

EXETER CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - ECONOMY
5 SEPTEMBER 2013

RAMM'S VISITOR RESEARCH PROGRAMME 2013-14

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Members of the visitor research programme and for the forthcoming plans to be noted.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 RAMM has a strong track record in collecting information about visitors, their behaviour, attitudes and opinions. This activity helps the museum to listen to visitors and change where necessary. It also provides important evidence for funders, partners, applications and award submissions. The other reason for collecting this data is to understand RAMM's contribution to the vibrancy of the city's offer and its role in creating the quality of life that is one of Exeter's distinguishing characteristics.
- 2.2 Two tranches of research have been undertaken since RAMM reopened in 2011, the first December 2011 to January 2012 (funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund) and the second in August and October 2012 (funded by Arts Council England). This work forms part of a research plan to 2014.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Since reopening in December 2011 the visitor research has been designed to capture visitor views regarding their experience of and reactions to the newly-refurbished museum.
- 3.2 Most visitor information is collected through an exit survey, a questionnaire that can be self completed or facilitated by a researcher interview. It is designed to take no more than five minutes to complete. It consists of two question types – Classification (eg age, gender, employment status, residents or visitors, etc) and Views on RAMM – capturing views, rating a number of key service and operational aspects, and measuring satisfaction. The sample size is large enough (800) to have confidence in the robustness of the data.
- 3.3 RAMM also uses Acorn Segmentation, a tool widely used in the commercial world. This compares visitor information to local population data. It allows RAMM to identify areas of potential growth and to compare the socio-economic profile of museum visitors to that of the base population.
- 3.4 The collection, analysis and reporting on data 2012-14 is funded by Arts Council England through its Major Partner Museums programme which runs until March 2015

4 KEY FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH DECEMBER 2011 TO OCTOBER 2012

4.1 Views on RAMM

- Satisfaction levels are high with 96% rating their overall satisfaction as good, very good or excellent.
- Eight out of ten people said they would be likely to visit again which suggests visitor numbers should remain high.
- Nearly one in nine would recommend a visit to friends and family.
- 75% said their visit was better or much better than expected.
- The top three ways to describe RAMM are educational, family friendly and high quality.
- 94% agreed that RAMM makes a vital contribution the life of Exeter and the region and 89% said they were proud of that.
- Half of RAMM's visitors say the most effective way to promote to them is via the website. High Street posters (38%) and press advertising (33%) scored highly too.

4.2 Classification

The breakdown of visitors to the museum confirms significant changes to the origin and time spent in RAMM by visitors compared with those who visited before its refurbishment.

- 62% of visitors to RAMM live in Devon with 38% from the rest of the UK and abroad; a higher proportion were from Exeter and Devon prior to the development.
- RAMM has more female visitors (62%) than male.
- Nearly three quarters of the visitors are employed (full or part time) or retired.
- 49% of respondents had not visited before showing RAMM has been successful in attracting new visitors since its refurbishment.
- Over half of the visitors to RAMM spend between one and two hours in the museum, while nearly a third spend between two and four hours. This compares with an average of 41 minutes measured before RAMM closed for redevelopment. Increasing this measure, which is a key indicator of the quality of the visitor experience, was a performance measure agreed with the Heritage Lottery Fund for the museum's development project.
- In socio-economic terms RAMM's profile almost exactly matches that of the Devon population. This finding is unusual for museums and is a result of the planned audience development undertaken by the museum.

4.3 A cautious view has been taken of the spend generated by visitors to RAMM between April 2012 and March 2013. Based on information gained from those who indicated that RAMM was the main reason for their visit to the city, and based on an average of £14.55 being spent per visit by locals and £40.95 by non-local visitors, it is estimated that a total spend of £3.35 million was generated into the city's economy.

5 PROGRAMME 2013-14

- 5.1 RAMM will carry out two visitor surveys in each of 2013 and 2014 building on the data collected in 2011 and 2012 to benchmark performance from year to year and identify trends and attitudes for the service to respond to. Information from these surveys will also be used to compare visitor's socio-economic profile with local population data.
- 5.2 It is necessary for benchmarking purposes to be consistent in a proportion of the data gathered and important that interviews/questionnaires are not too long. However there is scope for developing the research to explore some different aspects of a visit to RAMM.
- 5.3 For 2013 the Classification questions of the questionnaire will remain broadly the same and continue to record information about visitors. The Views on RAMM questions have been amended to include two new areas. Questions will explore attitudes and behaviour related to donating and spending.
- 5.4 There will be a further opportunity to develop the questionnaire for 2014 to explore other key areas where information and attitudes would be useful in service planning.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The programme to date has provided valuable data about visitors to RAMM and their reactions to the newly-refurbished museum. Developing the research to include new areas, such as attitudes and behaviour to donating and spending money, will provide RAMM with further insight into important areas it wishes to develop.

7. RECOMMENDED

- i) Members are invited to comment on the report and to note the positive impact of RAMM in attracting visitors and their expenditure to the city.

Camilla Hampshire
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ECONOMY DIRECTORATE

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling the report:

None