



department for
**culture, media
and sport**

DCMS Museum Peer Review Pilot

Natural History Museum

Our aim is to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, support the pursuit of excellence, and champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries.

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Chapter 1: Background

1.1 The DCMS self-assessment and peer review pilots for museums.

Following the publication in January 2008 of the report *Supporting Excellence in the Arts: From Measurement to Judgement* by Sir Brian McMaster, DCMS has been taking action to implement the recommendations made in the review. One major part of this implementation programme is to develop and instigate a self-assessment and peer review process for museums in receipt of Grant-In-Aid funding from DCMS.

This process has been developed by DCMS with input from the museums sector. Three pilot reviews have taken place in November and December of 2008, at the National Portrait Gallery, the Natural History Museum and Tyne & Wear Museums. DCMS is considering the results of these pilots and the process involved, with a view to further developing a review system to roll out to all DCMS sponsored museums beginning in 2009/10. The results of these pilots will also stand as the baseline reviews for the three institutions involved.

Ahead of its review the Natural History Museum was asked to complete a self-assessment based upon six questions. A panel of three reviewers was then chosen, with agreement from both DCMS and the Museum, to include individuals with a suitable range of expertise. The review panel for the Natural History Museum consisted of:

- Carol Butler, Registrar and Chief of Collections, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution.
- Ian Blatchford, Deputy Director, Victoria & Albert Museum.
- Michael Reiss, Professor of Science Education, Institute of Education, University of London.

The panel was asked, over a three day period, to examine the functions and strategic direction of the Museum, evaluate the Museum in terms of its self-assessment and identify both areas of excellence and opportunities for development. This was achieved through discussions with the Chairman of the board of trustees, the Director, the Executive Team and management of most operational areas. The panel toured the front of house and back of house facilities and studied background documentation provided by the Museum prior to the visit. The review panel would like to express their thanks to everyone at the Natural History Museum for the time, energy and enthusiasm they contributed to the review process.

This review will act as a benchmark against which future reviews of the Museum will be compared. All views represented in this document are those of the review panel. A secretariat function was provided by DCMS officials. DCMS would like to thank the review panel and all involved at the Museum for the time given to the review.

The McMaster report has indicated that in order to deliver excellence, cultural institutions should aim to:

- Provide life changing experiences for individuals.
- Show creativity and innovation.
- Be willing to take risks and experiment.
- Develop an international reputation.
- Be open to everyone.
- Present both relevant and challenging concepts to the public.

1.2 The Natural History Museum

The Natural History Museum is a leading national institution and one of the country's top visitor attractions. The Museum houses over 70 million specimens of animals, plants, fossils, rocks and minerals, as well as a large natural history library and a collection of natural history art. It is an international hub of scientific research with some 300 scientists working across the disciplines of botany, entomology, mineralogy, palaeontology and zoology.

In addition to the main Museum site in South Kensington, the Museum has a branch at Tring in Hertfordshire.

The Museum's stated mission is: "to maintain and develop its collections and use them to promote the discovery, understanding, responsible use and enjoyment of the natural world". In addition, the Museum has seven high-level ambitions with a vision to: "advance our knowledge of the natural world, inspiring better care of our planet". The seven strands of work are:

- Generating new knowledge;
- Running a major scientific infrastructure;
- Providing access to existing information;
- Delivering learning opportunities;
- Engaging with a larger, diverse audience;
- Creating engaged and scientifically literate citizens; and
- Inspiring a lifelong commitment to the natural world.

In 2007/08 the NHM received 3.78 million visits, of which 1.25 million were by children (aged 15 and under) and 1.53 million were from overseas visitors. Its website received 5.55 million unique visits. In the same year the Museum received Grant-In-Aid funding from DCMS totalling £45.09 million which equates to £11.93 for each visit. The funding for 2008/09 is £51.12 million, £7.85 million of which is funding for capital projects.

Further information regarding visitor figures and funding agreements can be found for all museums sponsored by DCMS on the department's web-site http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/museums_and_galleries/default.aspx

The unique nature of the NHM means that it is not just a museum but a major scientific research institution in its own right. It is important to note that this report does not assess the excellence of the scientific research carried out by the NHM; the Museum has existing systems of external peer review in place to assess the quality of its research. Nevertheless, the panel explored ways in which NHM's scientific research feeds into its other activities.

Chapter 2: Judgement of Excellence in Central Museum Functions

The peer review highlighted a number of areas in which the Natural History Museum is excellent.

- 2.1 The NHM has a very strong public offer reflected by the substantial growth in the number of visits to the Museum in recent years. The panel feels the NHM is exploring what excellence in public engagement means and has been willing to take risks and try out innovative ideas and practices through a range of its public engagement and learning programmes. As a result the Museum is becoming increasingly confident in how to communicate science to its visitors.

The NHM is particularly innovative in the presentation of the work of its scientists to the public. Darwin Centre 1 (DC1) offers the public “behind the scenes” access to its scientific staff and to parts of its collection. The panel believes that Darwin Centre 2 (DC2) will take this aspect to another level and has the potential to set new benchmarks in public engagement. The reviewers think the Nature Live talks by the NHM’s researchers and curators present scientific knowledge in an open and accessible way for a range of audiences, supporting both formal and informal learning. Another example of this was the introduction of the Amazing Butterflies exhibition, the focus of which was a large outdoor butterfly house. The review team is impressed by the NHM’s use of interdisciplinary project teams drawing on the expertise of its scientists, learning, visitor services and web team in developing an exhibition.

However the reviewers think there are still areas in which the Museum could be improve its public offer (see 3.1).

- 2.2 The NHM has a strong learning programme with some innovative features. The panel are impressed by the range of formal and informal learning programmes and it is clear that the Museum is willing to take risks by working with new audiences and to experiment with its practice. The Real World Science project to support the teaching of secondary science and delivered in collaboration with three regional museums is considered to be innovative and focused on a priority audience for the Museum. The panel think it still has much more potential to support Government priorities for the teaching of secondary science. The review team consider the use of a teachers’ panel to provide input to and feedback about the Museum’s learning programmes to be novel and are pleased with the inquiry-based approach used by the NHM to stimulate learning by visitors. They are also impressed by the willingness of the NHM’s learning team to develop smaller, more intensive and higher unit cost programmes for local community-based audiences. The slavery and the natural world programme is an engaging way of linking cultural history with scientific specimens. The panel think it represents appropriate risk taking because it explores a sensitive and controversial topic.

The panel consider the NHM's learning volunteer programme to be an exemplary scheme which offers many benefits to the volunteers, who gain useful experience and skills, and to the Museum because the work of these learning volunteers has strengthened its public offer by animating the galleries.

- 2.3 The Natural History Museum is a world class and genuinely international organisation. It is respected by similar institutions world-wide and has formed strong partnerships with other large museums of natural history, notably in Paris, Washington and New York. The panel are impressed by senior management's understanding of both the benefits and risks of international collaboration. Based on information provided by the NHM and on conversations with its staff the review team have concluded that the Museum is involved in the key international projects where it can use its collections and expertise to add value, such as the EU-funded EDIT and Synthesys programmes (relating to networks for taxonomy). The panel consider the policy of recruiting specialist staff from an international pool to be a sensible approach to building the institution's knowledge base and its capability in scientific research, as is the programme of visits by scientists from other institutions across the globe. The reviewers recognise the financial constraints faced by the NHM in competing for the best international talent.
- 2.4 During their visit the review team were able to tour the shell of the new DC2 building which was in the early stages of its fit out. From what the panel saw they consider the development and building of the second phase of the Darwin Centre to be extremely encouraging. It is noted that this is a sizeable project and the NHM has shown that it has the ability to successfully manage a major capital building scheme. The panel think that the architecture of the building is superb and are anxious to see the extent to which some of the innovative design features, such as the link between the visitors and the scientists at work, will succeed. Presenting the work of its scientists is one of the strong points of the NHM's public offer and the panel think DC2 has immense potential to build on this existing strength. The reviewers are impressed by the amount of thought that has gone into DC2's development and agree that it would set new benchmarks for standards in collections storage. The review team recognise that once open, DC2 should deliver both anticipated and unanticipated benefits to the NHM and wonder how the Museum will judge its success. Therefore the panel recommends that the NHM develops a set of criteria for testing the success of DC2. The panel note the central part DC2 will play in making the public more aware of the NHM's role in the scientific community but think the Museum should be careful not to place all its emphasis on presenting science through the Darwin Centre buildings. The Museum should continue using and developing other spaces and opportunities for communicating about its research and collections.
- 2.5 Although not reviewed directly by this panel, information contained in the self-assessment materials such as the annual report and meetings with its senior staff confirmed the reviewers' view that the NHM is a centre of scientific excellence and has acquired an international reputation for scientific expertise in a number of areas. The panel feel that a key management challenge is how to reflect this scientific excellence in the Museum's public offer. The structure of the organisation presents the Museum's management with three key challenges in relation to developing the Museum's public offer: a) how does it ensure the quality of the science underpins the public offer; b) how does it draw upon the interests and knowledge of its scientific staff to develop specific public engagement programmes; and c) how does it utilise the intellectual capital within the museum to articulate a narrative which can inform public debate on specific scientific issues? On the whole the panel think that the Museum's systems and structures enable it to draw together expertise from various areas fairly well, although they think more could be done

to better integrate the work of various departments. They are confident this could be achieved through the fine tuning of existing internal practices and structures.

- 2.6 The review team think the Museum has a progressive approach to people management and development. They feel that the achievement of Investors in People standard is a convincing indication of the Museum's progress in recent years. The panel consider the introduction of a competency based system of staff appraisal to have been an important development which is delivering a number of key benefits to the organisation. Another programme has been initiated by the Human Resources department for developing talented people within the museum. However, it is not clear to what extent the rest of the senior management team is fully engaged in shaping this programme's format or in identifying the programme participants. The reviewers have a sense that the NHM's senior and middle managers are given a large amount of discretion to deliver departmental objectives within an overall planning framework. They are pleased to see that the results of the staff survey in a number of key areas are moving in the right direction. The panel did express concern about turnover rates among some sections of staff but feel that the Museum has initiated means of understanding the situation through an annual staff satisfaction survey.
- 2.7 The panel think that the work carried out to identify the needs of various stakeholders through the brand shift project is worthwhile and would produce a number of tangible benefits for the organisation. In this context they feel the concerted effort that has been made to manage the relationship with Government has been of real benefit.

Chapter 3: Areas for Development

The review panel identified some areas for development that the Museum should explore further. Overall the impression was that the Museum is making appropriate progress towards its goals, and as expected, has areas where systems have not yet become fully embedded.

Essential

- 3.1. Following the opening in autumn 2009 of DC2 (the second phase of the Darwin Centre), the NHM must renew its focus on the presentation of the permanent collections in its main galleries in the Waterhouse building. The panel is conscious that the NHM's management has had to make choices about where to direct its capital resources and that the DC2 development has been focused primarily on serving the natural sciences. The panel think there is a danger that some of the displays in other parts of the museum will very quickly begin to look dated after the launch of DC2. The mineralogy and palaeontology exhibits in particular need to be updated and interpreted to modern standards because the science and methods of display have moved on since they were set up. The panel feel the display of objects across the Museum – some of which are iconic – should be improved. This is even the case in the DC1 building where the labelling of some of the collections on display isn't legible. The panel think that the next stage of development should concentrate on improving the visitor experience in these areas. The panel suggest that the Museum budget for an annual gallery refreshment allowance.

The Museum's management is aware of the need to improve the offer in the Waterhouse building and is planning to address this in its next tranche of work. In doing so the panel feel the Museum should do more to keep the galleries up to date with the best and most appropriate science, using examples from NHM research wherever possible. The public should gain an awareness of the NHM as having a strong research component; currently this is lacking in the galleries.

- 3.2. The Museum should do more to clarify its audience development objectives over the coming years. The NHM has strong mass appeal as evidenced by the increase in visits to the Museum, which is expected to exceed 4 million p.a. once DC2 has opened. Clearly the size and make up of the NHM's audience will shift somewhat when DC2 opens to the public but the panel think that even now the Museum should be thinking about three key issues regarding the audience.

Firstly the NHM needs to think more about developing and targeting programmes for specific audience groups. The reviewers feel increasing thought could be given to developing programmes for smaller niche audiences through interpreting collections not just scientifically but in a culturally and socially relevant way for a particular group. The Museum currently does a large amount of work with schools but it does not yet appear to have translated this into attracting sufficient numbers of 11 to 15 year old visitors through its doors. This is at odds with the ambition to build a national secondary science offer as expressed through the Real World Science programme.

Secondly the NHM should start to consider what its optimum visitor numbers would look like. The Museum is very popular but the quest for ever higher visitor figures will eventually be unsustainable and could impair the quality of the visitor experience on offer. Given the recent increase in visits the Museum must think more about how it can optimise the use of its space for the large number of visitors received or indeed consider if it even wants to try and limit visitor numbers at some point in the future.

Thirdly the Museum needs to consider using its position as a voice of authority to drive the public debate on key scientific issues of the day to a greater extent in order to promote wider public engagement with science. In order to do this the Museum would need to think about how it balances acting as a campaigning organisation advocating a point of view in a debate and acting as an independent reference point for the public.

Strongly Desirable

- 3.3. The self-assessment identified increasing the impact of the Museum's virtual presence as a priority. The panel think that the individual elements of the web strategy are strong but need to be drawn together into a coherent overarching digital strategy. For example, it is not clear how worthwhile initiatives such as digitizing academic papers or the watercolour collection fit into a clear, museum-wide plan. This is of particular importance as IT projects developed separately can prove difficult to integrate further down the line due to incompatible technologies, or architecture of philosophies of approach. Therefore it is imperative that the Museum takes a unified approach to fulfilling its digital agenda and it should consider giving overall responsibility for this area to a senior member of staff.
- 3.4. The NHM's strong international presence has been developed in part through a series of collaborations with leading museums in other countries. The panel are surprised by the lack of a comparable strategy for developing partnerships at a corporate level with regional museums in England and recommend that senior management consider how the NHM could develop a more prominent role in the English regions. The panel think that the highly regarded Real World Science project, which has been delivered in collaboration with learning teams in Tyne and Wear Museums, Manchester Museum and Oxford University Museum of Natural History, offers a useful model for how this could be done. Similarly the Museum could look at some of the successful regional programmes that are run by other national museums for inspiration and ideas.

For Consideration

- 3.5. The panel note that NHM does not currently have a Deputy Director. While many museums of NHM's size and complexity do have this position, they are not necessary for a museum to be successful. Deputy Director roles work well when they emerge organically, based upon an agreed perception of need among the senior managers. NHM may gain some benefit from the internal coordination that a Deputy Director could provide, especially during ambitious phases of the brand shift, enhancing linkages between the Museum's various departments and freeing the Director's time enabling him to concentrate on specific strategic issues. The panel feel there are sufficient potential benefits associated with appointing one that it merits consideration, but recognise that the senior management team is working well together and may not feel the need of this role in their team.
- 3.6. The NHM has already committed to undertaking a 'brand shift' strategy. This is driven by a desire to change the public's perceptions of the NHM; it is recognised as a museum of

natural history on a superficial level by visitors but the full span of what the Museum does is not widely known (particularly the science behind the scenes). The Museum is looking at how each stakeholder sees it now and how the NHM itself wants to be perceived by stakeholders in 5 years time. The panel agree this is a worthwhile project but think that in order to fully achieve its aims, the NHM should consider bringing in consultant expertise from outside the Museum. The NHM will also need to consider more carefully how this brand shift will affect its longer term goals (e.g. 25 year plan) and in the shorter term consider what the deliverables and milestones of the project might be.

- 3.7. The Museum currently does a huge amount in delivering the Government's priorities for out-of-classroom learning and in supporting the teaching of secondary science. The panel thought the NHM should build on its expertise in supporting the formal learning of children and young people and look to influence the development of the primary and secondary science curricula. They recommend the Museum considers how it could work in partnership with the QCA, NCSL and other key education sector bodies towards this end.
- 3.8. The reviewers recognised that the age of some parts of the NHM's estate present it with a number of difficult challenges with respect to the care of its collections. The reviewers were given a tour of two of the NHM's collections stores in order to see the "best and worst" of its facilities. One is located in the Darwin Centre phase 1 building and the other is located underneath the main Waterhouse building. They are impressed by the standards of care in the former facility and whilst the physical environment for stored items in the latter is extremely poor the reviewers are reassured by the NHM's plans for upgrading the care of artefacts currently stored in this area. The reviewers want to give the Museum credit for sharing their plans to address this difficult issue.

Chapter 4: Evaluation of the Self-Assessment

As part of the review process, organisations under review have been asked to complete a self-assessment based on six questions. The panel felt that the completed self-assessment by the Natural History Museum gave a very thorough view of the public offer, but to some extent undersold the entirety of what the Museum had to offer. Looking at each question specifically:

4.1 What is the strategic vision of your museum?

The stated vision of the NHM is to “*advance our knowledge of the natural world, inspiring people to take better care of our planet*”. The panel feel the NHM’s management had thought deeply about the organisation’s purpose and have undertaken a large amount of work to develop the Museum’s corporate plan and to articulate its strategic vision. The reviewers consider the vision to be appropriate for the NHM and sufficiently ambitious in its scope. However the panel do think that more consideration should be given to how success in achieving the vision would be measured.

The reviewers feel that the self assessment accurately reflects the positive impact on the organisation’s ability to deliver its strategic objectives from the introduction of a more systematic approach to planning in the past 3 years. The NHM is a large, complex and diverse organisation and the panel think the NHM’s rigorous corporate planning process provides a useful management discipline that enables various departments to align their activities towards achieving the organisation’s overall vision. The reviewers believe the planning system works with the grain of the organisation’s scientific culture and are impressed by the flexibility individual departments have to develop their own plans within an overall framework. From their discussions the reviewers have a sense that senior management provide departments with a large amount of discretion about how to put their plans into action and generally avoid the temptation to interfere with the implementation of them. Nevertheless, the panel also take the view that the benefits of the approach to planning has not yet been fully realised and more could be done to connect the various parts of the organisation to ensure there is a more integrated approach to developing and delivering the public offer.

4.2 How do you measure success and excellence in meeting it?

The review panel agree with the NHM’s assessment that it is a leader in its field internationally and that it is positioned among a top tier of world class international peers, which include the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington DC, the American Museum of Natural History in New York and Le Museum National d’Histoire Naturelle in Paris. Through regular collaboration with these institutions, the NHM has certainly been able to attain benchmarks of best practice.

Although not part of the review, the panel are satisfied that appropriate mechanisms are in place to judge the quality of the research work undertaken by scientific staff at the NHM. From meeting key members of staff and reviewing supporting documents the reviewers feel reassured that the scientific work undertaken by the NHM’s staff is of a very high standard. The

review team recognise that the quality of the science at the NHM has to underpin the Museum's public offer and has to be a key component in its public programmes and therefore it merits sufficient investment.

The reviewers think the NHM had developed an appropriate system to monitor its performance. It is clear that key performance information is used to develop plans and to adjust plans in year. The panel think senior management's regular meetings to communicate how well the Museum is doing to staff is a useful discipline. Although visitor satisfaction is measured (% of visitors that would recommend a visit), the panel believe that the Museum would benefit from developing a more in-depth qualitative understanding of the impact of a visit upon the visitor's scientific knowledge and thinking about the natural world.

4.3 What has gone well recently? What hasn't?

A number of the achievements listed in the document are impressive: for example, the increase in the number of overall visits to the NHM since the introduction of free entry from 1.7m in 2000/1 to 3.8m 2007/8 is clearly a reflection of the Museum's strong public offer; and the Museum's management is right to cite the successful completion of the construction of the second phase of the Darwin Centre. However, the panel feel that this is the weakest section of the NHM's self-assessment and represents something of a missed opportunity as the majority of the answer is presented as a long list of achievements with little reference to strategic priorities or why the successes are important in helping the museum achieve its aims. The panel think it would have been much better for the NHM's management to present a small number of case studies highlighting examples of where it is delivering excellence and the reasons why things have gone well, rather than provide an exhaustive, unreflective list. Similarly the panel think the Museum's management could have used the process of self assessment to reflect upon 2 or 3 areas where it feels the Museum is underperforming and explained its plans to address these shortcomings. The peer review subsequently could have provided a useful opportunity for the Museum to test its thinking with the reviewers.

4.4 What are your particular plans and how will you fulfil them?

The panel are pleased that the NHM has been able to provide a focussed list of its main corporate priorities over the next 5 years. It is clear from the review process that delivering the Darwin Centre Phase 2 is the main focus of the museum at the moment. Completion of DC2 in autumn 2009 will be a huge achievement of which the Museum's management and staff should be proud and will constitute a significant moment in the NHM's history. The panel see this as an exciting development that is likely to have a profound impact on the way in which the Museum works as a whole and will offer the NHM many significant opportunities for the future (some of which cannot yet be anticipated). The panel suggest that senior management would benefit by taking a pause for breath following the opening of the Darwin Centre 2 in order to reflect on these changes before deciding what future plans to make.

The panel feel DC2 has rightly consumed a large amount of senior management's time and energy, but are concerned that other corporate priorities might not receive sufficient management focus in order to ensure that they move forward sufficiently quickly. Conversations with the Museum's leadership have helped to allay this concern. The Senior Management Team recognised they have a lot on their plate but are determined to ensure the good progress of other priorities following the opening of the Darwin Centre 2.

The panel agree that the Museum's 'virtual environment' offers real potential to strengthen its offer and that sufficient resource should be invested in developing an integrated digital strategy.

The panel think that the brand shift project could result in a number of important benefits if the processes are managed correctly and if the work produces some tangible deliverables. The reviewers believe that the NHM would benefit from a better understanding of the perceptions of its key stakeholders and from asking some difficult questions of itself in order to develop the messages it wants to convey. The reviewers think that there is a risk that the Darwin Centre might come to dominate the Museum's internal discussions about its positioning and be seen as a panacea. The reviewers feel that once the branding work has been completed the Museum will need to think about the implications for the way it operates. The NHM will need to consider whether or not it has the "right" skills in-house or will it need to develop partnerships. The panel think that subsequently an action plan, with clear milestones and deliverables, to take things forward should be formulated and implemented in a short time frame.

4.5 What challenges and opportunities do you foresee in undertaking them?

The challenges presented in the self-assessment document are all related to funding and staffing issues. The panel agree that these are important challenges facing the NHM in the short to medium term. The review panel also conclude that over the same period the Museum has to deal with another two significant challenges and these are updating the public offer in the permanent galleries in the main Waterhouse building and how to better integrate the science and public engagement sides of the Museum. The latter aspect is integral to the 'brand-shift' work that the Museum has identified as a priority elsewhere.

The panel are confident in the ability of the Museum's management at all levels to make the most of the opportunities presented in its self-assessment.

4.6 Do you have the leadership needed to achieve your goals and are you positioned to be adaptable to change?

The Panel feel that the self-assessment has provided a useful description of the management/governance structure, but the Museum should qualify why it believes that it has the leadership it needs.

The review panel are very impressed by the Director and think that he provides the Museum with strong leadership. They feel that he has a good grasp of the strategic challenges and opportunities facing the organisation and that he communicates the vision for the Museum very persuasively. The Director blends the evidence-centre mindset of his scientific colleagues with the more audience focus of the visitor services side; his ability to balance and integrate these perspectives is impressive. The panel are supportive of the changes introduced by the Director in the past 3 years. The reviewers think that the business planning system works well and has many benefits for this large and complex organisation. The panel are also impressed by the calibre of the senior management team who they feel have the appropriate levels of professional expertise to perform effectively in their own functions.

The panel would have welcomed an opportunity to meet more of the trustees during the review. As a result they feel unable to comment on the balance of the board's expertise and the appropriateness of the trustees' skill set.

The NHM is a large and diverse organisation with around 850 staff and the panel recognise that there is an on-going management challenge to ensure that individual departments avoid the risk of working with a silo mentality.

The panel agree that developing talent is an important issue for the Museum to address. The reviewers consider that there had been good progress on staff training especially through the introduction of new HR practices such as a competency-based appraisal. The panel feel the

achievement of Investors in People standard is a reflection of the NHM's progressive approach to people management and development.

Chapter 5: Summary Against the McMaster Criteria for Excellence

5.1 Provides a life changing experience.

The NHM has committed to providing a number of in depth programmes to really engage visitors, enthusiasts and students at a personal level. The panel think that these are excellent endeavours and are particularly impressed by the Nature Live programme, the schools work including the Great Debate and hands on interactive sessions

After recent focus on capital projects and temporary exhibitions, the Museum should now renew its efforts to fulfil the potential of its collection and expertise in order to provide an excellent experience for visitors to the permanent collection galleries. This could be achieved by updating the interpretation of the collection, particularly by modernising the display settings and by bringing out more of the Museum's own scientific work into the galleries.

5.2 Shows creativity and innovation.

The Museum has made a major commitment to innovative museums practice with the development of the Darwin Centre. When fully open, this facility will bring the public closer to the excellent scientific work that the Museum carries out and the aim is to change the way the public thinks about the Museum and the importance of the collections. The Museum has also been innovative in other ways; for instance, the Amazing Butterflies exhibition brought visitors outside to see nature in action, the Nature Live programme facilitates greater visitor interaction and learning and the unique volunteer learning programme creates benefits for the volunteers themselves, the Museum and the visitors.

5.3 Is willing to take risks.

The Museum has taken a few notable risks particularly with its public engagement programme. This ranges from developing a new way of engaging with the public through the design and significant investment in the Darwin Centre buildings to experimenting with new programmes to find out what works and doesn't work for its audiences. The Museum is also a very vocal public voice on issues of science such as evolution and climate change. The panel does, however, think that the Museum could be bolder in its approach to display and try out more experimental approaches, for example through working with artists to a greater extent.

5.4 Has an international reputation.

The NHM undoubtedly has a first class international reputation and can be considered one of the great museums of natural history in the world. The Museum does not, though, rest on its laurels in this department but is an active player internationally, working with key partners across the globe and keeping up to date with international best practice.

5.5 Is open to everyone.

The NHM has a large and diverse audience and is particularly popular with young children and families. The Museum itself realises, however, that it should do more to attract under represented groups. It does not attract as many 11 to 15 year olds as it would like but does not currently seem to have a firm plan in place to increase participation with this age group.

The Learning and New Audiences teams organise small, intensive onsite and outreach programmes which are specially tailored to engage and develop sustainable relationships with specific groups. The Museum works with local communities, people who have never been to the NHM – including people from ethnic minorities and “looked after children”.

The NHM has developed successful partnerships with some regional museums notably Manchester Museum, Oxford University Museum of Natural History and Tyne & Wear Museums through the Real World Science project but the panel think that it could do more to expand its regional offer.

5.6 Presents both relevant and challenging concepts to the public.

The NHM is a well recognised and trusted public voice and to a certain degree it has used this position to push forward the agenda of greater public engagement with science through its own work and through the media. It has taken on board some of the hot topics of the day, such as evolution and climate change, and has used its exhibitions and expertise to help increase public understanding of these issues and challenge misconceptions but the panel feel that more could be done to really excel in this area. The goals of this work are to enthuse scientists of the future and to inform public debate, both of which are vital aims for the nation as a whole.

Annex – During the review the panel met with Natural History Museum staff from the following positions and operational areas:

- **Director**
- **Chairman of the Board of Trustees**
- **Audit and Assurance**
- **Collections and storage**
- **Darwin Centre 2 Construction**
- **Development**
- **Estates**
- **Finance and Administration**
- **Human Resources**
- **Learning**
- **Learning Volunteers**
- **Library**
- **Palaeo Conservation Unit**
- **Policy and Planning**
- **Public Engagement**
- **Science**
- **Ad-hoc conversations with visitors in the galleries**
- **External visiting group for Mineralogy**



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