Rising to the Challenge of Making Museums Relevant
OUR CHALLENGE
WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

- We can see through our visitor research that, despite having positive perceptions of museums, NI audiences are voting with their feet. They simply don’t visit as much as they used to.
- We have become increasingly reliant on a narrow and unsustainable audience mix, overly dependent upon repeat visitors.
- It’s not that the museum experience has deteriorated, it’s that there are so many new and different ways to fill time.
- If we stay still, we will continue to see erosion of our visitor numbers, and ultimately our role in society.
- This is a modern challenge faced by many museums and cultural organisations. Like others, we need to recognise this is a reality.
There is a gap between what we know is true about museums, and what many people perceive or think about museums. This represents a relevance gap. At the same time, our funding and resource gap means it is more difficult for us to invest in the programming that will allow us to become more relevant. The danger is our museums get lost in this widening gap.

**WE NEED TO CLOSE THIS GAP.**

**DOING NOTHING IS NOT AN OPTION.**
The “Sweet Spot”

- Public Engagement
- Finance & Income Generation
- Curatorial & Collections Care

- Reach
- Relevance
- Revenue
- Reputation
CASE STUDY 1:

THE GAME OF THRONES TAPESTRY
GAME OF THRONES

Biggest TV show in the world:

• watched in 200 countries worldwide
• average of 31 million people watch each episode
• 22.8 million Facebook fans; 7 million followers on Twitter; 5 million Instagram followers

Screen Tourism Opportunity:
• Northern Ireland – “Home of Thrones”
• Link show to destination – create ‘set jetters’ amongst the fan base and beyond
• Season 7 global media campaign
GAME OF THRONES TAPESTRY
NEW VISITOR EXPERIENCE
THE RESULTS
REACH

Over 200,000 visitors to the exhibition.

Increase from 30% to 52% in overseas visitors.

Online Season 7 Campaign reach:
70 million
33m video views
400k website hits

RELEVANCE

Younger audience (under 24) doubled.

Active co-creation with community audience (textile guilds).

Textile collection and traditional heritage skills showcased in a contemporary way.

REVENUE

£300k in international marketing campaign in 22 countries.

Increased income from retail & merchandising.

REPUTATION

Partnership working with key stakeholders.

Enhanced image and profile.

Changed perceptions of the National Museums NI brand.
THE AFTERMATH
SEASON 8

WHAT DO WE SAY TO THE GOD OF DEATH?
NOT TODAY

IT’S NOT MERCY HE SEES. IT’S DEAD ALREADY.
TRADITIONAL HERITAGE SKILLS
A CONTEMPORARY TWIST
NEW PARTNERSHIP: BAYEUX MUSEUM
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CASE STUDY 2:
THE TROUBLES & BEYOND
THE GALLERY
Art has often provided the most profound and critical responses to conflict. The Troubles in Northern Ireland are no exception.

National Museums NI has selected a range of challenging and evocative artworks from its collection to go on tour, starting at Nerve Visual, Ebrington, in January 2019.

Featuring work by artists such as Joseph McWilliams, Locky Morris, Jack Pakenham and Rita Duffy, Troubles Art will explore themes of conflict and violence, suffering and loss, and the meaning and power of symbols, through a programme of exhibitions, events and workshops.

Registration is now open for the first workshop programme, starting in Derry-Londonderry.
MAJOR PROGRAMME

Our EU Peace IV funded Making the Future partnership project will explore the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland and border counties in ROI.

Through a programme of interconnected activities, the project will use significant objects, collections and archives as a stimulus to pose challenging questions about the past, ‘take the temperature’ of where we are at currently as a society, explore cultural identity and create potential solutions for our future well-being.
DELIVERING THROUGH PARTNERSHIP
THE RESULTS
52% out of state visitors (34% across the Ulster Museum).

Touring exhibition and community engagement activity across NI.

Good Relations Programmes engaging hard to reach audiences.

C2:DE Audience increase from 19% to 22% at Ulster Museum.

Inclusion of Voices of ‘68 in the national curriculum with schools conference and online resources.

Ulster Museum awarded Queer of the Year 2018 by LGBT+ group Queer Space.

Contribution to the social peace process.

Content Development: Active co-production with community audiences through collecting workshops, creating oral history archives, personal testimonies and co-curated exhibitions.

Built confidence & credibility.

International recognition:
• representatives speaking at 6+ global conferences on contested history
• international university delegation visits.

Designated as an International Site of Conscience.

Silent Testimony exhibited at the United Nations in NYC.
THANK YOU

NATIONAL MUSEUMS NI