

1.1 Project title
National Railway Museum

9.0.4

1.2 Category
Museums, galleries,
events and visitor attractions

1.3 Sub Category
n/a

1.4 Client company
Science Museum Group

1.5 Design consultancy
Thompson Brand Partners

1.6 Current date
28 June 2013



Executive Summary

2.0 Executive Summary (264 words)

Established on its current site in York in 1975, the National Railway Museum (NRM) tells the story of rail transport and its impact on society. It is the largest railway museum in the world and is home to the national collection of historically significant railway vehicles, artefacts, written and pictorial records.

However, visitor numbers had been falling since 2006. Rail enthusiasts were making up an increasingly higher proportion, with family visits falling alarmingly. And NRM was not alone. The other major museums and attractions in the York region were suffering too, with significant falls in visitor numbers across the board.

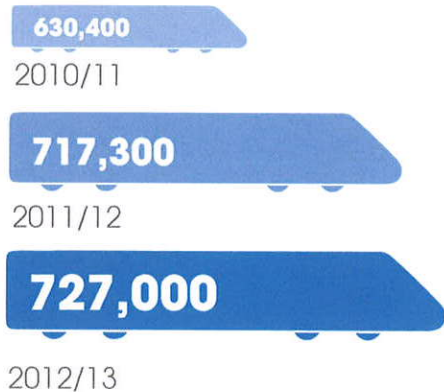
NRM reviewed its brand platform and issued a rebrand brief to help drive visitor numbers (both in person and online) and family appeal in particular. It also set an objective to grow revenue, as the museum was free to enter and funding sources were becoming harder and harder to secure.

Thompson Brand Partners was engaged to deliver the rebrand.



Executive Summary

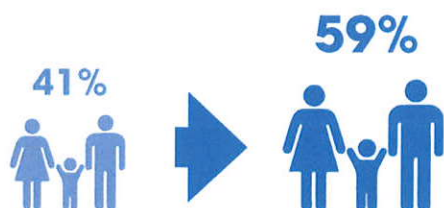
For a very modest design investment, the museum brand has been significantly re-positioned and the results have been spectacular:



Visitor numbers

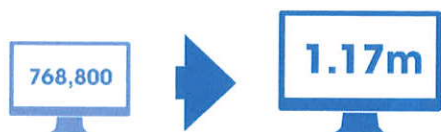
After 5 years of falls, visitor numbers were up 14% in 2011/12 to 717,300. They were sustained and increased again by a further 1% in 2012/13 to 727,000.***

This, in a falling market which saw visitors to major attractions down by 12% from 2.6m in 2009 to 2.3m in 2012.*



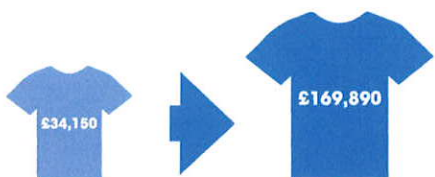
Family visits

Family visits now make up 59% of all visits, up from 41% in 2010/11, a rise of 44%.***



Online visitors

Online visitors up 34% from 768,800 in 2010/11 to 1.03m then up again to 1.17m in 2012/13.***



Merchandise licence sales

Total value of merchandise licence sales for 2 years to June 2013 up by 397% on the previous 2 years.***



Project Overview

Before:



Connecting Generations

Exploring
Confident fun
Momentum
Make it live
Custodianship
Big wows, little wows

3.1 Outline of the brief

Having agreed a new brand framework (essence and values), NRM issued a brief for the development of a new brand identity and guidelines. A new identity and clear principles were required, which articulated the new essence and values, and helped improve consistency of communications and behaviour.

The objectives of the rebrand were to:

- Drive visitor numbers – to reverse the trend of falling numbers
- Drive family appeal – to increase family visits without alienating enthusiasts
- Drive online visitor numbers – increase traffic, to help raise profile
- Drive revenue growth – create opportunities to increase revenue generation

To realise the new vision and achieve its objectives, NRM had already redefined its brand framework and knew it needed to update its image.

The brand essence was defined as 'Connecting generations through the wonderful stories of railways and how they shape our world', or 'Connecting Generations' in short. The brand values were Exploring; Confident fun; Momentum; Make it live; Custodianship; Big wows, little wows.

It was vital that the new visual identity had specific appeal to the primary growth audiences, but did not alienate core audiences. The new audiences were defined in a series of segments but essentially NRM wanted to appeal to more families, without putting off the railway buffs.

The identity had to be capable of application to marketing collateral, merchandise, signage, website, museum and online retail operations, uniforms and exhibition graphics.

The project deliverables were a new brand identity including logo and consideration of typefaces, colours and image style, a detailed set of brand guidelines and internal presentations of the new identity to the NRM team. Other considerations included the need for different formats of the logo, a broad colour palette to help with implementation, potential for trade-marking and the need to work well online.

Before:



Project Overview

3.2 Description

NRM is the largest railway museum in the world, with sites in York and Shildon. It is home to over 300 years of history and over 1 million wonderful objects. Visitors can marvel at iconic locomotives, watch engineering work in progress in the Workshop, browse the object-filled Warehouse and let off steam in the outdoor play area. NRM is also an important asset in Yorkshire's tourism offer.

As part of the Science Museum Group (formerly NMSI), its aim was to be the 'most admired museum in the world.' With this new vision of being a world-class museum, where people from all walks of life choose to explore how railways help shape our world, NRM was seeking to position itself as the North of England's premier heritage attraction.



Project Overview

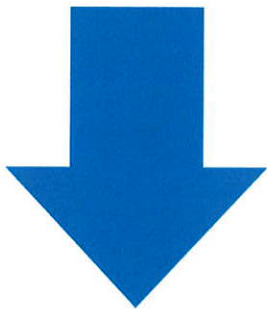
3.3 Overview of market

There are a wealth of other competitor visitor attractions in York and Yorkshire, ranging from museums to theme parks, gardens, shopping centres and heritage railways. The new brand needed to stand out within this crowded marketplace and be bold when applied to materials featuring multiple partner logos.

The new branding also needed to position the museum as a world-class attraction with national credentials, despite a York base. The National Railway Museum also has a sister site at Shildon and the brand needed to have potential for future expansion to this site.

Whilst well established, the visitor attraction market in York had been struggling since the recession took hold in 2008. In terms of combined visitor numbers, the decline has been stark, with total visitor numbers in 2009 of 2.6m falling by 12% to 2.3m in 2012.* Each attraction was finding it increasingly hard to attract visitors and competition levels had become intense.

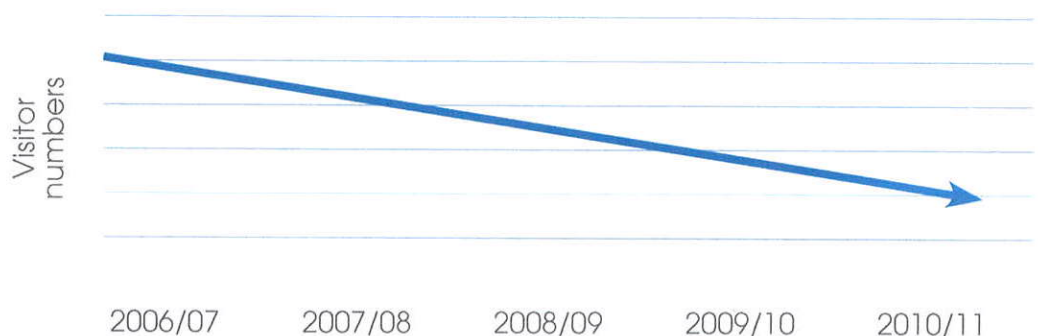
Visitor numbers
down 12%
between 09-12



York Castle Museum



From 2007/07 to 2010/11 NRM had suffered 5 consecutive years of falling visitor numbers.



Project Overview



3.4 Project launch date

July 2011

3.5 Size of design budget

£25,000

3.6 Outline of design solution (260 words)

A new head of steam

National Museum status carries with it an important responsibility – to fully represent the subject area’s past, present and future. The National Railway Museum’s audiences are varied, from rail enthusiasts looking to build on the comprehensiveness of their knowledge, to families just looking for a great day out.

Finding the right line between the past and the future was a difficult balance. The rail enthusiasts jealously guard rail travel’s industrial, steam-driven heritage, whilst the vital family audiences need something more – an experience that will mean something to children who can afford to take technological excellence and visual excitement for granted.

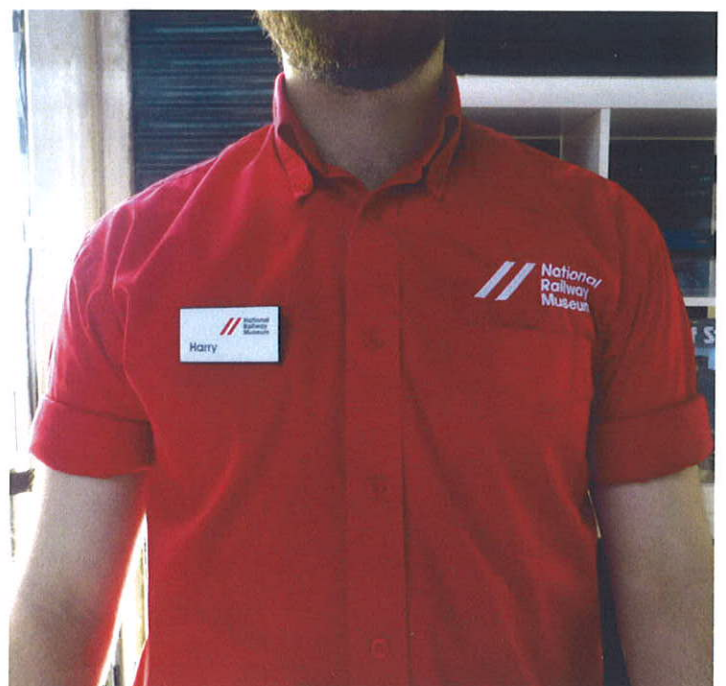
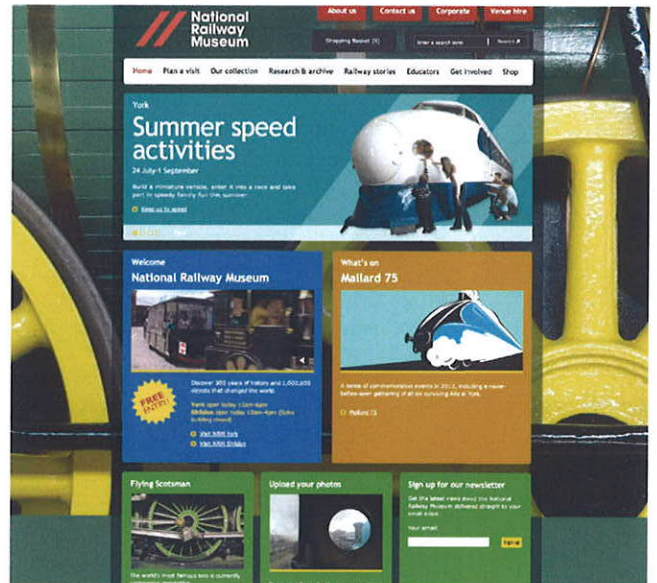
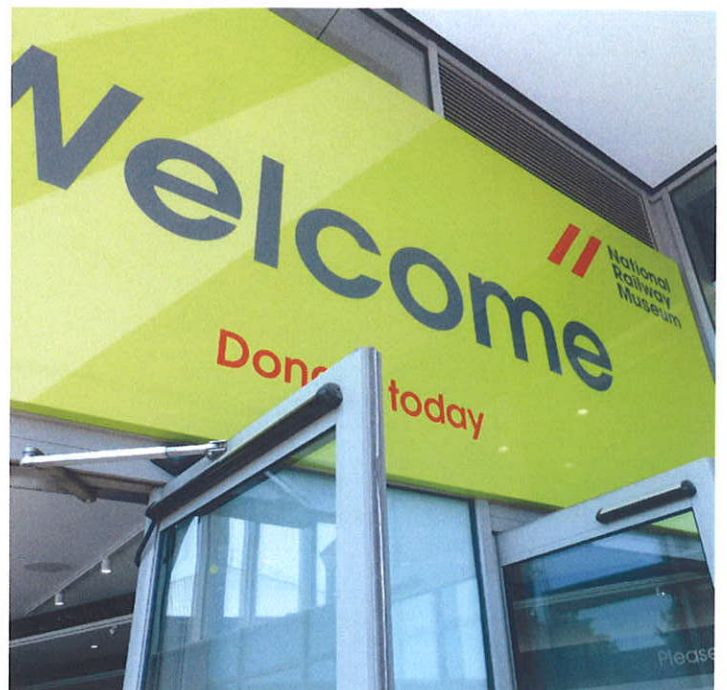
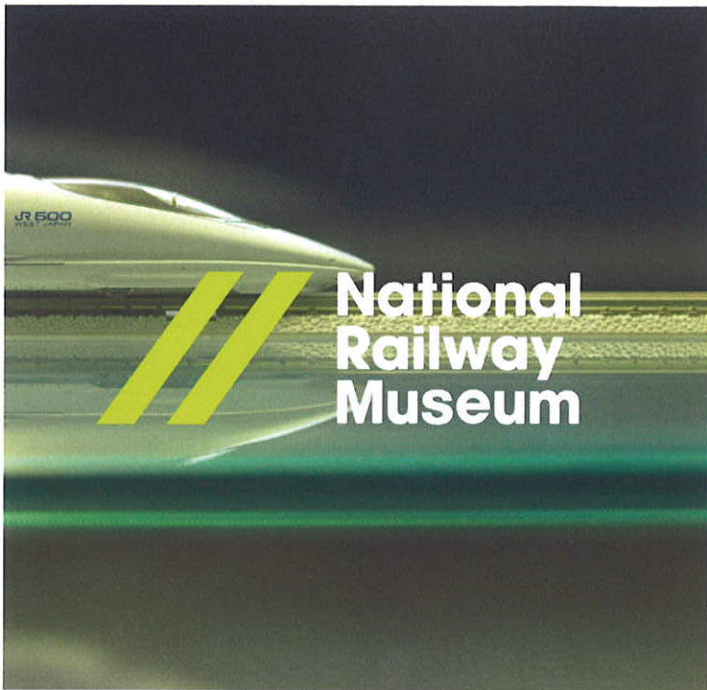
The new brand was built on two things that are central to rail travel, but often difficult to truly reflect within the museum itself – movement and speed. The solution, inspired by railway iconography, was simple enough for all audiences to feel that they could ‘own’, and was capable of bringing out the new brand essence of ‘Connecting Generations’.

The identity is contemporary, but with the ability to be used in more of a heritage feel in some applications. A broad colour palette and suggestive image style were included to illustrate the flexibility it offers.

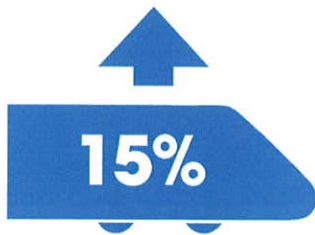
We decided on including the name in full rather than an abbreviation, as a reminder of the national status and subject matter of the museum. A graphic element was also included, capable of use throughout the organisation as a support item, e.g. in signage, merchandise, etc.

Launched in July 2011, the rollout is still being managed by the inhouse team.





Summary of results



Total increase in visitor numbers



4.0 Summary of Results

The results achieved during the 2 years since the rebrand, i.e. years 2011-12 and 2012-13, against the objectives of the brief are as follows:

4.1 Drive visitor numbers

After 5 consecutive years of falling visitors, annual numbers were **up by 14% in 2011-12**, increasing from 630,400 in 2010-11 to 717,300 in 2011-12.***

This level has been maintained in 2012-13, with the total **increasing by a further 1% to 727,000**, whilst the majority of York attractions saw falling visitor numbers.***

The backdrop to this performance is a significant reduction in visitors to attractions in York generally, down 12% from 2.6m in 2009 to 2.3m in 2012.*

Visitor numbers also increased to several events, which were held before and after the rebrand launched. Wizard Week in 2012 delivered a **5% increase** on the same event in 2011, and was the busiest half term for nearly a decade.***

Paddington Bear in October half term 2012 **delivered an increase of 4%** on the previous October half term.***

Visitor numbers during the Easter holiday 2012 were **up 30% compared to 2011**, with a total of 51,918.***

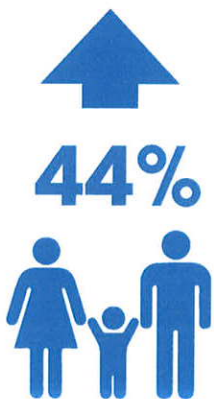
4.2 Drive family appeal

Brand associations that helped this, were measured by an independent online panel (SSI)**. Since the introduction of the new branding, respondents saying NRM is:

'just about the past' fell from 24% in 2010 to 19% in 2012**

'serious' fell from 24% in 2010 to 19% in 2012.**

Family visitors made up 59% of all visitors in 2012-13 compared with just 41% in 2010-11 (before the rebrand). **A significant increase of 44% year-on-year.*****



Year-on-year increase in family visitors

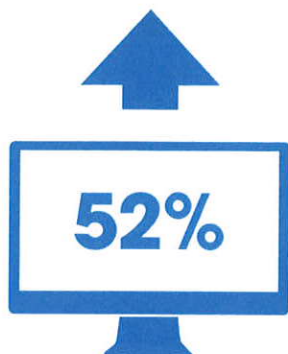
4.3 Drive online visitor numbers

Online visitors were up a colossal 34%, from 769k in 2010-11 to 1.03m in 2011-12.***

In 2012-13 online visitor numbers increased again to 1.17m.***

Total increase in online visitors of 52% over 2 years.

This followed only a very simple re-skinning of the existing website, with the new branding added, and no other changes.



Increase in online visitors over 2 years.

Project Overview



4.4 Drive revenue growth

Overall revenue has grown, including increased retail sales and other commercial activities.

Licensing – much stronger demand from potential partners to work with the new brand, including Hornby and Mallard ranges.

Total value of merchandise licence sales for 2 years to June 2013 up by 397% compared to previous 2 years.***

June 2009 – June 2011

£34,150

June 2011 – June 2013

£169,890

"As a licensee, we live and die by the licenses we buy into, and the key to every success is almost always down to consumer brand awareness. When we saw the new NRM branding we were absolutely delighted. It brought the brand bang up-to-date which in turn created a relevance and freshness to our products. Our sales figures since the rebrand speak for themselves across our full range, but the best example has to be our mug sales which have tripled since we incorporated a fully branded NRM mug box."

Will Marston,
Sales Director, Star Editions



Project Overview

And this is just the start!

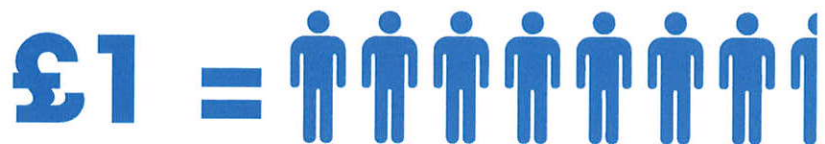
Due to budget constraints, the rollout is being managed internally on a stage by stage basis, enabling a strong return on investment to continue for 5-10 years. Not all was enjoyed at the outset.

Emma Farley, Marketing Manager at NRM confirmed:

“There is still huge potential with the new brand and we have not yet maximised its application digitally. What is great is seeing the huge amount of pride that everyone within the organisation has for our fabulous brand and everything it stands for.”

4.5 Return on investment so far?

The rebrand budget of £25,000 has helped attract 183,500 new visitors since being introduced in June 2011. That's 7.34 people for every £1 spent!



Other influencing factors

Has a major spend on rollout influenced these figures?

NO. Financial constraints have meant the opposite. The rollout is being managed internally, on a stage by stage basis.

Has the NRM marketing budget been increased?

NO. Again financial constraints have impacted on marketing activities.

Has a new website affected the numbers?

NO. The NRM website has only had a basic re-skin so far, with the new branding added.

Research resources

* Big Attraction Group York, research. 2012

** SSI brand awareness research.

*** Visitor numbers provided by NRM.