



department for
culture, media
and sport

DCMS Museum Peer Review Pilot

Tyne & Wear Museums

Tyne & Wear Museums' Management Team Response

improving
the quality
of life for all

This document represents the response from the Management Team at Tyne & Wear Museums (TWM) to the Pilot Peer Review carried out on behalf of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

It is laid out in three parts:

- Firstly, our response to the Review: the Panel's report is presented in the left hand column of a table and detailed responses from TWM's Management Team are provided in the right hand column of the table.
- Secondly, there is a short, summary response to the Pilot Review following the detailed response.
- Finally, there are comments relating to the review process, its performance and potential.

Section A:

Detailed response to the Review's findings and recommendations

Contents

Chapter 1: Background.....	6
Chapter 2: Judgement of Excellence in Central Museum Functions.....	11
Chapter 3: Areas for Development.....	15
Chapter 4: Evaluation of the Self-Assessment.....	23
Chapter 5: Summary Against the McMaster Criteria for Excellence.....	28
Annex: Who the review panel met.....	16

Chapter 1: Background

PEER REVIEW TEXT	TWM MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
<p>1.1 The DCMS self-assessment and peer review pilots for museums.</p> <p>Following the publication in January 2008 of the report <i>Supporting Excellence in the Arts: From Measurement to Judgement</i> 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Ahead of its review, Tyne & Wear Museums (TWM) 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 TWM, to include individuals with a suitable range of expertise. The review panel for TWM consisted of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Martin Earwicker, Director, National Museum of Science and Industry.- Susanna Pettersson, Head of Development, The Finnish National Gallery.- Michelle Percy, Marketing Director, Silverlink Properties. <p>The panel was asked, over a three day period, to examine the functions and strategic direction of TWM, evaluate the service in terms of its self-assessment and identify both areas of excellence and opportunities for development.</p>	

This was achieved through discussions with the Chair of the Tyne & Wear Museums Joint Committee, the Director, the Executive Team, management of many operational areas and museum sites, volunteers, front of house staff and members of outreach programmes. Tyne & Wear Museums also arranged for the panel to meet with a number of users and stakeholders including representatives of client bodies including all five Tyne & Wear Councils, the Pro-vice Chancellor of Newcastle University, the Chief Executive of MLA, the regional Head of Arts for the Arts Council England North East, regional museum partners, local businesses, user consultation groups and educational users.

The panel also toured the front of house (and some back of house) facilities of the Discovery Museum (Newcastle), Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths and Museum (North Tyneside), Shipley Art Gallery (Gateshead) the Laing Art Gallery (Newcastle) and the building site of the Great North Museum. The review panel would like to express their thanks to everyone at Tyne & Wear Museums for the time, energy and enthusiasm they contributed to the review process.

This review will act as a benchmark against which future reviews of TWM 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 TWM 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.

We believe that one of the greatest strengths of our review process was the incorporation of a substantial number of users and stakeholders: this was recognised and acknowledged by the review team.

It was suggested by DCMS officers at the time that this element was virtually unique to the TWM review and should be incorporated into guidance for future reviews.

1.2 Tyne and Wear Museums

Tyne & Wear Museums (TWM) comprises twelve museums and galleries across Tyne & Wear, principally funded by the five local authorities of the area, plus Newcastle University, DCMS and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA). In addition, TWM jointly manages two collections storage and access facilities

<p>at Beamish: the Regional Museums Store and Regional Resource Centre. The Service is governed by a Local Authority Joint Committee that currently consists of 23 elected members from the five Tyne and Wear authorities (Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland). TWM is one of the largest local authority museum services in Britain and is also the lead partner in the North East Regional Hub of the “Renaissance in the Regions” programme that is managed by the (MLA).</p> <p>Tyne & Wear Museums Service (TWM) is the only local authority museums service to be sponsored by DCMS, receiving £1.80 million in Grant-In-Aid funding in 2007/08 which represents 12.7% of its total income of £14.17 million. In 2007/08 TWM received a total of 1.50 million visits of which 49 percent were from children aged 15 and under and 41 percent of adult visits were from lower socio-economic groups. In the same year, the TWM website received 1.15 million unique visits.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>TWM Sites</p> <p>The Service comprises twelve museums and galleries across Tyne & Wear, as below (<i>with 2007/08 visitor figures</i>).</p>	
<p><u>Gateshead</u></p> <p>Shiopley Art Gallery. The Gallery is a fine art gallery and a national centre for design and contemporary craft that includes ceramics, wood, metal, glass, textiles and furniture. A recent £650,000 redevelopment, resulting in the Designs for Life Gallery, showcases over 300 objects from around the globe. The fine art collection includes William Irving's <i>The Blaydon Races</i>. (<i>32,000. Lower than average 40,000 due to closure for refurbishment</i>)</p>	
<p><u>Newcastle</u></p> <p>Discovery Museum. Discovery is the region’s most popular museum, showing social and military history as well as maritime and scientific developments through the ages. A major exhibit is “Turbinia” - the test vessel for Charles Parson’s steam turbine and which dominates the entrance. (<i>440,000</i>)</p>	

<p><u>Newcastle University</u></p> <p>Hancock / Great North Museum. The Hancock Museum closed in 2006 for a £26 million transformation as part of the Great North Museum project to open in 2009. This will be a flagship attraction and will include the Designated natural history collections from the former Hancock Museum, with Greek and Etruscan objects from the former Shefton Museum, and prehistoric, Roman and Anglo-Saxon collections of the former Museum of Antiquities. TWM will also manages the Hatton Gallery as part of the Great North Museum, although it will remain in its existing location (see below).</p> <p>The project receives funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, TyneWear Partnership, One NorthEast, the European Regional Development Fund, the Northern Rock Foundation, Newcastle City Council, a variety of other trusts and foundations and the lead funder and project leader Newcastle University.</p>	
<p><u>Newcastle</u></p> <p>Laing Art Gallery. The permanent collection includes important works by John Martin, the Pre-Raphaelites, post impressionists, sculpture by Henry Moore and a highly regarded watercolour collection. Events are organised throughout the year including talks from leading contemporary artists and activities for families. <i>(258,000)</i></p>	
<p><u>Newcastle University</u></p> <p>Newcastle University's Hatton Gallery. The Hatton's permanent collection comprises works ranging from the Renaissance to the twentieth century, including painting, sculpture, printmaking and drawing.</p>	
<p><u>North Tyneside</u></p> <p>Segedunum Roman Fort, Baths & Museum. Segedunum was the eastern gateway to Hadrian's Wall. The excavated fort includes an interactive museum and a 35m high viewing tower providing wide views across this World Heritage Site. <i>(40,000)</i></p>	
<p><u>North Tyneside</u></p> <p>Stephenson Railway Museum. The Museum exhibits the days of the steam railway at the home of George Stephenson's 'Billy' and many other engines. Rides on a real steam train can be taken and the story of coal and electricity's impact on ordinary</p>	

<p>people's lives is examined. The steam engines are run by volunteers, with supervision from the Museums Service (43,000)</p>	
<p><u>South Tyneside</u></p> <p>Arbeia Roman Fort. The Fort gives an insight to Roman Britain and contains many finds as well as excavated remains, and reconstructions of original buildings. The fort was originally built as a garrison and guarded the entrance to the River Tyne. (79,000)</p>	
<p><u>South Tyneside</u></p> <p>South Shields Museum & Art Gallery. Amongst other exhibits, the venue explores the story of South Tyneside through displays, hands-on exhibits and art, including the lifetime achievement of the successful local author Catherine Cookson. (168,000)</p>	
<p><u>Sunderland</u></p> <p>Monkwearmouth Railway Station Museum. The Museum reopened in August 2007 following a £1 million restoration and redevelopment programme. The buildings, incorporating the original station, house seven interactive galleries including a children's gallery. (37,000)</p>	
<p><u>Sunderland</u></p> <p>Sunderland Museum & Winter Gardens. The site combines a museum, art gallery, exhibition space and Winter Gardens. The Museum examines the history of the city from its prehistoric past to the present day. The Winter Gardens house 2,000 flowers and plants. The Art Gallery includes paintings by L S Lowry and Victorian works. (327,000).</p>	
<p><u>Sunderland</u></p> <p>Washington 'F' Pit. A Victorian pit-head steam winding engine, engine house and headgear are preserved as a monument to Washington's coalmining heritage reaching back to the 1700s. 'F' Pit was one of the country's oldest working pits and closed in 1968. The Museum is opened only on a couple of weekends of the year by arrangement for use by parties. (705)</p>	

Chapter 2: Judgement of Excellence in Central Museum Functions

PEER REVIEW TEXT	TWM MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
<p>Tyne and Wear Museums is a service primarily focussed on making a positive difference to the lives of the local community. Its strong passion for public service and social inclusion is evident throughout the organisation, from the large team of enthusiastic volunteers, right through to the senior management. Many of its outreach and learning programmes are innovative and really superb and can be seen as being of a benchmark standard for excellence in this area.</p>	<p>We acknowledge that this is a priority for TWM and are pleased that the degree to which it is now embedded in the organisation is recognised.</p> <p>Praise for the learning and outreach programmes is appreciated and, we believe, well deserved.</p>
<p>2.1 The Director and senior executive management team of Tyne and Wear Museums were identified as being particularly strong. The Director and his team have worked hard to increase the standards of the service and the provision for the local community. The results of this work were apparent during the review visit and there is a clear sense of pride and a culture of enthusiasm throughout the organisation. This is especially impressive given the complex governance and funding structure under which Tyne and Wear Museums operate, which places a substantial number of demands and restrictions on its operation.</p>	<p>The management team appreciates these comments and the Director is particularly pleased that the qualities of his Senior Team are recognised. The Team enjoys his full confidence and he considers that their commitment to the organisation and its mission is exemplary.</p> <p>The Management Team considers that whilst the funding structure of TWM is complex, the Governance is not. The Joint Museums Committee functions well and with one voice. Governance, risk management and scrutiny procedures (e.g. the Audit Committee with independent chair and vice chair) enhance its functioning.</p>
<p>2.2 The review panel were impressed by the teams that worked across the service. These teams appeared to be doing a good job of co-ordinating exhibition, marketing, resource and learning planning and were really adding value which could not be achieved if the museums operated as separate entities. The panel particularly noted the communications team as being impressive, utilising its structure and expertise to provide a positive impact across the service on a relatively constrained budget. Similarly the panel considered that exhibition programming was a strength with good use made of in-house expertise from</p>	<p>We believe that there is a real strength in the joint service and this is reflected by its ability to create service-wide teams and provide levels of capacity, specialism and expertise that would not be possible for any one of the individual partners.</p> <p>The Communications Team and Exhibition programming team deserve these accolades dealing with, as they do, an extensive and diverse offer and often with relatively restricted resources.</p>

<p>across the various teams in the service.</p>	
<p>2.3 Tyne and Wear Museums has done well to build up and maintain a large and active volunteer service. There are roughly 250 volunteers active across the museums at any one time, with around 500 volunteers working in any one year. The structure of having a pool of well trained volunteers who can provide assistance at a number of sites means that this resource is being well utilised. The volunteers' enthusiasm and hard work is rewarded through opportunities for training and development and through an awards programme and TWM has recognised that volunteers play a key advocacy role. There is an opportunity to use the volunteer pool further to provide more personal guidance to museum visitors.</p>	<p>We are proud of our commitment to volunteering and our 'Investors in Volunteers' designation. Volunteers add immense value to our service and we hope that this is reciprocated in terms of the opportunities that they enjoy.</p> <p>Our volunteering programme is made possible through the Renaissance programme and this is borne out by the way in which we have supported the development of museum volunteering throughout the region, both by working with partners within the sector, and with the regional development agency, One North East.</p>
<p>2.4 The Discovery Museum was identified as being of a nationally excellent standard and the strongest museum in the service. It is the most popular museum in the region in terms of number of visits and visitor satisfaction. The panel thought that its combination of local history and strong science and industry collections works well and were impressed by the displays and the public accessibility to the stored collections. The panel particularly noted the 'People's Gallery', which presents exhibitions led directly by members of the local community, sometimes tackling difficult issues such as mental health and life in prison, as being a risk worth taking and were very impressed by the quality of the curatorship and the design of the space.</p>	<p>Discovery is the region's most popular museum in terms of number of visits and visitor satisfaction. The forthcoming merger with Tyne & Wear Archives Service will provide the opportunity to further enhance the offer both at Discovery and beyond.</p> <p>Discovery, however, is not without its maintenance problems, notably the challenge of sustaining the displays and interactive exhibits: this is identified in our self-assessment and noted below.</p>
<p>2.5 The outreach programmes operated by Tyne and Wear museums are world class and truly innovative. Of particular note are the 'Children's Panel (Collective Minds)', the 'Museums and Galleries Disabled Access Group' (MAGDAG) and the 'People's Panel'. These are forums for, respectively, local children, people with a range of disabilities and local people from a variety of backgrounds. They participate in workshops designed to promote engagement and understanding of the collections and also act as forums which provide useful information back to the museums about how they can be improved in terms of access and interest. The panel noted that these forums, together with more specialised ones such as the maritime curators group gave TWM a strong set of informed viewpoints.</p>	<p>We are proud of our commitment to user consultation and involvement; however, we know that we still need to do much more. As part of the 're-visioning' exercise for Discovery Museum, we will be trialling various methods of "participatory appraisal" as part of a commitment to further engage and give a voice to our existing and potential users.</p> <p>The museums and their collections belong to the people of Tyne & Wear and those people must have a stake in their use.</p>

<p>Other programmes which received high praise included work done with local young people to enhance the Not in Education Employment or Training (NEET) courses at Gateshead College and the projects to help bring together asylum seekers, recent immigrants and members of the local community. The panel experienced first hand how these programmes had provided real life changing experiences to those involved. The panel were very pleased to see that members of the 'People's Panel' are now themselves actively exploring ways in which to further engage visitors to the museums.</p>	<p>We can only agree and re-assert that this is a key element of our work.</p>
<p>2.6 The panel was generally pleased with how the Great North Museum (GNM) project was developing. It was felt that the new space in this museum for temporary exhibitions would allow the region to stage the kind of quality, nationally recognised shows that it had previously had trouble accommodating. The panel thought that the opportunity for Tyne and Wear Museums to bring such high profile exhibits to the area should not be underestimated. The build quality throughout the project was excellent but there were some concerns regarding how some of the exhibition layout would work with multiple entry and exit points. The panel was also not yet convinced that the rebranding exercise of this much loved local museum would be successful, although they recognised the ambition to create a museum as a tourism destination.</p>	<p>We acknowledge the potential recognised by the panel.</p> <p>The multiple entry and exit points are a deliberate and essential part of the re-development of a building which previously suffered from completely inadequate access between different areas and tortuous and confusing routes between galleries. It may be that this is a misinterpretation of the Panel's view because at least one member clearly expressed the view that exhibitions with pre-determined routes are undesirable and at odds with audience requirements or behaviour.</p> <p>We cannot deny that the re-branding exercise has been challenging, not least because of the diversity of stakeholders involved. We would argue, however, that whilst the Museum is indeed loved locally, its brand and content were not recognised beyond the sub-region other than by specialists. The re-brand, involved extensive market research and audience consultation, and is part of a determined effort to promote the GNM nationally and internationally, which is in accord with recommendations below.</p>
<p>2.7 The learning programme at TWM was identified as being excellent, particularly with regards to its work with schools. The learning teams across the service had managed to tailor the offer to fit the national curriculum to ensure that schools would continue to visit and make the most of the facilities and expertise at the museums.</p>	<p>We invest heavily in our learning activity and these comments suggest that this investment bears fruit.</p>

<p>As part of the wider effort to engage young people, the panel considered that TWM was particularly strong in its focus on parents and guardians visiting with children and had responded to this demand for family friendly environments as part of a concerted effort to encourage museum visiting from a very young age.</p>	<p>This is also true and also reflects our commitment to cross-generational learning; something that can be particularly powerful in North East England where there are many extended families, with child-care shared across generations, and amongst siblings, their wider family and friends.</p>
<p>2.8 The panel considered that TWM was adopting a sound strategic approach to the operation of the Renaissance programme for the eighty museums in the region, particularly in key areas such as collections care and marketing skills.</p>	<p>We believe that TWM and its North East partners have set the benchmark in this respect, not least in managing to engage every museum in the region in the programme. We do have a head start in that it is a small region with only 80 registered museums. TWM also includes 12 of those 80, so there is <i>de facto</i> a greater number and proportion of museums than in any other region that is guaranteed a share of investment even within the Hub. These factors will undoubtedly be considered by the Renaissance Review Panel when considering the best model for all regions.</p>

Chapter 3: Areas for Development

PEER REVIEW TEXT	TWM MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
<p>The review panel identified some areas for the development that the Service should explore further.</p>	
<p>Essential</p>	
<p>3.1 The Governing body and Executive Leadership of TWM need to be clearer about their vision and mission as they expand their management of services to include the Great North Museum and the archive service.</p>	<p>We are surprised at this comment because we believe that we are clear about our mission and vision (this is acknowledged elsewhere in this review) and this vision is under-pinned by our beliefs. Moreover, this clarity is shared by the majority of staff as proven by our recent Investors in People review which highlighted the degree to which the vision is understood and owned by staff.</p>
<p>This will help to ensure that TWM continues to develop as a group of museums that will attract visitors and users from outside the region and build a national reputation for scholarship and visitor experience. More thought needs to be given to both the current governance structure and the overall vision for the collection and the different sites.</p>	<p>We either failed to communicate, or the Review Panel failed to appreciate, the scholarship taking place both within TWM, and the degree to which this is being enhanced and developed with Universities and other partners in the region. It would not be appropriate for a predominantly locally funded museums service to invest in research on the same scale as a major national museum; however, there are many examples of good practice, and of 'smarter' working with key partners to achieve this.</p> <p>Our Archaeology Team, for example, publishes regularly in academic journals, whilst there has been extensive work on contemporary history subjects. Furthermore, staff have researched and published on the policy and practice of public engagement.</p> <p>The work of the Archaeology team is recognised internationally for its contribution to Roman frontier studies through excavation, publication and the organisation of high-profile academic conferences: we are, for instance, hosting</p>

the prestigious international Limes Congress on Roman frontier archaeology this year. Since the Peer Review, the national/international journal *Current Archaeology* named our research project at Arbeia as Research Project of the Year.

We are partners in a series of AHRC-funded programmes with local Universities, including Collaborative Doctoral Awards looking at digital methods of collecting historical evidence, and co-organisers of a series of seminars on Instrumentalism.

Most significantly, as part of the re-development of the Laing Art Gallery's permanent galleries, we are engaged in a project called *Creative Spirit*: this is a £1 million project that will create a new gallery and some 30% of the funding represents an AHRC contribution towards a research project into how the public engage with regional art. This will lead to not only published material, but will also create public resources within the Gallery.

The Great North Museum project, encompassing the Hancock Museum, the Museum of Antiquities, the Shefton Museum and the Hatton Gallery holds important research collections many of which have been published.

We do acknowledge that, of our regional funders, only Newcastle University prioritises research as part of its service level agreements: research is, after all, not the core business of local authorities, particularly in times of financial stringency. It would be true to suggest, therefore, that just like every regional and local museum service, there is limited pure research capacity. This is why we have committed to working closely with Universities to provide such capacity.

There is, however, an important pointer here: if government requires an increase in research activity, in line with national museums, then it might consider providing additional revenue funding in respect of this. Such a model would be in line with the funding provided for National Museums Liverpool, but with the added investment of local authorities.

	<p>In this respect, it might be pertinent to consider wrapping DCMS funding with Renaissance North East Funding to consider the establishment of another National Museum in the Regions.</p>
<p>The Executive Leadership Team at TWM should be given the power to manage the Service as a single corporate whole. While local authority engagement and support will remain important, a longer arms-length relationship from local authority political decision-makers would enable the Museum Director and his Executive Leadership Team to develop the service strategically for users, both in the region and nationally.</p>	<p>We do feel that the Executive Leadership team does have the power to manage the service, but the point about a single corporate whole is an important one. The service does have a single voice and a single mission; however, it is true that each stakeholder has its own aspirations for its own museums. This is, however both the nature and purpose of the Joint Service: to create excellent opportunities for people in the North East Region. In this sense it could be construed as a strength rather than a weakness.</p> <p>We believe that the joint service arrangement has many benefits and the executive rarely feels constrained! The Joint Service is perhaps difficult to explain and may be challenging to manage, but we believe that it is an important way of securing 'ownership' of the local authorities (probably more so than if it were arms length) and, more importantly, of securing benefits for regional users.</p>
<p>Current governance arrangements and service level agreements are not flexible enough to allow quick progress on key strategic issues such as whether there should be a careful rationalisation of museums and collections, or an evaluation of individual sites.</p>	<p>We are not aware of examples where current arrangements have been inflexible and feel that talk of rationalisation betrays a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of stakeholders and users. The people and council of South Tyneside, for instance, would not accept the closure of their museum because there is already one in Sunderland; or the people of Gateshead, the closure of the Shipley, because there is art provision in Newcastle. Each museum or gallery has its own identity and its own market; to suggest that successful museums should be closed and subsumed by others makes little business sense, and pays no attention to the needs of principal users.</p> <p>If DCMS truly wants to see less, but larger museums, and with an enhanced research focus, then it should consider conferring national museums status on TWM with a</p>

	<p>concurrent commitment to increase financial support. The regional funding partners could then continue to run their own museums focused on their local communities.</p>
<p>We would encourage TWM to consider looking into trust status or a governance model whereby the Joint Committee appoints an independent Board to take the key strategic decisions in the best interests of TWM as a whole.</p>	<p>TWM's governance arrangements are changing with the merger with TWAS and this will lead, amongst other things, to a smaller Joint Committee. Similarly, at the time of the scheduled review in 2011, there will be consideration of different governance models. We do not believe that the Panel identified any obvious reasons to recommend creation of an independent board.</p>
<p>In terms of vision, TWM needs to consider what more could be done to enhance the current arrangement and presentation of the collection in order to strengthen its place nationally and internationally as a centre of excellence. At present there is some confusion between local museums very closely linked to the community and the ambition to develop as a collection of international standing. There can be links between the two, but more could be done to rationalise some of the collections so that material of national and international importance is presented to its maximum potential and set fully in context.</p>	<p>We do refute the suggestion that there is confusion between the local, regional and national roles. We reject the proposition that you can be either a local museum, or have an international reputation, but not both. Rather than confusion, we would characterise it as balance!</p> <p>We fully acknowledge the need to enhance the presentation of all collections and venues and respond by committing to do this. In fact, some £80 million has been spent across the twelve venues in a 12 year period, but more is still necessary, not least to carry out renewals of the last renewals!</p>
<p>The panel thought that TWM could benefit greatly from classifying its ambitions into three different levels: Regional, National and International. The intended outcome would be that the service would strive to be the best regional museum in some aspects (e.g. local history, art galleries), the best national museum in other aspects (e.g. volunteer programme, archaeology) and a world leader in a select few areas. The panel felt that with a greater international presence, TWM could become a world-class model for learning and outreach programmes that museums outside the UK would look to as a benchmark.</p>	<p>We welcome this suggestion from the Panel which accords with the focus of our current thinking and will help us better articulate the complementary roles of the organisation.</p> <p>We do feel that in order to really develop the international dimension of our work, additional central government support is desirable and we are, for instance, approaching the FCO with regards to our work in South Africa.</p>
<p>3.2 The collection strategy of the Service was considered to be underdeveloped. The panel heard that the collections were owned by each individual authority, with individual acquisition budgets. Through questioning, the panel were not able to identify a purposeful approach to developing the collections across the various museums and found little was being done to decide on acquisitions and disposals in a strategic manner. Acquisitions appear to be made on a sporadic, unfocussed and unplanned basis, with the exception of collecting oral histories.</p>	<p>A comprehensive acquisitions policy is in place and is regularly reviewed (and is currently under review). We have also identified funding for strategic acquisitions programmes such as the Northern Rock Foundation support for Contemporary Craft Collecting and the HLF Collecting Cultures programme to develop collections in the applied arts and crafts.</p>

	<p>We actually believe that there is little wrong with the Acquisitions Policy/Strategy, however, we believe that there is a question of just how effectively it is used and applied in some areas. We will use the Panel's comments as stimulus to conduct a review of both strategy and practice.</p> <p>Additionally, reference is made to the collecting of oral histories: in actual fact we collect both oral histories and digital stories. Their collection is the result of strategic decisions. We believe that there are good reasons to increase the level of acquisition and rationalisation and to keep it under review.</p>
<p>However the collection team was fully capable and well aware about collection management on a practical level and it seemed that the collection team had both the potential to develop the collection management processes as well as the tools to work with.</p>	<p>We agree that our Collections and Exhibitions Team is extremely capable! There is, however, possibly a misunderstanding of the role of the Collections Management team in relation to the Curatorial specialists as it is the latter who would predominantly determine acquisition policy.</p>
<p>This is an area which the TWM management need to look into further to ensure that the right policies are in place to build a structured and meaningful collection for the future. With the merger of the Archive Service in April 2009, now would be a timely opportunity for the service to consider the philosophies that will drive the collection strategy.</p>	<p>We agree that the merger with Tyne & Wear Archives Service presents an opportunity to further review, consider and develop collecting strategies, particularly in the field of social history and in science and technology.</p>
<p>Much of the recent development effort of TWM has gone into capital projects and now there is an opportunity for the focus to shift towards collections and content of existing buildings.</p>	<p>There has been considerable investment in capital projects, but most of these have greatly improved collections facilities as well as public access, some specifically so. For instance, the Regional Museums Store and the Regional Resource Centre, both built in partnership with Beamish have contributed to collections care and accessibility; the Great North Museum project includes the creation of a major store and resource centre in the basement of Discovery Museum; the refurbishment of Discovery Museum itself has included the creation of purpose built, secure and environmentally controlled stores, which the Panel visited. The suggestion that there has been inadequate, or even disproportionate, investment in collections is at odds with the evidence and</p>

	<p>perpetuates an inaccurate, and out-moded and unhelpful stereotype.</p> <p>Similarly, a large proportion of Renaissance funding has been invested in collections schemes including addressing long-standing backlogs in documentation, in conservation staff and equipment and in providing curatorial capacity. We are also developing relationships with local Universities to build in research relationships that will provide collections research capacity.</p> <p>We accept that within the self-assessment and the three-day visit there was insufficient opportunity to highlight this work but we believe that we can demonstrate a considerable amount of activity.</p>
Strongly Desirable	
<p>3.3 The panel visited the Segedunum site and thought that this unique place was full of potential to build a centre for Roman history. However that potential is not being fully recognised and the panel thought that the site was focussing too much on serving the school curriculum and would not provide a suitably interesting experience for adults interested in Roman history. The panel were also concerned that the inclusion in the gallery of themes such as the Tudors and local ship building risked transmitting confusing messages about historical timelines, though they did recognise that this would likely change when the Great North Museum project was complete and that in the meantime the school curriculum needed to be serviced.</p>	<p>Segedunum is the starting point for all adults beginning the Hadrian's Wall Heritage Trail. The market for Hadrian's Wall Heritage is a complex one and the location of Segedunum in an urban situation does prejudice against its success.</p> <p>The site is situated adjacent to the recently closed Swan-Hunter shipyard and the interpretation of this aspect of history has always been an important part of the site's interpretive offer. Similarly, one of Segedunum's key characteristics is that the site does show, very effectively, change through time, however, we would acknowledge that investment in Segedunum is insufficient and this is one reason that we chase diverse school curriculum markets as demonstrated by temporary exhibitions such as the Egyptians and now the Tudors.</p> <p>We will consider the Panel's remarks as we plan the future of Segedunum. We will also ensure that museums' plans and aspirations are built into the discussions and plans over the North Bank of the Tyne.</p>
<p>3.4 The panel thought that the collection and display of contemporary art is not well managed throughout the service. There have been limited attempts to include contemporary art in the collection but this did not appear to be of a generally</p>	<p>We will utilise this criticism to review this aspect of our work with our art curators. Having said this, the Shipley has a well-developed policy for collecting contemporary craft and an</p>

<p>high standard and was sometimes presented in confusing settings (e.g. an exhibition about art and architecture in the Laing, small collection in Sunderland Museum). One notable exception was the video installation by Catherine Yass in the Laing Gallery, which the panel felt was an excellent and ambitious curatorial decision, but to develop this kind of work further would take a more strategic approach and need to link more to the permanent collection. Tyne and Wear Museums may wish to make firmer decisions on whether or not to expand and improve the contemporary art offer across the service, taking into account the existence of the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in the same region.</p>	<p>extremely strong collection. The Laing has an active contemporary exhibition programme and has worked closely with Baltic to develop a number of initiatives, including international collecting, and has committed to work particularly closely with the new director of Baltic to inform and develop TWM's strategy in this respect.</p> <p>It is hard to imagine where would have been more appropriate than the Laing to host the Art and Architecture exhibition and we feel this comment reflects the reviewers' tastes (as does the praise for Catherine Yass). The small collection at Sunderland Museum exhibited amongst historic work is representative of this collection and this reflects the priorities of the Acquisition Policy. It is also quite natural to present historic and contemporary works juxtaposed to explore the nature of both.</p>
<p>For Consideration</p>	
<p>3.5 The panel felt that the trading strategy of Tyne and Wear Museums could be improved. Spend per visitor is very low (34p across the service) and almost half of the shop income comes from the Laing gallery. The panel thought that the shops were unconnected and could make a greater impact and that senior management could do more to instil an appreciation of the importance of revenue and an understanding of the level of subsidy the museums receive.</p>	<p>Spend per visitor is low compared with London-based national museums but not at odds with other regional services. Spend per head also drops in relation to high visitor numbers.</p> <p>We used to benchmark ourselves against other large local authority services but it became increasingly difficult to get our peers to provide the necessary information! A recent review shows, for instance that at most of our venues, our spend per head compares favourably with both other local authorities and 'regional nationals' such as National Museums Liverpool. We do however recognise the need to build our income from this source and are continually seeking to do this.</p> <p>We commissioned a report last year from a fund-raising consultant which, in many ways, pre-empted the Review Team's comment regarding the appreciation of the importance of revenue generation amongst staff. The Director made this the central theme at this January's 'All-</p>

	<p>Staff' Meetings and will continue to do so. The message from management to staff for some time now has been that we are going to need to generate an increasing proportion of our turnover, and that 'self-help' is the key.</p>
<p>3.6 The ambition amongst management and staff could be developed further to be stretching to the world class level and to look to the best UK and international museums as benchmarks of excellence. The panel felt that certain teams were more open to taking on board ideas and experiences from outside TWM, but more could be done to encourage all teams to seek opportunities for learning and to utilise knowledge and experience from elsewhere to refresh their own work.</p>	<p>The Management team acknowledges the need to stretch the organisation. TWM has been at the forefront of benchmarking within the UK but will seek to develop more international benchmarking partners where there can be meaningful comparisons.</p> <p>We do acknowledge that the (correct) focus of staff on the 'bottom line' may lead to a tendency to be constrained by budget rather than ambition. Having said this, we have raised and continue to raise a significant element of our income from external sources and continue to demonstrate what is possible despite relatively limited investment.</p> <p>The Archaeology Team, for instance undertakes commissioned studies for museums and archaeological organisations throughout England and Scotland and 90% of the staff are supported entirely by earned income.</p>

Chapter 4: Evaluation of the Self-Assessment

PEER REVIEW TEXT	TWM MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
<p>As part of the review process, organisations under review have been asked to complete a self-assessment based against six questions. The panel felt that the completed self-assessment by Tyne and Wear Museums gave a good honest overview of the overarching issues facing the museum, its achievements and the areas identified as requiring improvement. Looking at each question specifically:</p>	<p>We believe that we are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. We do feel that the restrictions on the size of the self-assessment prevented an organisation as diverse and complex as this from addressing all the issues that we would have wished to. We would also want to place on record our belief that complacency is our greatest threat and that we are aware of the need to review and improve constantly.</p>
<p>4.1 What is the strategic vision of your museum?</p> <p>The mission and vision of TWM are to “help people determine their place in the world and define their identities...” and “for everyone to have access to museum provision in Tyne and Wear...”. The panel thought that this strong focus on the Service being of public benefit was evident throughout the organisation and its work.</p>	<p>We are encouraged by this comment and are proud of the way in which our staff and volunteers develop and demonstrate this focus.</p>
<p>TWM also list some of their beliefs to be to “inspire and challenge people to explore their world” and to “act as an agent of economic regeneration and help build and develop communities and the aspirations of individuals”. The panel felt that on this front while the Service was doing admirable work to reflect the important history of the region there is also room to challenge the audience to think about new opportunities and the ever changing global economic and social climate.</p>	<p>This is a very specific recommendation but we will seek to develop new and challenging public programmes.</p> <p>Just as importantly we will seek to practice what we preach and ensure that we respond to these global changes. We are currently investigating the implementation of more sustainable regimes throughout TWM and TWAS.</p>
<p>The panel thought that TWM could benefit greatly from classifying its ambitions into three different levels: Regional, National and International.</p>	<p>We will seek to address this in our corporate planning processes and through our management objectives. We agree that such an approach could bring benefits to our planning and delivery.</p>

<p>4.2 How do you measure success and excellence in meeting it?</p> <p>TWM's measures of success revolve around access, value and impact with arguably the greatest emphasis being placed on access and particularly access for the very hardest to reach sections of society. In fact the self-assessment states that "If TWM has a Unique Selling Proposition, then it is its long-standing commitment to access: physical, sensory and intellectual." The panel thought that good measures were in place to judge the success of the work to improve access but that perhaps the next focus for the museums should be to focus more on impact for a regular visitor who is not part of an outreach scheme.</p>	<p>The Management Team fully acknowledges this comment. We would only add that whilst many funding streams and performance management regimes prioritise 'hard-to-reach' groups, we have developed this aspect of our work because it is central to <u>our</u> mission. This has been a consistent approach and we have not been swayed by the agendas of others. We would not want to diminish this work, but we fully accept the need to seek balance and address the needs of all audiences. It is also worth noting that investment in access provision improves the core facility, and almost always provided benefits to all audiences.</p>
<p>4.3 What has gone well recently? What hasn't?</p> <p>TWM has received a large amount of funding in recent years (£38 million since 2000) from the Heritage Lottery Fund which it has successfully invested in capital projects (total capital spend since 2000 has been £80 million). The panel were impressed by the 98% success rate of the Service in bidding for funding and particularly thought that the development of the Winter Gardens at Sunderland had been a success as a strong, informal and accessible museum for the local area. In order to present value for money, this capital spending now needs to be followed by a renewed emphasis on improving the existing offer. The panel also agreed strongly that the consultation groups of local people had been excellent innovations and were pleased that these were now established as long term entities.</p>	<p>We acknowledge these comments: like many cultural institutions benefiting from significant capital investment, the real challenge is sustaining the offer, thereafter. Our record, so far, is good, but we recognise the challenges ahead and the need to stay ahead of an ever more discerning public and this is why consulting with that public is so important.</p>
<p>As an overall successful scheme, the panel particularly noted the achievements of the museum service in engaging the local community with its heritage through a variety of cultural experiences. These programmes included themes as diverse as exploring the natural environment, sharing experiences of living with a disability, creating exhibitions with skateboarders and capturing the lives of coastal communities.</p>	<p>This is a key priority area of our activity and will continue to be so.</p>
<p>The panel agreed with the self-assessment that the maintenance of exhibits needs to be improved, noting a number of broken interactive displays in the Discovery Museum. However they also saw a need for greater interpretation of the collection, and would have liked to have seen more staff available in the galleries to answer questions from the visitors. The panel thought that would</p>	<p>The management team accept all of these comments. All are priorities to be addressed and we will use the Review Team's comments as further stimulus to address this.</p> <p>We support, enthusiastically, the proposition that more staff 'animating' galleries and available to assist the public would be</p>

<p>also provide an opportunity to involve the volunteers in a more dynamic way.</p>	<p>desirable, and would enhance the visitor experience. There is willingness from volunteers to participate in this way and we are investigating the development of a training regime to address this.</p>
<p>The panel also agreed that the senior management team are over stretched but thought that more could be done to solve this simply through increased delegation by giving more responsibility to the middle managers.</p>	<p>The role of middle managers is addressed in the self-assessment. We accept that this issue is a combination of senior managers' willingness (or lack thereof) to delegate, of addressing the training and development needs of middle managers, and of preparedness and capacity of those managers to take on additional responsibility. Addressing these issues is a critical organisational development priority.</p>
<p>Likewise, the panel thought that the offer at the Shipley Art Gallery was in need of improvement, but thought that more could be done to look at a range of solutions.</p>	<p>The offers at all venues are in need of constant and continuing improvement, however, the specific comments about the Shipley require some qualification as they are somewhat cryptic but, we feel, reflect the Panel's response to the particular exhibitions on show at the time.</p> <p>The Shipley has enjoyed significant investment into the <i>Designs for Life</i> gallery. It was clear that one of the reviewers was not impressed with this gallery although the same gallery has received exceptionally good reviews in the professional press and has been well received by the public; this assessment therefore appears to be a matter of personal taste.</p> <p>The two temporary exhibitions on show at the Shipley at the time of the visit included the local Art Society annual exhibition. This is, arguably, of lesser quality than normal exhibitions because the participants are amateurs. It is perhaps the only example of where curatorial input is restricted by a long-standing requirement to show this exhibition. It is worth noting however that this exhibition scores highly in terms of participation and popularity.</p> <p>The <i>Christmas Present</i> exhibition is an annual selling exhibition which contributes valuable income to the Gallery. The decision had been taken, prior to the Review, to suspend both exhibitions next year to accommodate a major touring exhibition.</p> <p>If the Review Panel were looking for high quality exhibitions had they visited the Shipley earlier in the year they would have seen</p>

	<p>exhibitions from the V&A, the British Museum and possibly the most impressive of all, 18th Century Blues, an exhibition generated in collaboration with the Universities of Northumbria and Sunderland, and the result of an international and original research project, that featured paintings and prints from some of the nation's greatest national collections.</p>
<p>4.4 What are your particular plans and how will you fulfil them?</p> <p>The biggest project for TWM in the short term is the opening of the Great North Museum which, if done well, the panel saw as a real opportunity to enhance the public presentation of existing collections and bring nationally recognised exhibits to the region. The self-assessment listed improving collections management as part of the Service's plans and the panel thought that this had not yet been thought through in depth but should be a priority for TWM going forward now that the period of intensive capital building is coming to an end. Special attention should be paid to the in-depth collection strategies not only on the very practical collection management level but also exploring the strategy on the theoretical and philosophical level, thus going deeper into the reasons behind what to collect and why. This is vital and timely as the Tyne and Wear Archive Service will be merged into TWM in March 2009.</p>	<p>Improving collections management is a priority for the service and is an area in which it is investing heavily. The major Collections Management Project is exactly about this. It is hard to reconcile the high investment, careful planning, development of a sound business case, the cross-cutting organisational contribution and strategic development of this plan, which has been developed according to strict PRINCE2 principles, with the Panel's comments about not being thought through!</p>
<p>The panel thought that although much of the work the Service is developing adds real value, it might be better off focussing on fewer, high priority issues, in particular focussing on improving the quality of the current offer, making the governance structure more efficient and rationalising some of the collections to create clear foci of excellence.</p>	<p>The management team are interested in these observations. We are not clear about what 'fewer, high priority issues' are. We do believe that the number of museums is a function of our clients' and audiences' desires and aspirations and it is not for TWM to rationalise these.</p> <p>We do fully acknowledge the need to continuously and consistently improve the quality of our offer, and we will strive to do this.</p> <p>Rationalisation of collections is a key element of collections management and our Disposal Policy has been developed to facilitate this.</p>
<p>4.5 What challenges and opportunities do you foresee in undertaking them?</p> <p>The panel strongly agreed that the political dimensions of the governance and funding structure are a major challenge to TWM being able to provide the best possible service going forward. They thought that the local authorities might</p>	<p>Governance should be kept under review but in any case, the primary governance structure – the Joint Museums Committee – will be re-configured in April to become a smaller committee</p>

<p>need to take a radical look at the way they operate the museums service and should do more to give greater freedom to what has proven to be a successful executive team. TWM also noted that there would be financial challenges over the next few years and the panel agreed that more could be done to improve the trading and fund raising activity of the Service including improving hospitality services for corporate hire, developing a TWM brand, and maintaining the direction of travel on e-commerce and new product development.</p>	<p>responsible for both Archives and Museums. Furthermore, this will inevitably be considered as part of the scheduled 2011 review of service.</p> <p>Once again, however, we would wish to emphasise that what may look like a complex governance structure, seems to work well and does not impede effective management in any significant way.</p>
<p>4.6 Do you have the leadership needed to achieve your goals and are you positioned to be adaptable to change?</p> <p>The panel agreed with the self-assessment that the Director and Senior Management team are totally committed to the success of TWM. They saw first hand the passion and ability of the team and the hard work that goes into making the service a success. They also agreed that the Director and Senior Managers are over-stretched but thought that more could be done to delegate work or to be more decisive about what work is and is not worth pursuing.</p>	<p>We acknowledge these comments. We accept the importance of delegating work but do not understand the comment regarding 'decisiveness about which work is and is not worth pursuing': we would appreciate clarification of this comment so that we can address it effectively.</p>
<p>The panel felt that although much had been achieved to date through the present Governance structure, in looking to the future to achieve a new level of international excellence some further thought should be given to whether the present structures were still the most appropriate and whether more freedom should be given to the executive team.</p>	<p>We believe that every aspect of the organisation should be reviewed and that governance is no exception. As noted, above, there will be an immediate transformation effected by the merger with T&W Archives Service: this will see the governing committee reduced from 23 members to 15. There are also proposed changes to create more effective parallel fund-raising structures by involving business and private supporters. In addition, a service review in 2011 will consider these issues.</p> <p>We do question the recurring comments about the freedom of the executive team which does not feel constrained other than by levels of investment.</p>

Chapter 5: Summary Against the McMaster Criteria for Excellence

PEER REVIEW TEXT	TWM MANAGEMENT RESPONSE
<p>5.1 Provides a life changing experience.</p> <p>The outreach programme of TWM is both large and in depth. It is clear that close work with members from across the local community is tangibly changing lives. Also the local history element of the museums offers a real insight into how local life has changed, which is of interest to both those who lived through the changes and those who are too young to remember. Conversely the number of museums with mixed content means that the impact of the collections is dissipated somewhat for the visitor to a single site.</p>	<p>We welcome acknowledgment of the impact of our targeted work. In particular, we are pleased that the power of museum experiences is recognised. We genuinely believe that we do change lives and this is affirmed by those people that the Panel spoke to.</p>
<p>5.2 Shows creativity and innovation.</p> <p>The panel thought that some of the outreach and learning activities carried out by TWM were truly innovative and leading the field. The ‘Peoples Panel’ and ‘Children’s Panel’ are good examples of where TWM has thought about new ways to interact with the local community and these innovative projects are now becoming embedded parts of the Service functions. The panel also thought that the communications department demonstrated creative thinking in coming up with new ways to engage audiences on a limited budget (e.g. Podcasts) and different parts of the organisation were aware of new opportunities that would open up through the merger with Tyne & Wear archives. The GNM also has innovative elements around the presentation of natural history and object handling.</p>	<p>We acknowledge these comments although we believe that there is still great potential to innovate further. We are certainly committed to continuous improvement and will develop this important area of our work.</p>
<p>5.3 Is willing to take risks.</p> <p>Although TWM has taken some measured risks in recent years, such as the ‘People’s Gallery’ and by expanding the Service to take control of new museums, the panel felt that in some ways TWM was not being ambitious enough.</p>	<p>We accept that there is room to increase ambition and will prioritise this for our staff development as a result of this observation. We do believe, however, that the Review Panel’s concept of ambition is rather limited: Developing the Great North Museum is a risk; the <i>Designs for Life</i> gallery at the Shipley is a risk; the <i>Culture Shock</i> programme is a risk; the <i>Great British Art</i></p>

	<p><i>Debate</i> – led by TWM on behalf of partners including Tate is also a risk but, equally, a huge opportunity.</p>
<p>The fact that many of the museums cover a range of topics in one place (e.g. at Sunderland there is natural history, shipbuilding, glassware, pottery, mining history, local history, fine art, a garden and more) means that there is little room for the curators to experiment and try out new ideas. The overall impression was that in most cases the curatorial staff were somewhat restricted in the decisions they were allowed to make and this left them limited in ambition.</p>	<p>We honestly do not understand this point: we certainly do not agree that museums covering a range of topics are by definition, un-ambitious. By contrast, there are numerous regional examples of single-topic museums/galleries that have failed to make the impact intended, or that have found difficulty maintaining their profile, or sustaining their business.</p> <p>We are completely perplexed at the suggestion that in most cases curatorial staff are somehow restricted in the decisions they are allowed to make; TWM is constantly looking for ambition from all its staff and ambition and aspiration is encouraged and supported. We are so concerned by this suggestion that we will be testing it rigorously.</p> <p>We do, however, recognise that the main barrier to ambition may be the level of investment available. If there is any substance to this charge, then perhaps it is that curators begin by thinking about the restrictions of the budget, rather than the possibilities of what they could achieve.</p>
<p>5.4 Has an international reputation.</p> <p>TWM has a reputation nationally, and to a lesser extent internationally, for providing an excellent public centred service that serves well the local area. However it lacks the large single subject museum sites, major world class collections and large exhibition spaces needed to attract audiences from far afield.</p>	<p>Following on from the previous comment, we do not accept the premise that large single subject museum sites are synonymous with international reputation. Three of TWM's collections: arts, science and technology and natural sciences are designated. The latter two of these are unquestionably of international importance. Furthermore, our market research shows that sites such as Discovery, the Laing, Segedunum and Arbeia do indeed attract national and international audiences as a matter of course.</p>
<p>Nor does it produce the kind of scholarly work (publications, research and conservation expertise) that would increase its standing amongst its peers and potentially open up new links and collaborations in these fields.</p>	<p>As noted above, we are developing relationships with a number of universities in the region to develop research activity. We question whether, under our current funding regime, it is realistic to develop an extensive research and publication programme. By working effectively with partners, however, we will increase this.</p>

	<p>We would repeat that Current Archaeology named our research at Arbeia as Research Project of the Year.</p>
<p>However TWM does have the potential to be a world leader for outreach, learning and volunteer programmes and by sharing its work more internationally could achieve an increased international profile which would lead to further opportunities.</p>	<p>We are seeking to share this work and will continue to explore ways in which we can share this more effectively. It should be noted that TWM hosted a national outreach conference last year and that its staff regularly speak at national and international forums.</p>
<p>5.5 Is open to everyone.</p> <p>This area is where Tyne & Wear museums really excels. The Service works actively to encourage new audiences and to attract people from a wide range of backgrounds. The number of museums that TWM provides throughout the region means also means that a reasonable percentage of local people can access at least part of the Service by public transport. This success can be seen by the visitor numbers (1.5 million) compared to the population of the area (approx 1.1 million).</p>	<p>We are pleased to receive this acknowledgement. We also draw attention to the low cost per visit in terms of public subsidy compared with other publicly funded museums and cultural institutions.</p>
<p>5.6 Presents both relevant and challenging concepts to the public.</p> <p>Certain exhibitions, such as those in the 'Peoples Gallery' tackle head on difficult and pertinent issues, such as mental health, and can be considered to be truly excellent. There is also a clear focus on local relevance and indeed the Service's mission "<i>...to help people determine their place in the world and define their identities...</i>" is clearly at the heart of what TWM does. However the panel felt that the museums could be doing more to promote debate about how the region can move forward into the future and compete in the global economy.</p>	<p>There are many areas in which we want to develop our programme of interpretation; The <i>Tyneside Challenge Gallery</i> at Discovery addresses these issues. We have also committed to developing the science and engineering agenda within TWM, and are working with a number of independent experts to do this including The Discovery Associates group.</p>

Annex – During the review the panel met with Tyne and Wear Museums staff stakeholders from the following positions and operational areas:

Elected members and Governing bodies

- Chair
- Vice-Chair
- Independent Chair of TWM Audit Committee

Executive Team

- Director
- Assistant Director
- Senior managers

Staff associated with particular museums:

- Discovery Museum: curator, keepers, learning officer and outreach officer
- Sunderland Museum: Senior manager, Museum manager, learning, development, keepers, outreach
- Segedunum: Senior manager, Museum manager, learning
- Shipley Art Gallery: Senior management, curator, keeper, learning, museums services (front of house)
- Great North Museum: Project manager, Interpretation co-ordinator
- Laing Art Gallery: Curator, senior keeper, exhibitions, learning, outreach

Other TWM Staff interviewed

- Senior Manager Corporate Affairs
- Senior Accountant
- Hub Projects Manager
- Development and Trading
- TWM Front of House Staff from across the Service
- Learning and outreach teams
- NE Regional Museums hub Manager and learning team
- Communications and e-learning team
- Senior management from across the Service
- Workforce development
- Exhibitions and collections, conservation and documentation

Stakeholders

- Volunteers
- Education and Inclusion Team, Sunderland City Council

- **Community Health Outreach Worker NHS**
- **Students on outreach programmes**
- **Heads of Culture from T&W (client) councils**
- **Client officers from T&W (client) councils**
- **Pro-vice Chancellor of Newcastle University**
- **Dean of Cultural Affairs, Newcastle University**
- **Director, The Bowes Museum**
- **Director, Arts & Development, Arts Council England, North East**
- **Chief Executive, MLA**
- **Libraries Manager, South Tyneside**
- **Local business partners**
- **The Laing's Peoples Panel**
- **TWM's Museum and Galleries Disabled Access Group**
- **Collective Minds (TWM's Young People's Advisory Group)**
- **Representative of Pakistani Cultural Society**
- **Regional Manager of the Heritage Lottery Fund**
- **Freelance artists and educators**
- **Senior Horticultural officer, Sunderland City Council**
- **Development Manager, Culture and Tourism, Sunderland City Council**
- **Arts Development Officer, Sunderland City Council**

Section B:

Summary response to the Review's findings and recommendations

General

- We would like to thank all of the members of the Review Panel and their DCMS support team for their time and commitment to this Peer Review. We appreciate the extraordinary amount of time and hard-work that they had to put in during a very intensive period. We would also like to thank Sara Selwood who observed the early part of the process. Their commitment is appreciated, particularly given their extremely busy diaries.
- We believe that during its visit, the Review Panel saw a broad range of our activity, but inevitably only superficially.
- It would be inappropriate to patronise the Panel members, but we do feel that the brevity of both the self-assessment document and of the visit itself made it difficult for them to get behind some of the fundamental issues that affect the governance, management and delivery of the joint museums service and this is reflected in some of the observations and recommendations.
- Similarly, we volunteered for this process on the basis that we can learn and improve from it. It is not our intention to be defensive against any of the criticisms or areas for development identified. Where we refute particular suggestions or question interpretations it is because we genuinely believe that they are incorrect, inappropriate or the result of misunderstanding.
- Where we do challenge observations or recommendations, we acknowledge that this may be a result of the limited time available, or genuine misunderstanding by the reviewers, or, equally, our failure to communicate certain aspects of our activity effectively.
- We do believe that the Chair of the review panel came with pre-conceived ideas particularly regarding issues of governance and funding which coloured both the review itself and affected the process as it took place.
- Despite this we welcome the praise for certain areas of our activity and the recognition of its quality
- Similarly, we are equally grateful for the areas for development identified and where we are able, we will endeavour to address those areas identified for development.
- Detailed responses to each point are made in section A, whilst comments on the process are presented in section C. The following comments in section B summarise our response to each review chapter.

Excellence

- We welcome, warmly, the positive comments about TWM, in particular those regarding the impact of our work upon the public and the real value that we add and the World-class programmes that we offer.
- We also welcome the specific comments regarding the strength of our senior management, communications, collections and exhibitions learning and outreach teams. We feel, however, that it is only fair to point out that all our activity is developed across the organisation and that both our successes and failures are shared. We believe that all our teams are strong in their own ways, but strengthened by working together.
- It is good to see our work with volunteers receive recognition: they are a vital part of our work-force and one that can only be strengthened.
- The work with consultation groups and panels informs our service development and we are pleased that this is recognised but we are committed to developing this significantly in a bid to democratise our product and delivery.
- Discovery Museum and the Great North Museum are flagship sites and are identified as such.
- We have worked hard to ensure that our leadership of the North East Regional Museums Hub is effective and productive.

Areas for Development

- We will follow the recommendation to attempt to classify our activity and outcomes as Regional, National and International
- Whilst we do not accept that effective acquisitions and collections management strategies are not in place, we do recognise that the application of these is not always consistent and we will seek to address this. We will review, in particular, our contemporary art acquisition policy and practice.
- We will continue the intensive work that we are carrying out in respect of enhancing collections management and access.
- We will continue to review the 'offer' at Segedunum and the extent to which it should focus only on the Romans, or not.
- We will continue to focus on our fundraising and retail activity and, in particular, will seek to increase the spend per head at point of sale.
- We do not believe that a museums service funded, primarily from local sources, can be expected to achieve similar research output as national museums, even on a pro rata basis. In drawing attention to this, we believe that the Panel were unaware of the research achievements within the organisation, or those achieved in partnership with regional universities
- Whilst the management and governance of the service will be kept under review, most particularly in 2011, we do not accept that any evidence was presented, or considered, that justified calls for changes to governance structures. No valid reasons were given for suggestions that an unquestioned move towards an independent board, or trust status is desirable. Regrettably, we feel that this theme reflected a preconception and preference of the Chair of the Review Panel and his inability to understand the mechanism and successes of the current governance structure.

Self-Assessment

- We are pleased that the Review Panel considered the Self Assessment document to be an honest appraisal of TWM.
- We are also encouraged that the Panel concurred with the strengths of the organisation identified in the Self Assessment,
- We re-affirm our commitment to address the following priorities:
 - A successful merger with Tyne & Wear Archives that makes the most of the opportunities offered.
 - Address the management structures, effectiveness, capabilities and competencies at all levels of the organisation through a programme of development, training, structural change and succession planning.
 - Consider the needs of all potential users and balance the needs of new and existing audiences
- Specific comments about particular art exhibitions we found less helpful as they appeared to reflect differences in taste rather than real issues.

McMaster Criteria

- **Provides a life changing experience**

We are pleased that our ability to change lives is recognised: it is a deeply held conviction of TWM and its staff and stakeholders.

- **Shows creativity and innovation**

Similarly, we welcome recognition of our creativity and innovation. The examples selected are good ones, but there are many more!

- **Is willing to take risks**

We are concerned that the suggestion that ambition is constrained: the recent growth of TWM and its ability to meet new challenges, we believe, suggest the opposite. The Review's association of multi-disciplinary museums and collections with curatorial constraint is confusing and we believe neither justified in the document, nor sustainable as an argument.

- **Has an international reputation**

TWM is working hard to build its international reputation and we would argue that our research activity, particularly through TWM Archaeology and through our relationships with Higher Education institutions, is more significant than recognised. We do, however, commit to re-assess this in the light of the Review, but also taking into consideration our predominantly local and regional funding streams.

- **Is open to everyone**

The Panel recognise that we 'excel' in this respect: it is something we are particularly proud of.

- **Presents both relevant and challenging concepts to the public**

Just as the Panel acknowledges our activity in this respect, we acknowledge that we should always seek to cover more, contemporary issues.

Section C:

Observations on the Pilot Peer Review Process

Peer Reviews

- It is worth noting that whilst 'volunteering' for this process, we are somewhat sceptical of such reviews. We are, after all, accountable to our stakeholders and, in particular, our direct and indirect funders. Surely it is these groups that we should be seeking to impress rather than our peers! Indeed, one of the factors, in our opinion, that has held back museums and other cultural institutions in the past has been the over-emphasis on what our peers might think, rather than on what the public might think.
- The pit-falls of peer review are obvious: the danger of conflicts of interest, mutual 'back-scratching', or indeed the temptation to settle a few scores are but three!
- We accept however, that there are powerful learning opportunities and we embrace these.

The Self-Assessment

- We questioned the criteria and model for this process prior to the Review and do not feel that our comments were acted upon, largely because of the short time scales involved.
- We do believe that the constraints on the required length of the self-assessment prevented a thorough enough assessment, or a complete enough picture for the benefit of the Review Panel.
- The self-assessment exercise was, however, valuable and provided a useful stimulus to consider and address issues of performance, policy and planning.

The DCMS Peer Review

- We believe strongly that the time allocated for the Peer Review was inadequate. Whilst supposedly three days, because of our distance from London, it was not much more than two days spent on site. Furthermore, the complexity, size and dispersal of our organisation (12 museum and gallery sites and two off-site stores) meant that it was impossible to give a full picture of the organisation in such a short time; it also led to us trying to pack far too much in to a short space of time. At least four full days would be desirable for an organisation such as ours; however, there would inevitably be problems in attracting reviewers of suitable calibre who could give up such a large amount of time.

- The terms of reference of the review need to be clearer and adhered to. The Chair of our Panel, for instance, strayed well beyond these terms into areas of funding and funding allocation which, we were told previously, had been explicitly excluded from the process.
- The potential pitfalls of such constraints are clear to see and some were demonstrated in our Review in that there were certain core principals and governance issues which appear to have not been fully understood by the Panel. This resulted in certain confusing assessments and recommendations which, when published, have the potential to be disproportionately damaging to the institutions being reviewed.
- As part of the process, there should be an almost instant verbal response to the management and governance bodies before the review team leave the site. This was clearly not possible in the time available, but both Reviewers and the 'Reviewed' expressed a desire to see this. The Chair of our Panel has offered to address our governing Committee and we appreciate this and intend to take up this offer.
- We worked very hard to involve a wide range of funders other stakeholders and users in our Review process. We believe that whilst this complicated the process, it added immeasurably to the value of the process and helped allay any fears of exclusion of the very people we serve and work with from the process. We would strongly recommend that this approach is adopted in future reviews.
- We believe that the formats of the meetings worked well, and that the single A4 briefing notes provided to the reviewers in each case provided a useful focus and stimulus for discussion.

Personnel

- The number of reviewers (three) supported by a secretariat from DCMS seems about right. We would recommend that this model is retained for the future,
- We believe that the diverse composition of the Panel was a strength: a UK National Museums Director with a science bent, a senior Director from an overseas Museum with an arts background, and the Marketing Director of a large, private, property development company. We insisted on involving someone from business and we believe that this approach was vindicated. Our staff and stakeholders remarked particularly on the qualities of Michelle Percy, particularly her incisiveness and intelligent questioning. Michelle's local knowledge as a resident of the region and a user of our services also helped provide the non-local reviewers with important context. We would strongly recommend that such a reviewer is included in future peer reviews.
- As noted, we do believe that the Chair of the review panel came with pre-conceived ideas particularly regarding issues of governance and funding. In the context of the Review, we would have liked to have seen more openness to other ways of working.
- On reflection, what was missing from our panel was anyone with a strong local government background who could have provided context to some of the governance issues discussed.
- We do think that it is important to bring the Panel together a few weeks before the Review itself to re-affirm the terms of reference and to review the documentation provided: again the time-scales precluded this (and it would represent a further commitment on behalf of the Panel members). As it turned out, and due to understandable and unavoidable personal circumstances the Chair had not read the self-

assessment document prior to the visit and was not able to devote his full time to the review process on-site.

- Effective induction and training of reviewers would seem to be a minimum requirement in this context.
- The DCMS officers on-site had a difficult job to do in providing secretarial support. On reflection, we feel that it would have been appropriate for at least one of the officers to have been from a more senior level. This would have ensured that an authoritative voice was present to provide guidance, see fair play and ensure that the focus of the review was maintained.

Pilot, or not?

- As a pilot process, we feel that this aspect was not planned for sufficiently rigorously. We believe, for instance, that the members of the three review teams should have had communication both before and after the reviews to plan and review the process. It would still be useful.
- There has also been some concern expressed by all reviewed organisations over the publication of the reviews when they are pilot processes: there is always the temptation for those reading them to seize on particular aspects.

In Conclusion

We are pleased to have been involved in this process and have found it useful and rewarding. We will use many of the recommendations in the review to inform our future planning and delivery.

We remain somewhat sceptical about the concept of Peer Review precisely because it is so subjective, however there is no doubt that both through the self-assessment and peer review components of the process, we gained important insights into our performance and potential.

We do believe that the composition of the review panel is critical (as is their induction) because a diverse panel gives a broad view of all aspects of the organisation. Recently, it was suggested that because McMaster was about excellence that the panel members must be acknowledged experts in the collections held by the museum in question. This, in our opinion, completely misses the point of the McMaster Report which concentrated very much on excellence of experience rather than relative importance of collections: a point that has been made forcibly and eloquently by Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport. We may not have agreed with everything our reviewers said (!), but we appreciated and benefited from their wide-ranging views and experience.

We would, therefore, like to conclude by thanking everyone who took part in the review, including all our staff and stakeholders, our colleagues at DCMS, but particularly the three review panel members who gave up such a substantial amount of their time for our benefit.

Alec Coles,
Director

Cllr. Ged Bell,
Chair, Tyne & Wear Joint Museums Committee