

Case Study: Collections Access Grant

In April 2020, MDEM launched a new round of Collections Access grant funding to support museums to increase access to collections such as improving documentation, storage and care of collections through delivery of collections training for staff and volunteers, by improving displays and information about collections and by addressing backlogs.

Organisation: Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum

Amount of grant applied for: £402.00

Date of application: December 2020

Project Delivery: June 2021

In December 2020, Woodhall Spa Cottage Museum made a successful application which enabled a tripartite collaboration between the museum, a local railway enthusiast and professional speaker, plus the Horncastle History and Heritage Society (HHHS) who initiated the idea of the partnership for the 50th anniversary of the closure of the railway in the East Midlands region with specific reference to Woodhall Spa, Kirkstead and Horncastle. One aim for the project was to increase the range of visitors using the museum.

Delivering the Project



There was regular contact between the three parties. Good advertising was provided from the start informing the public of the intention to hold events in 2021. The local railway enthusiast had already written a book which is in the museum shop and he was able to give a talk via Zoom. He also provided information for the panels used in the display room (see image) ensuring accuracy.

Key Challenges

Covid restrictions prohibited visits during April as the anniversary was 5th April. Opening to the public began Thursday 20th May. The talk was offered via Zoom on Tuesday 11th May and saw 50 participants using 47 devices. A virtual talk from the museum was a 'first'. Following a few initial minor hitches, it was well received.

Project Outcome

With the purchase of a Zoom licence to enable up to 100 to attend a virtual event, we have proved on this first attempt that this is a practical way to engage with audiences. The talk in May saw many new visitors in addition to the museum's usual Friends and Volunteers.

Items on rail history are now known about and can be borrowed to enhance future displays.

The display panels will be re-usable by the museum and can be loaned out to our new partners.

Summary

I have been delighted to receive very positive verbal feedback on the railway display from visitors who know me and my involvement. Those that relate to our local railway enthusiast, Alan Stennett, have been passed on and I know have been answered.

A few visitors have contacted me with offers of photographs of family members to add to our collection, some with stories about what their ancestors did along with requests for any further information the Museum or Alan can provide. We were favourably considered alongside the display at Horncastle, each complementing the other.

The display will remain in place until after a school visit in early November 2021.

The continuing restrictions due to the pandemic have had an impact, but visitor figures this year for our four-day per week openings compared reasonably well with the 2019 number of visitors.

- *Patricia Duke-Cox, Museum Director (October 2021)*