent on marketing prior to opening, and then around £20k afterwards. The projected budget for next year is £10k, which demonstrates a downward trend in the spend on marketing, yet visitor numbers remain high. In fact, only 30% of visitors have been encouraged to see the museum as a direct result of marketing. The remaining 70% are repeat visitors or come on recommendation, which is testament to visitor satisfaction, and ultimately to the effectiveness of the design.

Was it because the Museum opened in half term week?

This may have contributed to the incredibly high numbers of visitors in the first week, but cannot possibly account for such sustained success, and extremely high levels of returning visitors – visitor numbers exceeded annual projection within the first 3 months.

Was it because of additions to the collection?

There were additions to the collection - around 200 new taxidermy mounts, and 150 models were added to the displays, but to contextualise this- the total size of the collection is around 500,000 pieces, of which approximately 3,500 are on display. Thus most of the collection was already in existence, and crucially, even if the new additions to the collection had been displayed in the old, out-moded format, they would not have influenced visitor numbers to anything like those drawn in by the engaging new design.

Was it because of a new building?

The building was already there - it has been brought up to date and made more open-plan to facilitate greater access for a modern audience. The effective re-display of exhibits has engaged visitors, reaching out to new audiences, keeps them coming back and makes them recommend the experience to new visitors.

Was it because of the dinosaur?

It is true that dinosaurs are big attractions for family audiences, however the Hancock always had the dinosaur.



Appendix Visitor Quotes

“There is no set pattern for how or what to explore first. You can simply wander to your heart’s content... I would say that it’s impossible for any child to visit this place and not absolutely love it! As an adult visiting with other adults I also thoroughly enjoyed myself and felt there was a high degree of interactive features throughout the whole museum which helped sustain my interest in the exhibits..”
cyberem78 (dooyoo review)

“A really good family museum - but it’s NOT just for kids. I love the Hancock Museum!”
RTWJjuju (dooyoo review)

“One hundred percent of visitors to the Great North Museum: Hancock agree that it deserves to be called ‘Great’ according to an exit poll conducted at the museum following its launch last week”.
GNM website

Appendix

Before and after

