



Judge's Report for

The Welsh Mining Experience: Rhondda Heritage Park

The Sandford Award for Heritage Education 2019



Brief description of the site

The Welsh Mining Experience: Rhondda Heritage Park is situated at Trehafod and tells the story of coal mining and the wider industrial and cultural heritage of the Rhondda Valley. It is an accredited museum and popular tourist destination run by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council who invested £500,000 in 2017 to improve interpretation and facilities. There are Grade II listed buildings of the once working Lewis Merthyr Colliery to explore, complete with original pumping engines and winding gear, an opportunity to go underground to tour the reconstructed mine, museum displays about coal mining and the social history of the valleys, a children's playground, café and shop.

Summary of the visit shadowed

Please provide a short assessment (600 words maximum) of the key findings from your visit and the overall eligibility of the site for a Sandford Award.

*Include: **welcome and orientation, number and age range of the group being shadowed, the extent of any additional needs, the type of school visiting and its general geographical location, management and facilities, quality of teaching, learning and engagement of participants, learning objectives (for formal education programmes), informal learning (where applicable), overall quality of experience.***

The group were a mix of Year 5 and 6 children from a local school in Rhondda Valley, one had a hearing impairment and another had English as a second language. As well as history, science and art, the school wanted to learn about global citizenship and the local area's relationship with the rest of the world.

Coal Scientists, facilitated by the Outreach Apprentice, enabled children to discover how coal is formed, its properties and its different uses as a fuel. A high quality work sheet, mirroring the steps of the scientific process, was used to guide the session and each step involved intense discussion, as well as opportunities to handle coal samples, look at timelines illustrating the formation of coal and observe a giant mural featuring domestic fires, steam powered ships and trains etc. The A4 diagrams were a little difficult for the class to see and so expanding them to A3 or A1 would be beneficial. The children's responses demonstrated they had understood how pressure forces vegetation down to form coal and the differences between peat, lignite anthracite and bituminous coal. As well as science, the history of the valleys was integrated into the discussion and pupils were able to recount that high quality steam coal was mined at the Lewis Merthyr Colliery supplying ships like the Titanic and industry in every corner of the globe. As well as knowledge and understanding, many of their responses demonstrated a strong sense of pride in their community and included references to their own families who had worked in the mines. The Outreach Apprentice established an excellent rapport, maintained interest throughout and took time to explain and pause for questions and contributions.

An ex miner led the guided tour of the mine and pitched his delivery very appropriately. Descending underground in the cage aroused great excitement and key was the simulation of a planned explosion to release the coal. As the miner had worked at a local colliery, children were prompted to ask him questions throughout about what he had seen and done as a miner. He was

happy to divert from the usual content and provide first hand stories and this, coupled with the vivid and immersive experience of being in the mine, resulted in a very powerful learning experience. The children watched the working pumping engines and winding gear, handled miner's lamps, batteries and a stick of dynamite. Throughout the tour children demonstrated an understanding of a range of themes including key safety features of the equipment, the variety of jobs in the mine, piece work and how technology improved working conditions. They also demonstrated an empathy with the miners and in particular with children of their age who had worked in the mines.

The self-led Rhondda Landscapes session introduced children to paintings in the collection and allowed them to express themselves by creating a joint art work. Time taken at the start to explain to teachers how to run the session led the children to become restless. It would have been better to cover these instructions in advance, perhaps by email or to delay the children's entrance to the session. The gallery tour worksheet totally engaged the children with the questions it raised and the children were able to build on and reinforce knowledge gained during the Coal Scientist session with more insight into the importance of the Rhondda to the rest of the world.

Teachers commented on the high quality of the delivery in both led sessions. All their objectives had been met and the visit would link well with their topic on Energy.

Judges' Report and Recommendations

The report should include a concise assessment of the service offered and the visit shadowed against the Sandford Award criteria, together with any recommendations for future development.

1. Assessment of how the services offered meet the criteria

Please provide an assessment of the services offered against each of the criteria below:

1. The education programmes are delivered in a way that engages, informs and inspires visitors

	Not Met	Partially Met	Mostly Met	Well Met
Judge's assessment				X

Supporting evidence:

As well as impact on knowledge and understanding, the site's comprehensive Learning Policy based on the Arts Council's Inspiring Learning Framework, emphasises impact on enjoyment, inspiration, attitudes and values and impact in these areas is clearly being achieved across the learning programme. The Outreach Apprentice, who is working towards a Level 3 Diploma in Cultural Heritage and is relatively new to the role, and the ex miner fully engaged the children and inspired them to feel pride in their heritage and also in the strong prospects for the future of their community and locality. Time was taken to fully appreciate the scale of the features of this imposing site and the children were clearly in awe of the 1400ft chimney which served to ventilate the original mine shafts and the huge structure surrounding the colliery winding gear. The gallery activity was both educational and fun providing a good contrast with the led sessions and an opportunity for the children to interact with each other. The teacher allowed a level of noise during this session as it was clear that all were engaged and learning.

2. The education programmes at the site contribute to an understanding of the local and national heritage

	Not Met	Partially Met	Mostly Met	Well Met
Judge's assessment				X

Supporting evidence:

The programme provides an excellent understanding of the coal industry as traditionally the dominant industry in the valleys and there are many references to key local people, for example Aneurin Bevan, in relation to the pioneering hospitals of the Valleys and how he used their example in the founding of the National Health Service. Also highlighted are the Welsh men women who played a key role in protest and reform including John Hopla, the miner's leader imprisoned following the Tonypandy Riots of November 1910.

Links are strongly made between the local and national and international heritage through information about the export of coal from the Rhondda, the supply of coal to ships such as the Titanic through the contribution of Welsh coal miners during the two world wars.

The site's Café Bracchi is run by a local Italian family. It is an Italian style café that celebrates the Italian community, largely from the Bardi region, who came to the valleys during the industrial revolution and set up cafes and ice cream parlours known as Bracchi.

3. The education programmes have been developed through consultation with educational customers and advisers

	Not Met	Partially Met	Mostly Met	Well Met
Judge's assessment				X

Supporting evidence:

The learning team regularly work informally with local Rhondda Cynon Taf schools to ensure the programme meets the requirements of the Welsh National Curriculum. The curriculum changed in 2015, putting a greater focus on students' local area and how it relates to the rest of the world, emphasizing students' place in the world as global citizens. This change is clearly being reflected in the current programme.

More formally the learning team undertook a review of their entire programme in 2017 and 2018, working with local teachers and historians and with external curriculum development specialists from the Tir Na Nog Heritage Education Partnership to develop the content and approach of sessions and resources to better meet students' needs. Local schools were invited to pilot new sessions free of charge. The review highlighted the need to make visits more affordable as many of Rhondda Cynon Taf schools in particular are on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation. In response, the learning team have made a number of previously led sessions available as a self-led option.

Evaluation is carried out with all schools using evaluation forms and any concerns are dealt with by the Outreach Apprentice in liaison with the Education and Outreach Officer. The form provides opportunities for qualitative feedback through a comments section and actively seeks recommendations for the further development of the programme. Comments left in visitors books are regularly reviewed and assessed by the Operational Manager. Comments observed on the gallery exhibition were generally very positive and included comments such as "wonderful and very moving."

4. There is attention to good management and administration concerning all aspects of the visit

	Not Met	Partially Met	Mostly Met	Well Met
Judge's assessment			X	

Supporting evidence:

The Outreach Apprentice acts as the constant point of contact for teachers throughout the booking, delivery and evaluation of the visit. Pre-visits are offered to all group leaders and detailed information is available on the website to help teachers to plan their visit and this includes very useful example itineraries. Once an enquiry is received a follow up call is made to discuss learning objectives, options and dates and to identify any additional needs that children may have. A comprehensive pack is then sent out to confirm the booking and this includes an itinerary and risk assessments as well as an introduction to the history of the site and copies of worksheets which can be printed in advance. The Front of House Museum Assistant, Outreach Apprentice or a Guide welcome groups on site in the visitor centre. Where a group has selected to run activities themselves an introduction to each activity is given to group leaders to ensure they feel confident to run the activity. As mentioned above, this introduction would be better done in advance by email or care should be taken to ensure children are fully occupied and supervised while this briefing is taking place.

5. Educational resources and facilities are provided which enhance the quality of the learners' visits

	Not Met	Partially Met	Mostly Met	Well Met
Judge's assessment				X

Supporting evidence:

One of the heritage buildings, the Fan House, is used exclusively by schools as an activity and lunch space and as a storage area for bags and coats. A further activity space is available on the gallery and both areas are well furnished and equipped for learning. The Energy Zone Playground is a particularly high quality asset that is available for use by schools during lunch times and includes a number of interactives and a zip wire. Responding to consultation with schools and community groups this playground is closed periodically to allow young people with autism to have private use of this facility.

As well as the Outreach Apprentice, the ex-miners are a very valuable resource for both formal and informal groups, given their first-hand knowledge of the subject and plans are afoot to capture their testimony and technical expertise through an oral history programme in order to ensure these tours of the mine remain sustainable.

Real objects, rather than replicas, from the site's extensive accredited collection are used to support and enhance the led sessions. They consist of items that illustrate the industrial and social history of the Rhondda Valley from 1800 to present day. Artefact loan boxes are also available for use in schools.

The gallery exhibition is already an excellent resource, giving both locals and visitors a deep insight into the coal industry and the wider social history of the Rhondda valley. The objects and interpretation are both engaging and moving and a temporary exhibition about the Rhondda teachers' strike of 1919 was a particular highlight. Audio Visual Displays supported by oral histories,

images and film footage enhance the experience. Further improvements are planned which will enhance the interactivity of the gallery.

The cinematic dram ride simulates a hair raising journey at speed through the mine. This simulator at the end of the mine tour is more aimed at informal visitors but provides an exciting and fun addition for school groups.

The website is also a very comprehensive and effective resource that includes high quality videos that give an excellent introduction to the site. There are informal visits on offer for families and pre-school children can participate in Mini Miners, a led activity designed to encourage the development of social and basic skills through play. The learning team have also developed a bespoke session tailored to the needs of stroke victims in partnership with the Stroke Society and craft courses are available in partnership with a community arts group, Craft of Hearts.

6. The statutory requirements are provided				
	Not Met	Partially Met	Mostly Met	Well Met
Judge's assessment				X

Supporting evidence:

All the required practical facilities for school visits are in place and all the necessary statutory documentation was seen.

Policies and procedures	Yes	No	Further information/details if appropriate
Health and Safety	X		
Public Liability Insurance	X		
Risk Assessments	X		
Safeguarding	X		
DBS Checks for eligible staff/volunteers	X		
Equality and Inclusivity considerations	X		

Recommendations

1. A small enhancement would be to enlarge the very useful diagrams used in Coal Scientists so that the whole class can see them more clearly.
2. The instructions for teachers on how to run self-led sessions such as Rhondda Landscapes would be better done in advance by email or care should be taken to ensure children are fully occupied and supervised while these briefings are taking place.

SANDFORD AWARD FOR HERITAGE EDUCATION


Judges are required to make one of two recommendations for consideration by the Judges' and Directors' Panels, either a 'Sandford Award' or 'No Award'. Please delete below as appropriate

SANDFORD AWARD

Below is a citation that can be used for publicity or in the event of 'No Award' the criteria which were not met:

The activities, interpretation and facilities at the Welsh Mining Experience are of a very high quality. The learning team provides an outstanding learning experience that delivers both an in depth understanding of the science and history of the coal industry of the Rhondda Valley and a deeply moving insight into life underground and the wider social and political issues that affected the community. The learning programme also has the capacity to reinforce local children's sense of their roles as global citizens and their community's important contribution to the world.

Name of Lead Judge: Christine Chadwick

Signed: 

JUDGES' PANEL RECOMMENDATION: **SANDFORD AWARD**

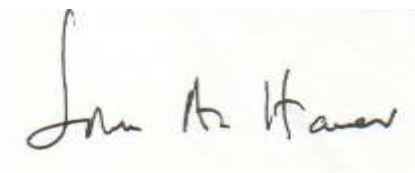
Signed (Chairman of the Advisory Group):

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light yellow background. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read "Tracy Borman".

Tracy Borman, 16 July 2019

DIRECTORS' DECISION: **SANDFORD AWARD**

Signed (Chairman of the Board of Directors):

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light yellow background. The signature is written in a cursive style and appears to read "John Hamer".

John Hamer, 16 July 2019