

Consultation Feedback



Interim Report – 31/3/11

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1. Introduction

This short report provides an overview of the key findings from the Prestongrange Consultation Meeting (24th February 2011) and summarises the results of a public survey run between 7/2/11 and 31/3/11. The main aims of the ongoing consultation are:

1. To understand how visitors use the Prestongrange site and museum.
2. To find out what visitors value about the site and museum.
3. To find out how visitors are using the services currently provided by the museum service.
4. To understand how visitors believe the site can be improved.

The methods used to collect information included:

- **Public survey:** Tick box and open-ended questions covering why, when and how visitors are using Prestongrange Museum.
- **Public Meeting:** Attendees mapped their use of the site and answered questions about their use of the museum. Group discussions revealed the issues which were important to people and the areas in which improvement is needed.
- **Contact with Museum Service via email or phone:** Contact details were provided via publicity in local papers, posters and a display at Prestonpans library.

From these two methods, 78 responses were generated in this initial round of consultation. This includes 59 via the questionnaire, 14 who attended the meeting and 5 who made contact via email. As the questionnaires were confidential, there may be some cross-over between participants who may have used more than one response method.

This report is broken down into sections that cover the main areas of feedback. As the consultation is an ongoing process which will continue throughout 2011, this is intended to reflect the responses of these initial respondents.

2. Key Findings

How often do you visit Prestongrange Museum or its grounds?

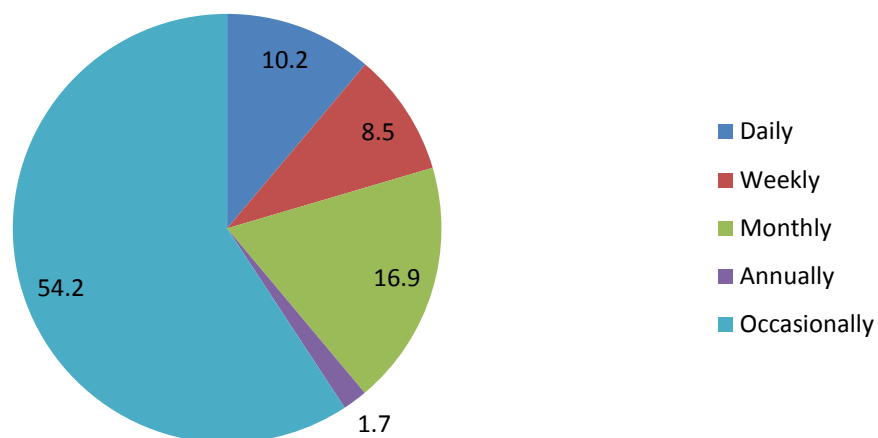


Figure 1

As the first question from the survey reveals, respondents varied in terms of how often they used the site (Fig 1):

| | |
|--------------|-------|
| Occasionally | 54.2% |
| Monthly | 16.9% |
| Daily | 10.2% |
| Weekly | 8.5% |
| Annually | 1.7% |

How do you use Prestongrange Museum and its grounds? Please tick as many answers as apply.
The answers can apply to you or your family.

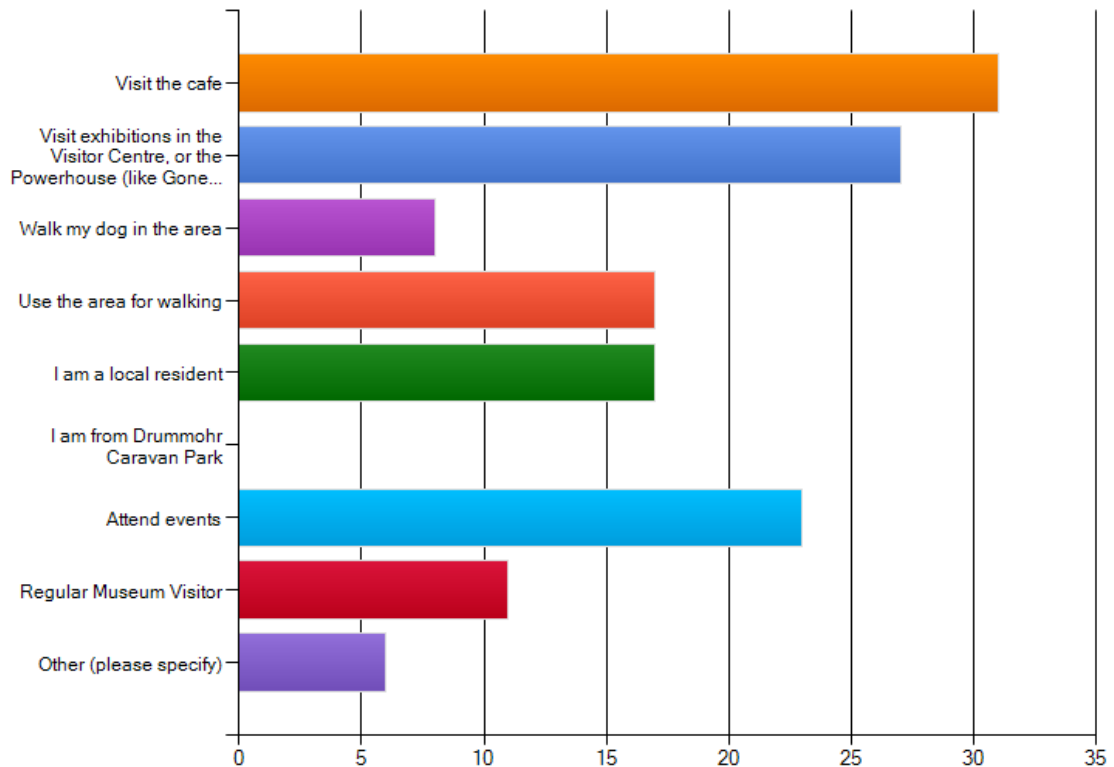


Figure 2

Respondents also varied in how they used the site (Fig. 2).

2.1 Site Maintenance

A key theme emerging from the consultation was the lack of appropriate site maintenance to allow visitors to fully appreciate the museum grounds. Poor drainage was mentioned as being unsightly, dangerous and obstructing public walkways. Responses to questions highlighted “*surface water*” and an “*overflowing drain outside the Powerhouse building*”.

Participants expressed concern about overgrown areas of the site, which threatened the heritage, “*scrub is taking over*”, “*mounds of dirt – an eyesore/looks terrible*”. The area behind the Powerhouse was highlighted as a problem zone during the mapping exercise. Many participants also mentioned the relatively new mounds of dirt along the main roadway – designed to prevent parking overnight. However, there was a concern, especially by local neighbours, that they were causing visibility problems as well as forcing people to walk on the busy roadway.

Respondents found dog fouling a particularly unpleasant problem. Suggestions to improve this included better policing and putting up more dog bins, particularly near the beehive kilns.

Other suggestions for improving the site included: installing more bird and bat boxes around the site, establishing a community orchard by improving and adding to existing fruit trees on site, ensuring wild flowers remain on site for use by wildlife and creating a wildlife garden.

2.2 Site Access

A number of participants noted the lack of access for people with limited mobility around the outdoor areas of the site. Drainage and overgrown areas were suggested as part of the problem but contributors also emphasised the poor and neglected pathways. It was suggested that the pathway leading to Drummohr should be opened up to allow better access. Putting a ramp over the railway at the end of the road leading to Morrison's Haven was also suggested as a way to improve accessibility from the east end of the site. Given that 37% of survey respondents use the site for walking and 17.4% use the site for dog walking, the pathways are obviously one of the busiest areas of the site.

2.3 Café

As the chart above reveals (Fig.2), the café at Prestongrange is one of its main attractions.

Respondents ticked as many answers as applied leading to the following number of votes for each answer:

Visit the cafe 31

Visit exhibitions in the Visitor Centre, or the Powerhouse (like Gone to Pot) 27

Attend events 23

Use the area for walking 17

I am a local resident 17

Regular Museum Visitor 11

Walk my dog in the area 8

Other 6

I am from Drummohr Caravan Park 0

Several respondents mentioned the good quality teas and coffee available, "great coffee!", "we enjoy chat and a cheap cuppa". Although visitors enjoy the use of the café they clearly want more from the service and think there is potential to expand. Suggestions include providing hot food, ice cream and giving customers more choice. Visitors believe there is also a need to generate wider awareness of the café. Visitors suggest having a road-side sign to encourage people to turn in.

2.4 Heritage

Participants seem eager to make more of Prestongrange's unique industrial past. Re-enactments and living history events were suggested to bring the history to life and engage with the public, *"I want to see much more interpretation/ living history of the heritage"*.

There were suggestions to expand the historical interpretation at Prestongrange to include Morrison's Haven and also improve existing exhibitions,

"Needs more artefacts in visitor centre ... what about a DVD player with Scran images/film footage ... Put on living history events relating to the area – pottery, audio visual of mining/brick-making, re-enactors, storytelling/ intergenerational activities."

The mapping exercise highlighted the improvements that need to be made in on-site signage, especially to highlight the nature of each building and directional signage around the site itself. New audio tour signs were also requested. Feedback suggests that visitors are concerned about the outdoor location of many of the large pieces of machinery, *"the site is disappearing"*. Visitors commended the recent restoration work completed on the wagons at the entrance to the site and suggested that this should be extended to other parts. Respondents also highlighted the need for better interpretation of the visible remains of industry. Suggestions included rewriting information boards and expanding the amount of information available to walkers, especially those who are not interested in taking an audio guide.

Other suggestions for improving the heritage resources available on site include a restoration of the Beam Engine, movement of large objects into a purpose-built hangar on site, producing salt or other Prestongrange products such as bricks on site, or involving special-interest groups in giving talks and tours.

2.5 Accommodating children/families

Respondents were keen to emphasise their enjoyment of events and workshops where their children were happily engaged in activities. Respondents seemed content that Prestongrange is family-friendly and a good place to bring children, *"kids love it" ... "Peaceful and a great place for a picnic in good weather. Great space – with heaps of potential and the café staff are lovely – plus it has a kids bit (always a bonus)", "The family day had a good variety of events, especially the archery, which my daughter really enjoyed"*. However, helpful suggestions included building a children's outdoor play area and having large games like hopscotch and outdoor chess.

2.6 Events/workshops

A substantial number of visitors come to Prestongrange to attend events, including roughly a quarter of survey respondents (Figure 3).

**Which of the following have you visited or taken part in over the past 2 years at Prestongrange?
Please tick as many as apply**

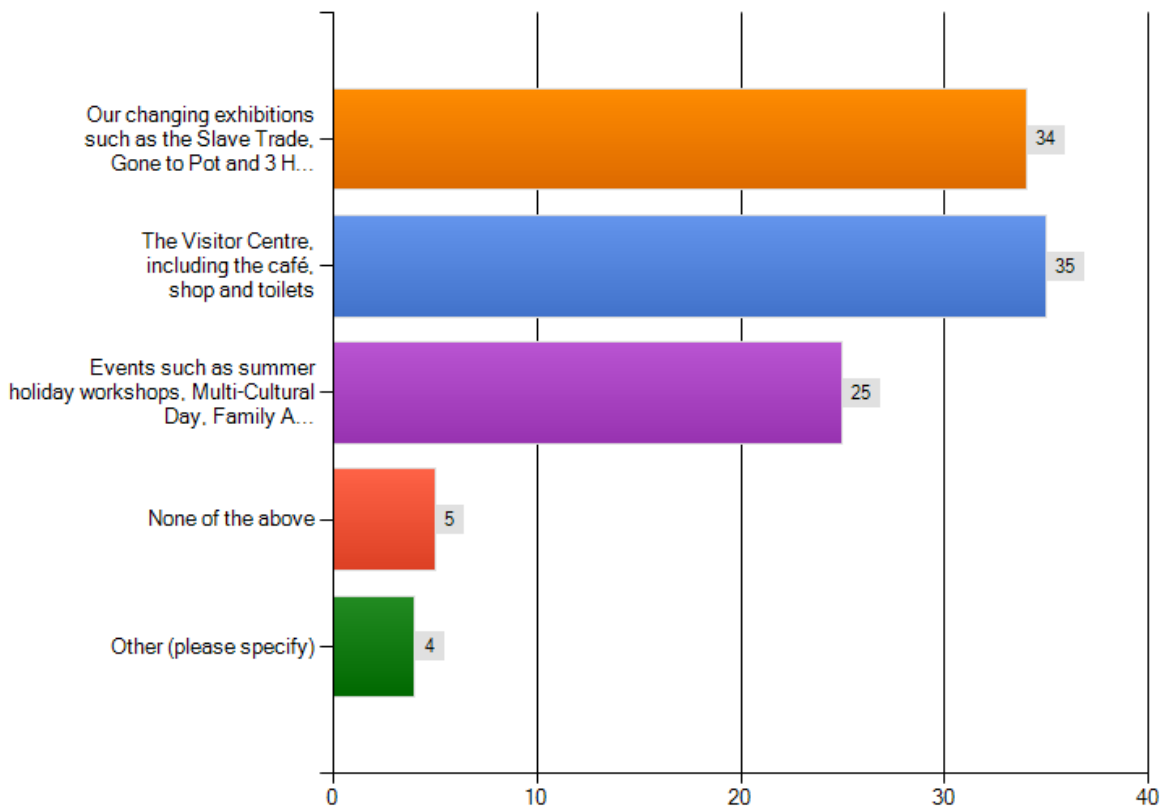


Figure 3

Feedback was extremely positive: *“All children’s events attended have been excellent.” ... “They are always well planned and interesting and any I have attended have been really good.”* Respondents were keen to highlight particular reasons for enjoying events: *“Good selection of events and practical for the children and good value” ... “The family day had a good variety of events” ... “ My children really enjoy the summer events and learning about the history of the area.”*

However, of those respondents who had not attended a workshop or event, 66.7% stated a lack of awareness as their reason for not attending. This suggests a need for wider and more effective publicity. As 46.7% of respondents expressed a desire to join the Prestongrange mailing list, it suggests that there is interest and enthusiasm for workshops/events at the museum.

Respondents also requested *“bringing back the steam days”* which used to be held at the museum by the Railway Preservation Society. Whilst this is currently not possible due to the need for restoration work to be completed on Engine No. 6 by RPS, it is worth noting that visitors are still very much interested in this type of event and it could therefore be brought back in the future. One respondent also suggested that the site could be used for outdoor theatre productions, as happened in the past with National Theatre of Scotland’s ‘Home’ production.

2.7 Exhibitions

Visiting exhibitions is one of the key ways in which people are choosing to use the site along with using the café and attending events (Fig. 2). Of all the sites at Prestongrange the Visitor Centre is used most regularly (Fig. 4). This highlights the importance of the Visitor Centre exhibition being engaging and interesting to people.

Which areas of the site do you use most regularly? Please use the map below for reference. The numbers beside some of answers relate to the map. You can choose one or more answers

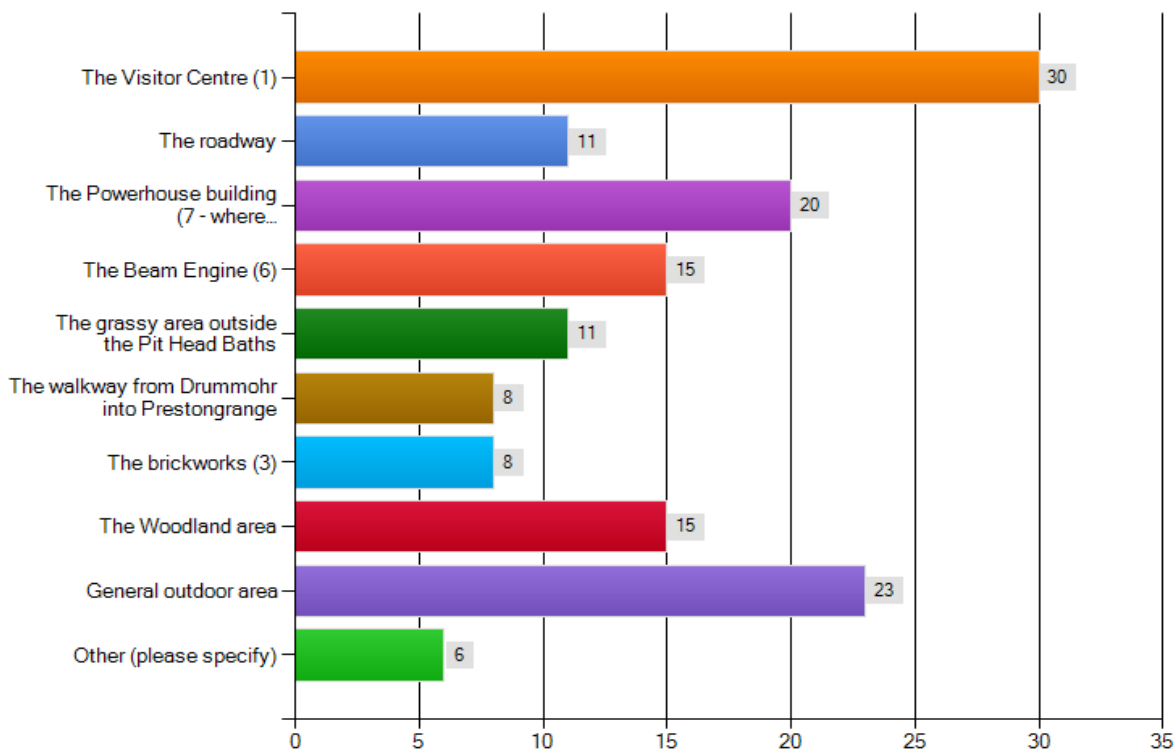


Figure 4

Feedback on exhibitions has generally been quite positive, *“I think that recently the events and exhibitions have been the best they've ever been. Well done!” ... “Informative lectures and displays”*. However, there is a feeling that exhibitions need to be better publicised to improve visitor numbers and some respondents highlighted the need for a more child-friendly visitor centre. Around a quarter of survey participants regularly visit the Powerhouse to see temporary exhibitions. This is an encouraging percentage but also indicates the potential to improve visitor numbers. Statistics from the museum show that visits to the temporary exhibition in 2010 were lower than expected. Whilst there could be a number of external reasons for this, there is obviously a need to publicise exhibitions more effectively.

3. Summary

This section summarises:

Main suggestions by visitors about improving the site and museum

- Improve the site's drainage.
- Improve pathways by removing obstructions, re-laying paths and preventing overgrowth.
- Improve accessibility for people with limited mobility (especially the pathway to Drummohr).
- Policing/prevention of dog fouling.
- Expansion of café menu.
- Further publicity of events, exhibitions and café.
- Further promotion of industrial heritage of the site through improved interpretation.
- Include more activities for children within exhibitions and create a children's play area.
- Increase visitor numbers to exhibitions.

Positive feedback

- Good quality tea and coffee served in café.
- Prestongrange is a site of natural and industrial beauty, enjoyed by families, walkers and local people alike.
- The visitor centre, workshops and events are family-friendly and enjoyable.
- The exhibitions have been interesting and informative.
- Workshops have been varied, well-planned and engaging for children.

It is encouraging that through the public survey 45.8% of participants would like to be on our mailing list, 20.8% would like to volunteer and 33.3% are encouraged to join a Prestongrange Consultation Group.

4. Next Steps

The next steps in the process are as follows:

- Continue consultation from 1st April as Prestongrange Museum re-opens for the season by asking visitors to complete questionnaires.
- Arrange focus groups with local families, school pupils/teachers and young people.
- Continue dialogue with local groups and individuals about how they can become involved with Prestongrange.
- Draw up an action plan for Museum Staff to include short and longer term goals based on suggestions for improvement by visitors.