



explore/engage/enjoy

Positive Change, Thriving Communities, Inspired People



explore / engage / enjoy

Across three unique sites, we care for and present inspirational collections reflecting the creativity, innovation, history, culture and people of Northern Ireland and beyond.

National Museums Northern Ireland believes that:

- Museums enhance wellbeing
- Museums create better places
- Museums inspire people and ideas
- Museums are for everyone, regardless of background, class, gender, race or religion
- Museums provide safe spaces to be shared by all
- Museums provide excellent learning opportunities
- Museums are important in developing tourism in Northern Ireland
- Museums are important to the economic, social and cultural development of our society



Foreword

Museums are uniquely placed to deal with issues of cultural diversity and distinctiveness, history and traditions. The resources that they hold on behalf of everyone can help unlock creativity, inspire people and contribute to fostering positive community identity. Given National Museums Northern Ireland's commitment to tackling poverty and social exclusion in recent years, we have been particularly pleased to have had the opportunity to work in partnership with the new Urban Villages initiative.

The projects which are highlighted in this publication are a representative sample of the work which is undertaken by our museums across a range of subject areas, on an ongoing basis. Our Social Inclusion Programme works with people in the most socially and economically disadvantaged areas of Northern Ireland. Participants in this programme consistently report that museum engagement delivers learning, creates enjoyment and provides them with inspiration. The majority of these people have not had any prior engagement with museums.

Some of the projects we cite reflect the positive impacts that cultural engagement can have on health and wellbeing, whilst others create an understanding of our shared past and hence an appreciation of a potential shared future. Confidence in your own identity, self-worth and your place in society are vital elements of a positive attitude and we hope that this will contribute to increased community cohesion in the areas where we work.

We are grateful to the people and communities who have taken part so willingly in our projects and are indebted to our funders and partners, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Urban Villages initiative and the Big Lottery. We look forward to delivering increased public benefit for everyone and to ensuring that everybody has the opportunity to enjoy our collections.

Paddy Gilmore

Director of Learning & Partnership
National Museums Northern Ireland

Museums Inspire People and Ideas

National Museums Northern Ireland's collections and programmes inspire people of all ages and backgrounds.

They provide enjoyable and stimulating learning experiences to help foster positive community identities.



Investing in our children

Early Intervention is a key tactic in tackling poverty, social exclusion and inequality. Our pre-school and primary school parental engagement programmes are designed to contribute towards breaking the cycle of educational underachievement. Reflecting the Department of Education NI Early Years and Key Stage One Curricula, our programmes place emphasis on literacy and numeracy, encourage interaction between parents and their young children, capture children's enthusiasm for learning and develop parents' confidence to support them.

The interactive gallery-based programmes centre around Berkeley Bear, a character who lives and works in the Transport Museum at Cultra. Programme activities stimulate curiosity, encourage exploration, and fire imaginations through storytelling. Locating the programmes in the Transport Museum provides families with a unique and captivating, shared learning experience, which they are unable to access elsewhere.

100% of teachers questioned stated that our parental engagement programmes helped build positive relationships between staff and parents.

"Children and parents working collaboratively as they engaged in the range of activities provided a great opportunity for brilliant shared experiences. Parents gained great confidence during their visit and with a determination to return to the museum again and again with their children."

Brenda Martin, Nurture Advisor,
Education Authority



Engaging with art

Bringing original artworks directly into a community setting is a wonderful way of breaking down barriers and addressing some of the stereotypical ideas of museums that people may have. It also creates awareness of the fantastic resources that museums hold on behalf of everyone, and of the opportunities to engage with them.

Our **Engaging with Art** project involved a lively cross-generational group from the **Gasyard Centre** meeting with museum curators in their community centre in the **Bogside and Fountain Urban Village** in Derry/Londonderry. This provided the opportunity for participants to use original art from our collections as the catalyst for fascinating discussions with the curators on favourite artists, periods and styles. One practical element of the project involved

them working with an artist to create their own 'masterpieces'.

A bespoke visit to the Ulster Museum and the Rembrandt exhibition was tailored to reflect the particular interests of the group. It delivered a valuable and rich experience, with participants quizzing curators and exploring the art galleries.

This **Engaging with Art** project stimulated much thoughtful discussion and dialogue, proving that art is inspiring and enriching and really is for everyone.

"This has given us the opportunity to begin interpreting our collections in a new way, engaging with the public at a local level. We look forward to building on this experience and bringing more art from our collections into communities."

Anna Liesching, Art Engagement Officer,
National Museums NI



“ I loved it. It was a great idea to come to the Gasyard, so locals here can see art and have a go at printing without feeling intimidated about going into the museum. I think I speak for a lot of us today, that we never went to the museum but would go now. ”

Participant



In the next two years over **1000** works of art from our Arts Council of Northern Ireland gifted collection will be made accessible to community audiences in Derry/Londonderry. This will be through exhibitions, workshops and the development of learning resources.



Inspiring teenage boys with a range of abilities

We know in National Museums NI that teenage boys relate well to the experiential learning that museums can offer. Our extensive transport collections, ranging from the DeLorean car and steam locomotives, to the Ferguson Flyer, lend themselves to STEM learning outside of the traditional school environment, something which proved particularly successful with the Year 10 teenagers from **Ashfield Boys High School** from the **Eastside Urban Village**.

Skilfully facilitated by museum educators and an experienced STEM Ambassador from Bombardier, the boys enjoyed an extensive programme which ranged from exploring the principles of flight through to an actual flight around Belfast Lough. Museum collections

were also used as the creative impetus for a range of digital and multimedia elements of the programme.

Unique engagement with museum collections, and the drive to help pupils achieve their potential, offers a possible approach to the increasingly recognised trends of academic under-achievement in specific sections of society. Importantly, it can also inspire boys to consider the range of potential career options open to them in the STEM sector.

"The trip inspired young minds to reach deep and always try to achieve what they never thought they could."

Kurtis Reid, Teacher



"Using the collections in the Transport Museum meant we could inspire these teenage boys on a new level as they could see great examples of science, technology, engineering and maths in action".

Tony Monaghan, STEM Ambassador, Bombardier

"This has been an absolutely unbelievable experience for these young men.....the superlatives would never end if I were to talk about the positive impact that this has had educationally, pastorally, personally – not just for the boys but the staff as well."

Jo McColgan, Principal

In two months we provided almost **1500** learning engagements for children and adults from Urban Villages.





"The Ipad project was brilliant for promoting family learning! It really pushed the boundaries for learning, fusing 21st century technology with the collections and exhibitions at the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum. It totally enhanced learning and fostered engagement with museum collections for families in a way that we hadn't experienced before. I would be extremely keen to run a similar project in the future."

Marian McKinney, Parent Support Programme Co-ordinator, Education Authority

Ashleigh Campbell, Year 6/7 Teacher, Ballysillan Primary School

Creating new family learning opportunities

Our museums provide unique settings for creative programmes which support the NI Curriculum. Our partnership with Urban Villages enabled us to further develop our programmes for 'hard to reach' families and to allow parents and children to use the latest digital technologies to explore our collections in innovative and imaginative ways.

Recognising that key skills such as literacy and numeracy can be part of a cycle of factors that lead to disadvantage and lack of opportunity, museum staff worked in partnership with the Education Authority to develop a tailor-made programme to help families discover fun ways to learn together on our sites.

Children and parents from **Ballysillan Primary School** from the **Ardoyne/Greater Ballysillan Urban Village** enjoyed using Ipad to explore schools, churches and shops from 100 years ago and to create themed movies using the unique backdrop of the Ballycultra Town Area of the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum. The programme also provided exceptional opportunities for parents and children to make special memories together by taking part in fun, educational activities and spending a night sleeping in the atrium of the Ulster Museum.

Last year **1800** parents and children from the top 20% most deprived areas in NI, took part in organised family programmes at the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.





"This is a great age-group to work with; you feel you can spark interests that could last for life. Over the weeks of the project you could see them grow in confidence and maturity. They relaxed with the artists and at the same time seemed to take their own work more seriously."

Colleen Watters, Head of Learning and Partnership, Ulster Museum

"It's a great resource for the girls....to get them out of the four walls of the classroom. I know for a fact some of the girls hadn't set foot in any museum before and some of the girls have now taken a Saturday and got a group together to come and visit."

Seadna Billings, Head of Art, Mercy College

"I've learned so much. The way I draw is different now."

Year 10 student



Developing creativity in teenagers

We have developed a model which has proved to be successful in engaging young people with our museum art collections.

Twenty-five teenage girls from **Mercy College** in the **Ardoyne/Greater Ballysillan Urban Village** took part in a museum-led art project based on portraiture. Taking their inspiration from artists as diverse as Rembrandt and Frank Auerbach, the girls worked with local artists to develop their skills in drawing, collage and painting during a series of visits to the Ulster Museum.

The girls particularly enjoyed exploring and discussing art in the Ulster Museum's galleries and meeting Ian Cumberland, a local artist from Banbridge, whose work was on display in the *BP Portrait Award 2015* exhibition.

Last year we provided free programmes for **53** summer schemes from the top 20% most deprived areas in NI.

The opportunity to engage with art in the context of a museum setting provides a complementary experience to that of the classroom as well as an insight into the many aspects of art and design. The Year 10 students also cited the experience as influential in subject choice and potential career direction.

In celebration of their work the project culminated with the launch of an exhibition of their works of art in *Discover Art* in the Ulster Museum.





"Children need to see things, touch things, smell things, in fact, engage all their senses if learning is to be relevant and long lasting. Visits to the museums, with their organised learning programmes, provide great opportunities for children to do just this and have fun while learning."

Tina Adair, Primary and Early Years School Improvement Officer, Education Authority

"It was wonderful to watch the children meeting donkeys for the very first time, seeing the excitement on their faces and helping them feed and pet them, while they screamed and laughed with exhilaration."

Geraldine Nolan, Community Engagement Officer, National Museums NI

During the past 2 years we have provided **4500** complimentary family tickets to our museums for people from the top 20% most deprived areas in NI.



Encouraging parental involvement in learning

It is widely recognised that parental involvement in children's learning makes a positive difference to their development. Building on our experience of developing and delivering parental support programmes on our sites, we created bespoke opportunities for families from the Markets, Sandy Row and Donegall Pass areas of the **South Belfast Urban Village** in response to an identified need from community co-ordinators.

Participants were from non-traditional audiences and included many families from ethnic minority backgrounds who have not usually accessed museum resources. The highly stimulating environments of our sites proved to be ideal settings to help encourage parents to support the learning of their very young children. All families took part in an

initial visit to the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, where they enjoyed spending time exploring locomotives, petting and feeding farm animals and learning about traditional crafts and skills. Following these visits, groups from all three areas came together in a special visit to the Ulster Museum. They took part in family learning activities which included an art workshop designed to encourage the parents and children to help each other create an artwork together. Many of these families had never visited the Ulster Museum, despite the fact it is on their doorstep, and are now planning to return independently.



Museums Enhance Health and Wellbeing

National Museums Northern Ireland works with people to help build resilience and capacity in marginalised communities. We provide accessible and supportive environments which contribute to improvements in health and wellbeing for everyone.



Promoting positive mental health and supporting emotional wellbeing

The eclectic mix of abstract and applied art in the Ulster Museum proved to be the ideal vehicle to engage a group of adults with long-term mental health issues. During a four week period, the group of service users from **Woodstock Lodge** in the **Eastside Urban Village** enjoyed exploring artworks and making their own pieces, facilitated by artist Anushiya Sundaralingam. An exhibition of their works of art was displayed in Discover Art in the Ulster Museum.

It is vitally important that non-traditional audiences benefit from public spaces such as museums, can use them without a sense of being stigmatised and can develop a sense of ownership of such venues. We are particularly encouraged therefore that two participants in this project now volunteer with National Museums NI.

“ I have really enjoyed the museum project.....it brought the museum and art works to life..... it has taken me out of myself.....I am now thinking of doing another art course. ”

Participants from Woodstock Lodge





Providing fun ways for older people to learn

Treasure House, our five-year partnership with **Clanmil Housing Association**, provides isolated older people with an opportunity to enjoy the collections, interact with them in fun ways and to develop new interests. Many people report that one of the key benefits of their involvement in Treasure House is that it provides a source of conversation with family members. Moreover it has a positive impact on the social cohesion within the housing association, creating a subject of mutual interest for everyone.



"It gives you something to look forward to. Everything I've made is hanging up on different parts of my walls. Instead of sitting in the house I'm out meeting people - it means a lot."

Participant



Rembrandt, *Self Portrait at the Age of 63*
© The National Gallery, London

Impacting positively on the health and wellbeing of local families

Craft in Mind uses museum collections to impact positively on the mental health and wellbeing of a group of parents from **Nettlefield Primary School** in East Belfast. We work closely with the school's Family Support Worker to provide a unique, tailored programme of activities, enabling the parents to learn traditional crafts and skills, including basket making, forge work, open hearth cooking, quilling and embroidery.

Prior to taking part, many of the participants experienced depression, agoraphobia and anxiety. Now, participants consistently report an increase in self-worth and a sense of being valued. Many of them have become confident, independent, actively engaged individuals who volunteer at the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum by demonstrating their new skills to the public two or three days a week.

"After operations on my back resulted in me being left disabled, my confidence and depression took a real bad turn. But this wee group has helped me realise that I can still be useful and do things that are worthwhile."

Participant

"This project has given our parents a new focus. They now have something to look forward to. It has given them the incentive they needed to learn new skills, meet new people and see they are able to reach their potential. They have grown in confidence and feel accepted by the museum staff who have shared their knowledge and skills."

Su Finch, Family Support Worker,
Nettlefield Primary School



Museums Create Better Places

National Museums Northern Ireland connects people with collections which reflect the interests of local communities.

We stimulate interest in history, heritage and nature to encourage civic pride and promote appreciation of physical environments.



Connecting communities with collections

Raising awareness of our shared cultural heritage was a successful way to engage the **Seniors Group** from the Markets area of the **South Belfast Urban Village**. Most of them were first-time visitors to our museums. Museum curators brought a diverse and fascinating array of objects to their community centre and these helped to unlock powerful memories and shared experiences.

Such was the interest raised that the group then travelled to the Ulster Folk & Transport Museum to meet with curatorial staff, visit exhibit buildings and take part in a 'behind the scenes' tour of the museum stores. The group enjoyed a special tour of *A Step in Time: The Story of Irish Dance*. They exchanged stories and knowledge with the exhibition's curator, shedding further light on, and contributing to, our collections through their reminiscences.

"Even at my age, you really can learn something new every day."

Participant

Last year our specialist curators took over **200** objects from our collections 'out and about' for handling sessions in **7** libraries within the Urban Villages.





"This is just the start of our relationship with youth groups in these communities as we fully intend to further develop this valuable work. We are organising more activities which take a look at other wildlife in urban areas and encourage young people to engage with the nature around them."

Pauline Campbell, CEDaR Database Officer

"The young people come from what I would call a concrete jungle. There's no green space.....it's very, very dull. They don't get to see the extent of what they've seen at the Ulster Museum today. They've been able to use binoculars and see the birds, the butterflies, fossils, skeletons, lizards and tarantulas."

Co-ordinator, Youth First Project

Last year in the 2015/16 period we supported **21** outreach events across Northern Ireland, ranging from species identification training courses, to our Autumn Wildlife Hunt and BioBlitzes.

Discovering nature in your neighbourhood

Staff from the Centre for Environmental Data and Recording (**CEDaR**) used their specialist knowledge of our natural heritage to provide young children and teenagers from **Pilot's Row** and **Youth First** community groups, in the **Bogside and Fountain Urban Village** in Derry/Londonderry, with a fascinating insight into our local environment. Seventy-nine children and young people took part in an outreach session led by museum staff and national experts as well as follow up visits to the Ulster Museum and the Ulster American Folk Park. They learned about birds and their habitats, how to locate them and identify the numerous species on our sites as well as in their own local area.

Using these new-found skills and knowledge, the young people have been encouraged to develop an interest in urban wildlife as well as a greater understanding and appreciation of nature in their city.



The Urban Villages initiative is designed to improve good relations outcomes and develop thriving places where there has been a history of deprivation and community tension. It has three inter-connected aims:

1. To foster positive Community Identities;
2. To build Community Capacity; and
3. To improve the Physical Environment.

There are five Urban Villages

- Ardoyne and Greater Ballysillan (North Belfast)
- Colin (West Belfast)
- Lower Newtownards Road – known as Eastside (East Belfast)
- Sandy Row, Donegal Pass and the Markets areas (South Belfast)
- The Bogside and Fountain (Derry~Londonderry)



If you are interested in working in partnership with National Museums Northern Ireland or would like further details on these projects, please get in touch.

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