



Great North Museum,
Newcastle Upon Tyne,
for Tyne & Wear Museums
and Newcastle University,
2009

DBA Design Effectiveness
Awards 2010: Gold Award

National Lottery Awards
2010: Best heritage project
shortlist

Design Week Awards 2010
Commended: museums,
galleries & visitor attractions

Arts Fund Prize 2010
longlist

World Architecture Awards
2009: Winner, best interior

Culture Journal Awards
2009: Renaissance museum
award

Project follow-up

16 months after project completion we revisited the Great North Museum to check on the impact of our design work (in conjunction with Casson Mann) and learn from its successes and failures. We found the museum in rude health, smashing attendance records.

In September 2010 total visitor numbers exceeded 1 million, easily surpassing the forecast 300,000 for the first year. Local schools and family visits are up, and 70% of visitors are either repeat visits or recommendations. The museum also entered the Visit Britain free museums top 20 for the first time, reflecting the 23% increase in its national and international visitors. First year operating accounts showed a surplus in the galleries' maintenance budget: symptomatic of the high design specification and finish, enabling the museum to control future spending in times of national budget cuts. And this is despite the extra wear and tear as a result of massively increased visitor numbers.

The British Museum, holding its AGM at the Great North Museum (the first time outside of London), highly commended the communication strategy we designed for the new galleries. The strategy carefully controls the amount of text used in object interpretation. Instead it uses images, exhibition architecture and interaction to tell stories and engage visitors. Ongoing quality control is assured as Tyne & Wear Museums' in-house design team have adopted and are embracing our interpretation design strategy. National Museums Scotland also came to have a look and went away impressed.

The Great North Museum's success has been recognised by the Arts Fund Prize, National Lottery Awards, Journal Culture Awards, British Interactive Media Awards, Guardian Family Friendly Awards, Design Week Awards and the DBA Design Effectiveness Awards.

