

# Great North Museum: Hancock and Hatton Gallery

Report to Senate from University Museum & Gallery Board **June 2026**

# Introduction:

**This report sets out how the Great North Museum: Hancock (GNM:H) and Hatton Gallery are delivering against and supporting Newcastle University's strategies. Covering the period from August 2024 to April 2026, it focuses on research, collections and public engagement, education and the student experience, and global influence.**

During the reporting period, both venues continued to make significant contributions to Newcastle University's strategic objectives through research-led exhibitions, collections access, public engagement, support for the student experience, partnership working and backing for the University's mission. While the wider cultural sector continued to operate within a challenging financial environment, both institutions demonstrated resilience, innovation and impact.

Support for the institutions comes from the University, and from Research England's Higher Education Museum and Galleries Collection Fund (HEMG). The University secured a c.55% uplift on the previous HEMG award in 2024, an award that recognises work done by both bodies and underwrites ongoing partnership working with Hatton and GNM:H. Support for the institutions also comes through Arts Council England as National Portfolio Organisations. The Natural History Society of Northumbria and the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne provide further support for the collections. Both organisations are proud to be working in partnership with Newcastle University and North East Museums.

One key change since the previous Senate Report is that Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums formally rebranded as North East Museums (NEM), launching the new identity in November 2024. The change reflects the organisation's growing role across the wider North East.

There has also been a change to the way the University's relationship with both the Hatton and GNM:H are managed. In addition to the formal governance arrangements for the relationship with North East Museums provided by the University's Museums and Galleries Board, the establishment of the University's Culture and Creative Industries Committee in Sept 2025, brings further strategic coordination.

Offering oversight of Newcastle University's principal cultural partnerships, members of the committee work closely with North East Museums, who are supported by the contributions colleagues from Hatton and GNM:H make to the committee's Advisory Board.

The Committee oversees liaison with NEM and supports activity that maximises the contribution of both venues to research, teaching, public engagement and impact. The Committee also works to strengthen the profile of both venues, improve coordination across the University's wider cultural offer and ensure that both organisations remain central to the University's engagement with regional cultural policy, the creative industries and place-based partnerships and contribute to its core research and education missions.

## Education

- 19+ university modules supported across disciplines
- 31 MA Curating students trained through live exhibitions
- 17 placements, internships and residencies delivered
- 678 visitors to BA Fine Art degree show preview

## Research

- 95 external research enquiries
- 35 research visits
- 54 research-engaged academics
- 36 publications and practice-based outputs
- 16 major national and international collaborations

## Engagement and Impact

- 27 research-led exhibitions delivered
- 244,623 total visitors
- 25,383 school visits
- Over 16,000 learners reached digitally

# Great North Museum: Hancock

Research, Collections and Public Engagement

**The Great North Museum: Hancock (GNM:H) continues to make a substantial contribution to Newcastle University's strategic objectives through research, collections-based scholarship, public engagement, student learning and civic impact.**

As one of the University's most significant cultural assets, the Museum combines internationally important collections with innovative exhibitions, educational programmes and collaborative research activity. Across the period, GNM:H secured and delivered a wide range of research, teaching and engagement initiatives that strengthened its role as both a public museum and a research infrastructure supporting Newcastle University and the wider higher education sector.

The Museum supported research across archaeology, biology, medicine, museum studies, conservation, classics and cultural heritage, demonstrating the breadth of the collections and their continuing value to scholarship. Researchers from institutions across the UK, Europe, North America and South America accessed collections and expertise, including doctoral researchers from University College London, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Minnesota and elsewhere.

The Museum continued to deliver a strong programme of research-led exhibitions and displays. Twenty seven exhibitions and displays were presented during the reporting period, including:

- **Treasure:** Hidden, Lost, Found, Space
- **Investigators:** Astronomy in the North East,
- **Rome:** Transformed,
- **Colouring the Past:** Decorated Ostrich Eggs in the Ancient Mediterranean,
- **Contested Desires:** Constructive Dialogues,
- **Destroying Nature, The Missing Lynx**

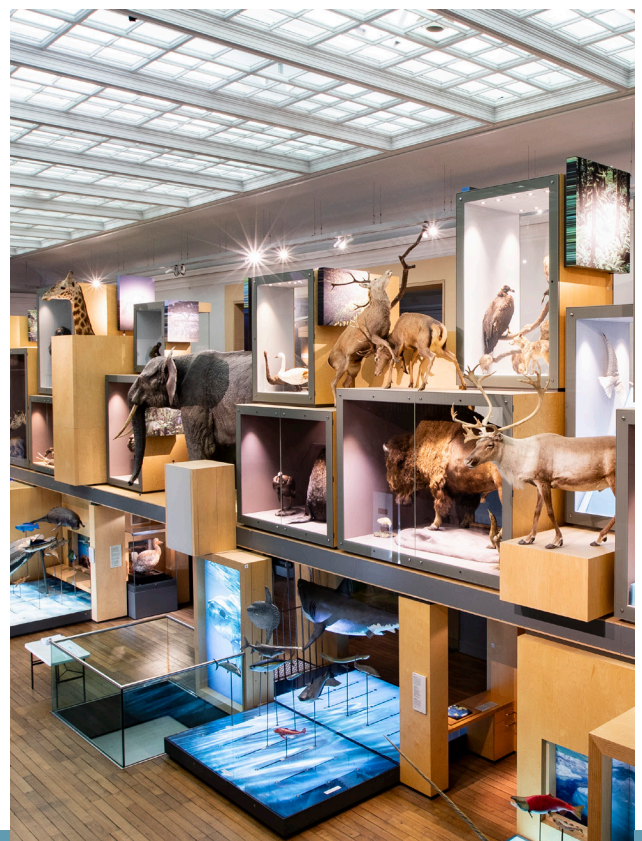
and the major gallery redevelopment project

- **Explore...**

## Research activity remains central to the Museum's work.

During the 24/25 period, GNM:H responded to **78** external research enquiries and hosted **28** external research visits, alongside **34** internal research enquiries and **24** visits from Newcastle University researchers and postgraduate students.

These exhibitions translated cutting-edge research into accessible public experiences while creating opportunities for dialogue around science, heritage, empire, identity and environmental change.



The Museum also led the development of Human Natures, a major touring exhibition produced through the Museums and Galleries Network for Exhibition Touring (MAGNET), which will tour nationally between to 2028, strengthening the visibility of both Newcastle University and North East Museums on a national stage.

A significant area of achievement has been collections digitisation and digital access.

- Approximately **90%** of the Museum's collections now have publicly accessible digital records through the North East Museums collections search platform.
- The collections management system currently contains **225,641** digital records representing more than **535,000** objects and specimens, with over **63,000** records linked to images.
- In 24/25, **355** new digital records were created representing **1,140** objects and specimens, while a further **453** objects received new multimedia content.

The Museum also completed the **digitisation and publication of the Transactions of the Natural History Society of Northumbria**, making nearly **two centuries of scientific research** and regional natural history accessible online. GNM:H has also demonstrated national leadership in collections digitisation through its role in the development of an application to the AHRC's Distributed System of Scientific Collections UK (DiSSCo) initiative.

Working with Newcastle University colleagues in SACS and SNES and major museums across northern England, the Museum led on the funding bid, piloting mass-digitisation workflows for botanical and entomological collections and developing a new digitisation strategy.

Though the wider project was not funded, the work helped establish ways of working and strengthened partnerships with Durham University Collections, Leeds Museums and Galleries, York Museums Trust, Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens, Hartlepool Museums and Kirklees Museums, and now GNM:H, alongside the University, is now well positioned to reapply to DISSCo round 2 and similar funding schemes. Plans are underway to target these funding opportunities.

In addition, the Museum's research collaborations continued to expand nationally and internationally. During the year, GNM:H participated in twelve major national collaborations and four international research partnerships. These included projects with the Natural History Museum, British Museum, Durham University, Glasgow University, the Open University, Manchester Museum and the National Trust.

International collaborations included **Rome: Transformed**, involving partners in the UK, Italy and Australia, and a major scientific investigation of an Etruscan ostrich egg from the Shefton Collection involving researchers from Bristol, Cranfield, Leuven, Ghent and Sydney.

Using advanced scientific techniques, researchers identified traces of ancient pigments including Egyptian blue and malachite, generating new knowledge about the object and contributing to wider understanding of ancient decorative practices. Findings from the project were subsequently shared with the public through the exhibition Colouring the Past.

## Learning and teaching remain fundamental to the Museum's mission.

GNM:H supported teaching on at least nineteen Newcastle University undergraduate and postgraduate modules across Biosciences, Archaeology, Classics, Ancient History, History, Museum Studies and Music.

Courses drawing directly on collections included Genetics and Evolution, Marine Vertebrate Biology, Destroying Nature: Disasters, Diseases and Environmental Injustice, Museum Studies, Global Heritage Management and Roman Frontier Studies.

The Museum also supported teaching and learning at Northumbria University, Durham University, Teesside University and the University of Sunderland, reinforcing its place in the region's higher education landscape.

Across 24/25, the Museum engaged with **126** postgraduate students, **271** undergraduate students and one doctoral student from Newcastle University, alongside substantial numbers of students from external institutions.

Student development was further enhanced through placements, internships and residencies. The Museum supported thirteen placements, three internships and one residency, including specialist technical internships focused on collections, interpretation and digital engagement.

These opportunities provided valuable professional experience and contributed directly to graduate employability and skills development. The Museum also hosted a range of external doctoral researchers undertaking projects in archaeology, conservation science, religious studies and museum studies, further reinforcing its role as a centre for advanced scholarship.

Public engagement continued to be a defining strength of the Museum. During 24/25, GNM:H welcomed **224,370** visitors and recorded **135,606** unique website visits. The Museum supported **832** visits, workshops and events for schools and further education audiences, reaching **22,959** learners through onsite visits, **714** through outreach activity and more than **16,000** through virtual engagement.

A particularly successful initiative was the expanded Hadrian's Wall Virtual Focus Day, which grew from a single day to a two-day programme and engaged over **5,200** children from **115** schools and eight home-educating families. This innovative digital programme demonstrates how museums can use technology to overcome barriers to participation and support access to heritage learning regardless of geography or school budgets.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion remain embedded throughout the Museum's work.

As an accredited **Museum of Sanctuary**, GNM:H continues to support people with experience of forced migration through volunteering and engagement programmes.

## GNM:H (2024–25)

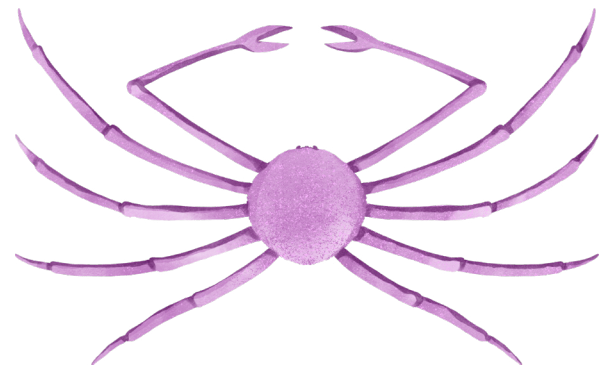
Internal research enquiries	34
Internal research visits	24
External research enquiries	78
External research visits	28
Publications / practice-based outputs	25
Research-engaged academics	42
Total visitors	224,370
Unique website visits	135,606
Schools engaged	448
School Visits	23,673

The Museum has also undertaken a comprehensive Poverty Proofing exercise, expanded partnerships with disability and community organisations, and developed programmes supporting Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse filmmakers.

Community-led projects such as **Explore...** demonstrate a commitment to shared authority and collaborative interpretation, creating opportunities for visitors and community participants to shape narratives and challenge traditional assumptions about museum collections and their meanings.

Collectively, these activities demonstrate the continuing importance of the Great North Museum: Hancock as a centre for research, learning and public engagement.

Through its collections, exhibitions, partnerships and educational programmes, the Museum continues to support Newcastle University's strategic ambitions while making a significant and impactful contribution to cultural, scientific and civic life across the North East and beyond.



# Hatton Gallery

Research, Collections and Public Engagement

Hatton Gallery continues to add significant value to the University's research and public engagement objectives through an ambitious programme of exhibitions, collections activity and collaborative projects. As one of the University's principal cultural assets, the Gallery provides a platform for research-led exhibitions, supports student learning and professional development, and enables broad public access to nationally significant collections.

Across the reporting period, Hatton delivered an ambitious programme of exhibitions, expanded digital access to its collections, strengthened partnerships with artists and researchers, and continued to develop innovative approaches to audience engagement and inclusion. Research-informed exhibitions remained at the heart of the Gallery's programme. Over the period, Hatton presented public exhibitions that connected contemporary artistic practice with the University's teaching, research and collections.

## Highlights included

**Mali Morris: Returning**, co-curated by North East Museums and the artist, which brought together works spanning four decades and explored Morris's relationship with Newcastle University's Fine Art programme and the legacy of the Basic Course developed by Richard Hamilton and Victor Pasmore. Drawing on the history of Fine Art at the University and Morris's personal experience of the Basic Design course, the project celebrated the University's unique contribution to contemporary art education, while reconnecting audiences including a new generation of students to one of the University's most distinguished alumni.

Another major exhibition, **Sustainable Clay**, examined the environmental impact and future sustainability of ceramic practice. Co-curated with independent curator and Visiting Professor Matthew Jarratt, the exhibition brought together contemporary artworks by local, national and international artists alongside historic objects from North East Museums' collections. By exploring issues such as industrial production, energy consumption, raw materials and transportation, the exhibition demonstrated how artistic practice can contribute to public understanding of environmental challenges. It also highlighted the continuing importance of Newcastle University's Fine Art Department as a centre of excellence in ceramics and material-based practice.

More recently, **Some Kind of Love: Actions and Reactions to Living on a Damaged Planet** showcased new and recent work by Professor Uta Kögelsberger. Through photography, film, sound and participatory practice, the exhibition explored the environmental and social consequences of climate change, examining landscapes affected by wildfire, ecological degradation and environmental uncertainty. Bringing together projects developed across Europe and North America, the exhibition encouraged audiences to reflect on resilience, regeneration and humanity's relationship with the natural world. The exhibition demonstrated how contemporary artistic research can contribute to public understanding of environmental challenges and stimulate dialogue around sustainable futures.

Opening in spring 2026, **HAPPY!** was a collaborative exhibition curated by the Hatton Gallery's young people's group, L-INK, in partnership with the Jerwood Collection. Inspired by Victor Pasmore's landmark 1957 Art Education Exhibition at the Hatton, **HAPPY!** celebrated creativity, learning and artistic development while providing young people with valuable experience of curation, interpretation and exhibition-making.

Drawing on works from one of the UK's leading collections of modern British art, the exhibition explored the formative experiences, influences and turning points that shape artistic practice. Through close engagement with artworks by major British artists, L-INK investigated how artists develop their creative identities through formal education, personal experiences and experimentation. The project also involved pupils from three North East schools, whose own artworks were exhibited alongside works from the Jerwood Collection.



**During the reporting period, the Gallery continued to provide opportunities for students and emerging professionals through exhibitions developed in partnership with academic programmes. Two exhibitions were curated by students on the MA Curating Art programme and drew extensively on works from the Hatton collection.**

These projects enabled students to gain practical experience of exhibition development, interpretation, installation and audience engagement while working within a professional gallery environment. The Fine Art 100 exhibition Study for a Painting (Exhibition), curated by Dr Matthew Hearn of Northumbria University, brought together works from the Hatton collection with contemporary works by Newcastle University Fine Art staff. The exhibition explored evolving definitions of painting and generated new conversations around artistic practice, materiality and creative research.

#### **Hatton's role as a research resource also continued to grow.**

- In 24/25, the Gallery supported seventeen external research enquiries and hosted five external researchers across seven research visits, including extended archive-based study visits.
- Researchers drew on the Gallery's collections, archives and expertise to support projects in art history, curatorial practice and cultural heritage.
- The Gallery also supported six internal research enquiries and continued to contribute to teaching and postgraduate research across Newcastle University.

Collections access remained a major priority. The Gallery continued to develop both physical and digital access to its holdings, ensuring that collections support research, teaching and public engagement.

In 24/25, Hatton facilitated three outgoing national loans, making nine objects from the collection accessible to audiences elsewhere. Works were loaned to exhibitions at the Laing Art Gallery and Bishop Auckland's Mining Art Gallery, extending the reach of the University's collections beyond Newcastle. At the same time, fifteen incoming loans brought **113** objects into Hatton exhibitions, including works from contemporary artists and major regional collections.

These loans significantly enhanced the quality and scope of the Gallery's exhibition programme and strengthened partnerships across the cultural sector. Digital access to collections continued to expand substantially. Approximately **95%** of the Hatton collection is now represented by digital records, placing the Gallery among the most digitally accessible university art collections in the UK.

During the reporting period, a further **237** objects were accessioned, photographed and uploaded to the collections management system, making them publicly accessible through North East Museums' online collections search.

These records included new acquisitions, collection objects and a significant body of material relating to Hatton's exhibition history, ensuring that researchers and members of the public can engage with the collection remotely.

The Gallery also invested in the creation of new digital resources linked to exhibitions and public programmes. As part of **Sustainable Clay**, thirteen films were produced, including an introductory film and twelve artist interviews. These resources provide deeper insights into artistic practice, sustainability and exhibition themes, extending the reach of the exhibition beyond the physical gallery.

All films include subtitles and audio, ensuring accessibility for a wide range of audiences. In addition, Hatton's L-INK young people's group developed a downloadable digital activity resource for **Mali Morris: Returning**, encouraging audiences to engage more deeply with the exhibition and the Gallery's wider artistic heritage. Student learning and professional development remain central to the Gallery's mission.

During the 24/25 year, Hatton supported **31** postgraduate students from the MA Curating Art programme through the development, installation and delivery of exhibitions.

Two postgraduate students also undertook research-focused placements, contributing to collections research, archive cataloguing and documentation projects.

The Gallery additionally supported twelve BA Fine Art students and four MFA students through the presentation of their final exhibitions, providing opportunities to develop professional skills and engage with public audiences.

Hatton's collections also contributed directly to teaching on programmes including Curating Art MA, Global Heritage Management MA, Museum Studies MA, Fine Art BA and Fine Art MFA.

# Public engagement has remained strong.

- Hatton welcomed **20,253** visitors and attracted more than **28,600** unique web visits in 24/25.
- In the same period, The Gallery worked with **58** schools and engaged **1,710** pupils through workshops, visits and educational activity.

Learning programmes were designed to support both formal and informal education, while outreach activity ensured that schools unable to visit in person could still engage with collections and exhibitions.

Alongside schools activity, Hatton continued to deliver programmes for young people, older adults, refugees and asylum seekers, people with sensory impairments, and those experiencing physical or mental health challenges.

These activities reflect both Newcastle University's civic mission and North East Museums' commitment to equality, wellbeing, social mobility and inclusion. Hatton's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion was further demonstrated through targeted programmes and partnerships.

Its volunteer programme has become recognised for creating a welcoming environment for people from diverse backgrounds, including those who are neurodivergent or for whom English is not a first language. The Gallery's L-INK young people's group continues to provide opportunities for creative participation, leadership and progression into higher education and the cultural sector.

These initiatives, alongside **North East Museums' Silver Autism Acceptance Award**, demonstrate a sustained commitment to ensuring that cultural participation is accessible to all.

Collectively, these activities demonstrate Hatton Gallery's continuing importance as a centre for artistic research, learning and public engagement.

**Through exhibitions, collections access, student development, digital innovation and community partnerships, the Gallery continues to advance Newcastle University's strategic objectives while making a significant contribution to cultural life in the North East and beyond.**

The Gallery remains an accredited **Museum of Sanctuary** and continues to work closely with refugees, asylum seekers and newly arrived communities.

## Hatton Gallery (2024–25)

Internal research enquiries	6
Internal research visits	7
External research enquiries	17
External research visits	7
Publications / practice-based outputs	11
Research-engaged academics	12
Total visitors	<b>20,253</b>
Unique website visits	<b>28,600</b>
Schools engaged	<b>58</b>
School Visits	<b>1,710</b>



# Learning, Teaching and the Student Experience

Both venues provide distinctive learning opportunities that enrich the student experience in terms that will support the development of the University's Leading Edge Curriculum (LEC), contributing to teaching across Museum Studies, History, Archaeology, Classics, Education, Marine Studies, Environmental History and other disciplines.

Students benefited from **object-based learning**, collections access and specialist expertise. Museum Studies students worked directly with collections and communities through practical modules focused on museums and heritage. Both venues also offered placements, internships and key opportunities for doctoral researchers. These students gained practical experience in collections management, curating, public engagement and interpretation, contributing directly to employability and skills development.

Key metrics included support for postgraduate researchers, extensive use of collections in teaching and a growing number of placement opportunities. The museums and galleries also contributed to careers activity, outreach and professional development opportunities, helping students understand pathways into the cultural, heritage and creative sectors.

Each year, Hatton Gallery hosts the BA (Hons) Fine Art Degree Show and MFA exhibitions, providing students with opportunities to present work within a professional gallery environment. In May 2025, the BA preview alone attracted more than 678 visitors.

The Gallery also hosted projects developed by MA Curating Art students, exhibitions that provided students with experience of curatorial practice, project management and public engagement while strengthening the links between academic study and gallery.

**Students from Media, Culture and Heritage, Architecture, Medical Sciences and Creative Writing also engaged with exhibitions and collections through workshops, tours and creative responses. Activities linked to World Anatomy Day and Black History Month demonstrated the interdisciplinary value of the collections.**

## Global influence

The global dimensions of UM & G activity continue to develop and align increasingly closely with the University's Strategy. Following a period of recovery after the pandemic, both GNM:H and Hatton Gallery have renewed their focus on international partnerships, international research engagement and support for global communities.

The venues support international researchers through access to collections, archives and specialist expertise. Hatton Gallery has seen particularly strong engagement from researchers based in Germany, Italy and the United States, reflecting the growing international profile of its collections and exhibitions. GNM:H has strengthened its international networks through collaborations, placements and professional exchanges.

**During the reporting period, the Museum hosted curators from Egypt, Iran, China and Kenya through the British Museum's international Training Programme. These placements provided opportunities for knowledge exchange, professional development and the strengthening of international cultural partnerships.**

The Museum's research collections remain a vital resource for international scholarship across archaeology, natural history, heritage studies and museum practice. International researchers and postgraduate students access collections and work with Museum staff, reinforcing Newcastle University's position within global research networks.

Hatton and GNM:H have also placed increasing emphasis on engagement with global majority communities, both locally and internationally. Programmes focused on decolonisation, community-led interpretation and collaborative curation have sought to broaden participation and ensure that collections and exhibitions reflect a wider diversity of voices and perspectives. Looking ahead, the enhancement of international partnerships, international research engagement and global visibility remains a key priority for both institutions.

**Through collections, exhibitions, research collaborations and professional networks, GNM:H and Hatton Gallery are increasingly positioned to contribute to Newcastle University's ambitions as a globally connected institution.**

# Conclusion:

Throughout the reporting period, **Great North Museum: Hancock** and **Hatton Gallery** have demonstrated the distinctive contribution that both organisation's cultural infrastructure makes to Newcastle University's strategic objectives.

Across research, education, engagement and global activity, they have delivered significant impact through exhibitions, collections access, student opportunities, public programmes and partnership working. In addition, they have supported researchers, students, schools, community organisations and cultural partners while strengthening the University's reputation as a research-intensive civic institution.

Backed by HEMG funding, this period has seen strong visitor engagement and the reinforcement of strategic partnerships. The transition from Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums to North East Museums marks an important milestone in the partnership and supports future regional growth and collaboration.

**Together, GNM:H and Hatton Gallery continue to connect Newcastle University's research, collections and expertise with communities locally, nationally and internationally, generating significant public value and enhancing the University's contribution to the cultural life of the region.**

## Performance:

(2024–25)	GNM:H	Hatton Gallery	Combined Total
Internal research enquiries	34	6	40
Internal research visits	24	7	31
External research enquiries	78	17	95
External research visits	28	7	35
Publications / practice-based outputs	25	11	36
Research-engaged academics	42	12	53
Total visitors	224,370	20,253	244,623
Unique website visits	135,606	28,600	164,206
Schools engaged	448	58	506
School Visits t	23,673	1,710	25,383

