



*Growing*

# The Donkey Sanctuary in a declining market

DBA Design Effectiveness

Awards submission 2017

Client company  
**The Donkey  
Sanctuary**

Design consultancy  
**The Allotment**



Industry sector  
**Charity**

Date  
**June 2016**

FOR PUBLICATION

# Executive summary

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The Allotment was commissioned in 2011 by The Donkey Sanctuary (TDS) to align the Charity's numerous brands, bring a clear, engaging purpose to support all of its work worldwide, and to help grow the Charity in what was a declining market at the height of the recession.

This submission depicts the effectiveness of a design collaboration between TDS and The Allotment. Since 2011, this relationship has acted as a catalyst to achieve **+60% growth in the Charity's income**, used for the benefit of donkeys worldwide.

*“The Allotment have articulated why The Donkey Sanctuary is such a loved and caring organisation into an inspiring brand that speaks consistently across multi-channel touch points.”*

**Mark Cross,**  
Head of Brand and Design,  
The Donkey Sanctuary

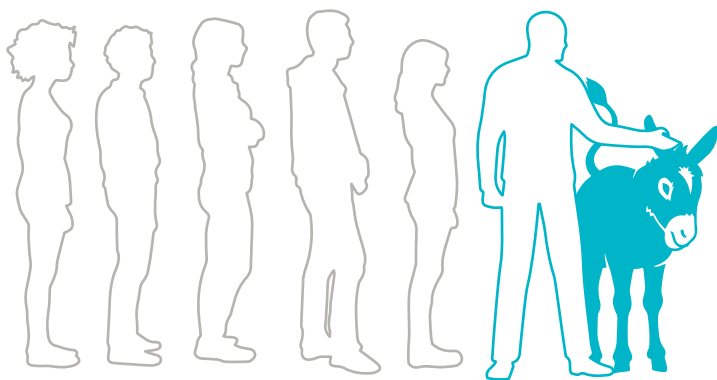
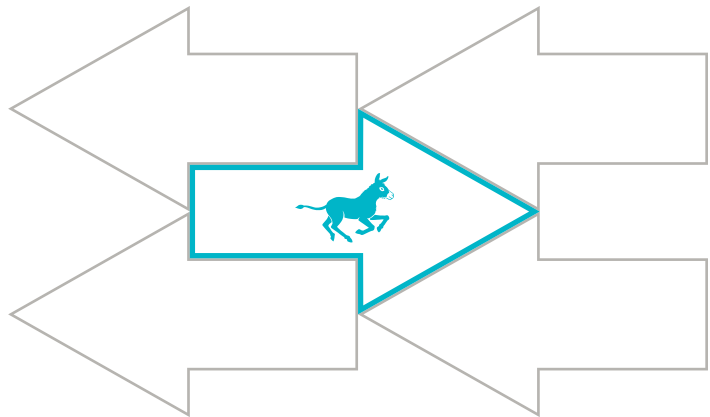


## Executive summary

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# 60%

rise in income during  
a period where giving  
to animal charities fell  
by an average of 24%

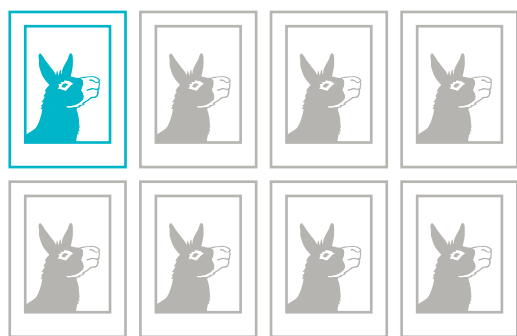


# 78%

increase in visitors to  
The Donkey Sanctuary's  
main site in Sidmouth

# 1:36

return on investment over  
the first four years\*



# 700%

increase in sales of the adoption  
packs within the first two months

# Project overview

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## Outline of the project brief

In 2011/12, the UK economy was at the height of an economic recession and this resulted in animal charity donations falling by an average of 20%. In an attempt to bolster their own fortunes, TDS sought an agency to reposition the organisation. The initial scope of the project was to tidy the brand up and bring more structure to its brand architecture as well as to its marketing and communications.

We were set an ambitious target of 33% revenue increase over 5 years, it was clear the charity needed much more than a make over. With our client we set about convincing the trustees and devoted supporters that the brand needed to be refreshed if it was to deliver exceptional growth through connecting with a new and younger generation of givers.

Following extensive consultation with TDS it was evident that the charity wasn't connecting its emotional purpose to the world or its people. Therefore, a wider, holistic development of the brand was agreed to reinvigorate the Charity

and bring a powerful, emotional purpose to the whole organisation. Further cross-channel campaigns were also highlighted as opportunities for growth post-rebrand.

## Objectives of work

- Align a number of brands and touchpoints into one consistent identity.
- Define an emotionally engaging and compelling purpose for the whole charity.
- Bridge the gap between the brand as a visitor attraction and as an international charity.
- Raise income by 33% over five years through multi-channel campaigns.

## Project launch date

The relationship with TDS began in August 2011 when The Allotment was commissioned to help grow the organisation and define the Charity's purpose. The Allotment is still working with TDS today.

# The Story so far

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TDS was founded in 1969 by Dr Elisabeth Svendsen MBE, with a sole purpose to provide welfare to all donkeys in need. In 1973, it cared for 38 donkeys but today TDS cares for 1.6 million worldwide and is one of the largest donkey and mule charities in the world.

## The Charity offers:

- Rehabilitation and healthcare of donkeys and education of the communities they serve in over 50 countries worldwide.
- Seven designated sanctuaries and visitor centres in the UK providing a permanent home for 4,000 donkeys, as well as sanctuaries in Ireland, Spain, Italy and Cyprus.
- Education and training of vets, students and animal health assistants.
- Donkey Assisted Therapy for children and adults with additional needs.
- Leading research in the wellbeing and healthcare of donkeys worldwide.

# 1.6m

donkeys are cared for by The Donkey Sanctuary today compared to just 38 way back in 1973

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It was with great sadness, that Dr Elisabeth Svendsen MBE passed away during the brand repositioning work in 2011. She was the driving force behind the Charity and without her advocacy there was heightened sensitivity around the entire project. It was Dr Elisabeth's drive, passion and devotion to the Charity that was pivotal in us defining the almost spiritual feeling of 'care and devotion'. It is this purpose that transcends so successfully across the brand and the multi-channel campaigns.

# Market overview

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The charity sector is a highly competitive and saturated market, with an estimated 164,000 active charities in the UK alone (Source: House of Commons Library, 2015). During the recession, the third sector was one of those industries that suffered most with the ongoing uncertainty, funding cuts and lower disposable income. The sector saw an average decline in individual donations of 20% during 2011/12 or in cash terms, a decrease of around £1.7bn (Source: Third Sector Journal, 2012).

*Decreased giving to charities - and animal charities more specifically - was still evident in 2014 with 7% of individual donations going to animal charities from a total spend of £10.6bn - a decrease of 9% from the £11.6bn given in 2010.*

(Source: CAF Online, 2014)

The volatile and unpredictable market saw cuts to funding streams of around 10% (Source: NCVO, 2015) following a new spending review in April 2011, which arguably had a knock-on effect on the income and investment for charities. The outcome was a decrease in employment in the voluntary sector of around 70,000.

Research also indicated, that those larger charities (defined as those with incomes over £100,000) such as TDS, were hit hardest with 79% affected. The smallest charities, while continuing to face challenges, appeared to be better insulated from the wider economy (Source: NCVO, 2012).

These external market influences were significant challenges to overcome in the first five years of working with TDS. Arguably, it was not until 2015 when the market became more stable, that these immense challenges plateaued somewhat.



# Outline of design solutions



## The beginning

It was very evident following a visit to the Sidmouth Sanctuary that there was a palpable and intense emotional feeling, which was not being communicated by the existing brand design and brand architecture — the palpable feeling of ‘care and devotion’ exhibited by the volunteers, vets, trustees, supporters and by the founder, Dr Elisabeth Svendsen MBE.

The Allotment created a new brand proposition — Selfless Devotion. This was not a make over, rather it was a strategy to heighten appeal, improve engagement of staff and volunteers, and deliver consistency for the Charity as a visitor destination and as a worldwide animal charity. Research showed that supporters loved the use of illustrative donkeys and liked the fact that there were two donkeys set in a holding device to signify ‘protection’. Building on the existing identity, we used Dr Svendsen’s first ever donkeys, Naughty Face and Angelina, to form the new brand identity, which created a consistent badge and proposition for the Charity that works internationally and across all media channels — the heart is a recognisable, cross-cultural global icon symbolising ‘love’.

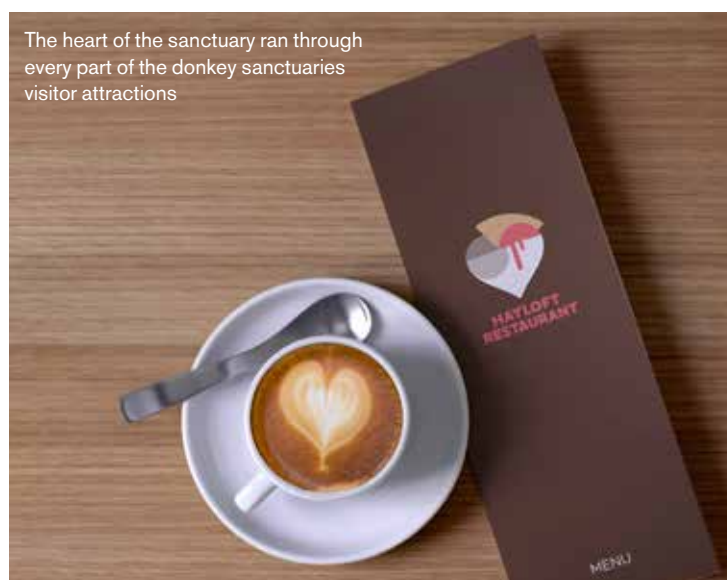
# Outline of design solutions



Emergency rescue vehicle



The heart of the sanctuary ran through every part of the donkey sanctuaries visitor attractions



Visitor leaflets

*Love, care and devotion are depicted in everything that is created for TDS and are at the very heart of the Charity and of all its supporters.*



# Outline of design solutions



The adoption scheme



## The story continued

The proposition of Selfless Devotion was rolled out across new collateral and it was this stirring idea that became the foundation for all other projects. In the years since the rebrand, The Allotment and TDS have developed and transformed a number of areas of the business, from the adoption scheme which

focused on a 'Lifetime of memories', the new retail and product strategy that brings to life the stories, personalities and humour of donkeys, through to seminal capital campaigns, such as the build of a new hospital that focused on the story of Georgie the donkey, whose life was at risk, but was saved through the expertise of the vets and the hospital.



Product & retail strategy

Word count: 323

# Summary of results



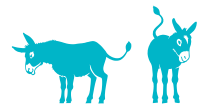
**Aim:** Increase income by 33% in five years (2016) or £1.45m per year on average

**Achievement:** As of 2015, one year before the benchmark, income was £35m; a £3.25m increase per year on average. That's a whole

**124%**  
above the initial target

**1:36 ROI**

This ROI is based on an overall investment over four years totalling £356,585 with a turnover increase of £13 million. The investment spans a number of projects including the initial rebrand, the adoption scheme, a major three tier product & retail strategy and a capital fundraising campaign for a new hospital facility.



TDS has moved from reaching 1m donkeys to 1.6m donkeys - an astonishing

**60%**  
increase in four years.  
(directly linked to income)

**60%**

In period 2011-2015, giving to animal charities fell by 24%. The Allotment began working with TDS in 2011 and in that same period, TDS saw its income rise from £22m-£35m; a remarkable 60% increase in just four years and well above the sector average.

- Increase in number of supporters 2011-2016: **230k to 330k**.
- Increase in visitors to the Sidmouth visitor centre has grown: **c.180k to 320k**.
- Hospital appeal campaign: Raised over **£1m** so far; **250%** more than the average fundraising campaign for TDS and **100%** more than the original target.
- Q1 donations to TDS in 2016 are up **17%** year-on-year.

- Unique visitors to the website have increased from 2011-2015 from **308,627 to 779,352**; a **153%** increase in four years.
- Volunteers across TDS farms have increased from 2011-2015 by **49%**
- Employee long service awards have been implemented: Bronze, Silver and Gold (10, 20, 30 years respectively) - this year's numbers are **122** Bronze, **46** Silver and **11** Gold - demonstrating that staff retention is exceptional.

*\*External factors must be taken into consideration.*



# Summary of results

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- The adoption scheme was highlighted as a potential growth project. The Allotment overhauled the adoption scheme. Since its launch, the adoption scheme income has grown by **117%** (based on income).
- In the first two months since the launch of the adoption scheme, 10,000 adoption packs had been sold equating to circa **£240,000** (exc. gift aid). Prior to the overhaul TDS was losing on average 1,666 in the same two-month period (based on losing 10,000 adoptees a year). That's a **700%** increase.
- Prior to the overhaul, the adoption scheme was declining annually with income standing at £568,605; a fall of 10% on previous year (based on y/e 2011). As of 2015, income from the adoption scheme stood at **£1,232,079**, and rising. A **127%** increase against the declining trend.

## Awards

### TDS Brand

Gold, Best Brand Evolution,  
Transform Awards, 2013.

Gold, Best Rebrand from a Charity/NGO/  
Non-profit, Transform Awards, 2013.

Silver, Best Creative Strategy,  
Transform Awards, 2014.

Highly Commended,  
International Brand Impact Awards, 2014.

Highly Commended,  
Marketing and Design Awards.

### TDS Adoption

Gold, Best Product Launch,  
Marketing and Design Awards.

### TDS Products

Highly Commended,  
International Brand Impact Awards 2015.

*“We survived the deepest economic crisis in our lifetime, lasting six years (2008 – 2013), during which, through your efforts, we not only maintained all our services to donkeys and mules throughout the world, but even grew our income during that difficult time.”*

**David Cook,**

CEO, The Donkey Sanctuary  
2006-2015

*“I just wanted to say what a great new logo. It sums up what the donkeys mean to everyone who works and supports the donkeys.”*

**Devoted donor,**

2012

## Other influencing factors

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### Economy

In the period 2011-2015, the British economy slowly, but gradually began to return to a position of stability and growing certainty. This, along with inflation, would have contributed to an increase in donations and willingness to part with disposable income.

### TDS Design Team

Between the period 2011-15, the TDS design team has increased in numbers and become more familiar with the brand and its purpose, which means they have now taken on significant amounts of work in-house. The Allotment provided a comprehensive solution and framework for the team to utilise as part of this process. The demand and increase in design requests for the in-house team is clearly illustrated, with demands by May 2016 exceeding the total received in all of 2015.

### Digital and PPC

There has been significant investment in PPC and digital advertising, which will have contributed to the growth of campaigns that The Allotment developed. The visual language and look and feel of this advertising has been developed from the guidelines, which The Allotment supplied as part of the rebrand in 2012.

### Trustees and Senior Management

Throughout the process, new members of staff have been introduced to TDS and will have brought about and implemented changes which may have brought about growth in the organisation or increases in donations. In late 2015, TDS appointed a new CEO, following nine years of service and support from David Cook. David was an advocate of The Allotment and has been supportive throughout our collaboration with TDS. The work of The Allotment has also been closely aligned to the employment of Mark Cross, Brand and Design Manager at TDS in 2011. It is through a close collaboration with Mark and his exceptional expertise in strategy, branding, design and internal engagement that The Allotment has been fortunate enough to push boundaries and work across the breadth of the Charity.

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### Research resources

Source: House of Commons Library, 2015

Source: Third Sector Journal, 2012

Source: CAF Online, 2014

Source: NCVO, 2015

Source: NCVO, 2012