
To: Sport, Leisure and Culture Policy Board

On: 14 May 2015

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: LEGO exhibition 2014/15 'Brick Wonders'

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of the customer improvements implemented for the recent hosting of the premiere of "Brick Wonders" LEGO exhibition at Paisley Museum. The exhibition was the follow-up to the highly successful 2013/14 "Brick City" exhibition.
 - 1.2. The touring exhibition was produced by LEGO Artist Warren Elsmore, and was staged at Paisley Museum between October 2014 and February 2015, running for a total of 16 weeks. The exhibition generated extensive press and media coverage, both locally and nationally, resulting in a high number of visits to the exhibition with average visitors figures of 900 per week.
 - 1.3. The exhibition allowed Arts and Museums staff to pilot a range of new customer focused improvements, designed to enhance the visitor experience. Brick Wonders closed in February 2015, with over 11,000 visitors.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Sport, Leisure and Culture Policy Board note the contents of this report.
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3. Background

- 3.1. The 'Brick City' LEGO exhibition (Oct 2013 – Feb 2014) attracted over 50,000 visitors to Paisley Museum and Art Galleries throughout the four month run. This unprecedented figure presented the service with considerable challenges in terms of staffing and visitor management, in particular at peak times and weekends.

- 3.2. Following an analysis of the visitor experience and associated figures, the front of house and customer experience operating model was revisited to look at options to improve the visitor experience and manage volumes of visitors coming to see future large scale exhibitions. These options included time slots for visitors, online ticket sales and seasonal opening.
- 3.3. These options were benchmarked against similar venues which offered attractive visitor experiences to customers and comparisons were sought in terms of best practice and value. The main emphasis in this benchmarking exercise was volumes of visits against a positive visitor experience; the service wanted to ensure that any future large scale exhibitions within the museum and art galleries provided the visitor with an excellent visitor experience.
- 3.4. In March 2014, staff approached Warren Elsmore, LEGO artist, with a proposal to open a national tour of his second exhibition, "Brick Wonders", at Paisley Museum in October 2014. It was decided that this exhibition would be used to pilot the new customer experience options intended to improve the visitor experience.
- 3.5. Tickets for 'Brick City' (2013-14) offered customer four visits for the price of one ticket. The price was £4 full price, £3 concession and £12 family ticket. The analysis of the repeat visits indicated that less than third return visits were free with a portion of this being under 3's which would not have been charged entry on any other occasion and significantly contributed to the large volumes of visitors at peak times. To assuage large volumes of visits at one time and improve and define the visitor experience, it was agreed that an online booking model would be adopted for "Brick Wonders", and that the option for repeat visits be rescinded.
- 3.6. It was intended that the detriment to customer satisfaction regarding the removal of return visit would be mitigated by the overall improved visitor experience and relatively low entrance fee. The new model reduced queuing times for customers which had been a concern for some visitors to the first LEGO exhibition. Ticket prices for "Brick Wonders" remained the same; at £4.00 full price, £3.00 concession and a £12 family ticket.
- 3.7. The new model operated an advance booking system, which allowed customers to book and pay for a one hour timeslot in advance, and therefore control the capacity of visitors in the exhibition on an hourly basis. This restriction safeguarded visitor numbers to a maximum of 180 people per hour, thereby allowing the building to function safely whilst offering a comfortable visitor experience. Analysis of 'Brick City' ticket sales found that the average dwell time was 45 minutes, therefore it was calculated that a 1 hour slot would be sufficient for visitors to 'Brick Wonders'. Upon booking customers were advised to arrive 15 minutes early to allow for tickets to be checked and the throughput of customers in to the exhibition.
- 3.8. Based on customer feedback from previous exhibitions, Brick Wonders was opened to the public during the Christmas holiday period. This proved popular with visitors.

- 3.9. 'Brick Wonders' was curated by Arts & Museums staff with input from Warren Elsmore to offer an attractive and informed visitor experience. The exhibition itself was themed around the Seven Wonders of the World, and featured a range of displays of models from the natural, modern and ancient world. The curation of the exhibition within the art galleries allowed for a considered approach on the formatting and display of models, allowing the exhibition utilise a one way system through the galleries, starting at gallery five and finishing at gallery one.
- 3.10. In addition to the models themselves, Arts & Museums staff worked with Warren Elsmore to create special themed interactives. This included specially commissioned videos created by local school pupil and young film maker, Morgan Spence. These films utilised Warren's models to create engaging narratives, bringing the exhibition to life for younger visitors. These videos have been incredibly popular on-line via 'You Tube' and have been shared on social media across the world.
- 3.11. The historical and natural themes of the exhibition offered a wealth of learning opportunities for schools and young people. This was capitalised on and a range of learning opportunities was developed by the museum's education team and made available to all schools across the authority, with pupils on school visits being allowed entry free of charge.
- 3.12. The overall feedback for the exhibition was incredibly positive, with many visitors commenting on the high quality of the experience and the value for money offered.
- 3.13. With over 11,500 visitors 'Brick Wonders' has had the second highest level visits to the museum for a single exhibition and demonstrates the positive impact that large scale, commercial exhibitions can have on the museum and the wider community of Paisley. In particular the joint working between the Arts & Museum team and local commercial businesses has been beneficial to all. The Arts and Museums service will continue to explore possibilities for future high profile commercial exhibitions to be displayed at Paisley Museum and Art Galleries.
- 3.14. The deployment of customer focused improvements such as timed slots, seasonal opening and online ticketing for future large scale exhibitions will be reviewed on a case by case basis for exhibitions, in the context of achieving best value and excellent visitor experience.

Implications of this report

1. **Financial Implications**
None within existing resources.
2. **HR and Organisational Development Implications**
None.
3. **Community Plan/Council Plan Implications**

Children and Young People	- To enhance and support learning provision across Renfrewshire.
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To showcase creative learning outcomes of children and young people from across Renfrewshire.

Community Care, Health and Well-being

- A place becomes more attractive when it has a thriving cultural sector, and can provide high quality cultural experiences.

Safer and Stronger

- Our approach to efficient government results in improved services to, and best value for, our customers.

4. Legal Implications

None.

5. Property/Assets Implications

None.

6. Information Technology Implications

None.

7. Equality and Human Rights Implications

The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because for example it is for noting only.

8. Health and Safety Implications

None.

9. Procurement Implications

None.

10. Risk Implications

None.

11. Privacy Impact

None.

List of Background Papers

None

MC/LG
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