

THE
NATIONAL
MUSEUM



Interpretation Strategy

2021-26

The National Museum of the Royal Navy

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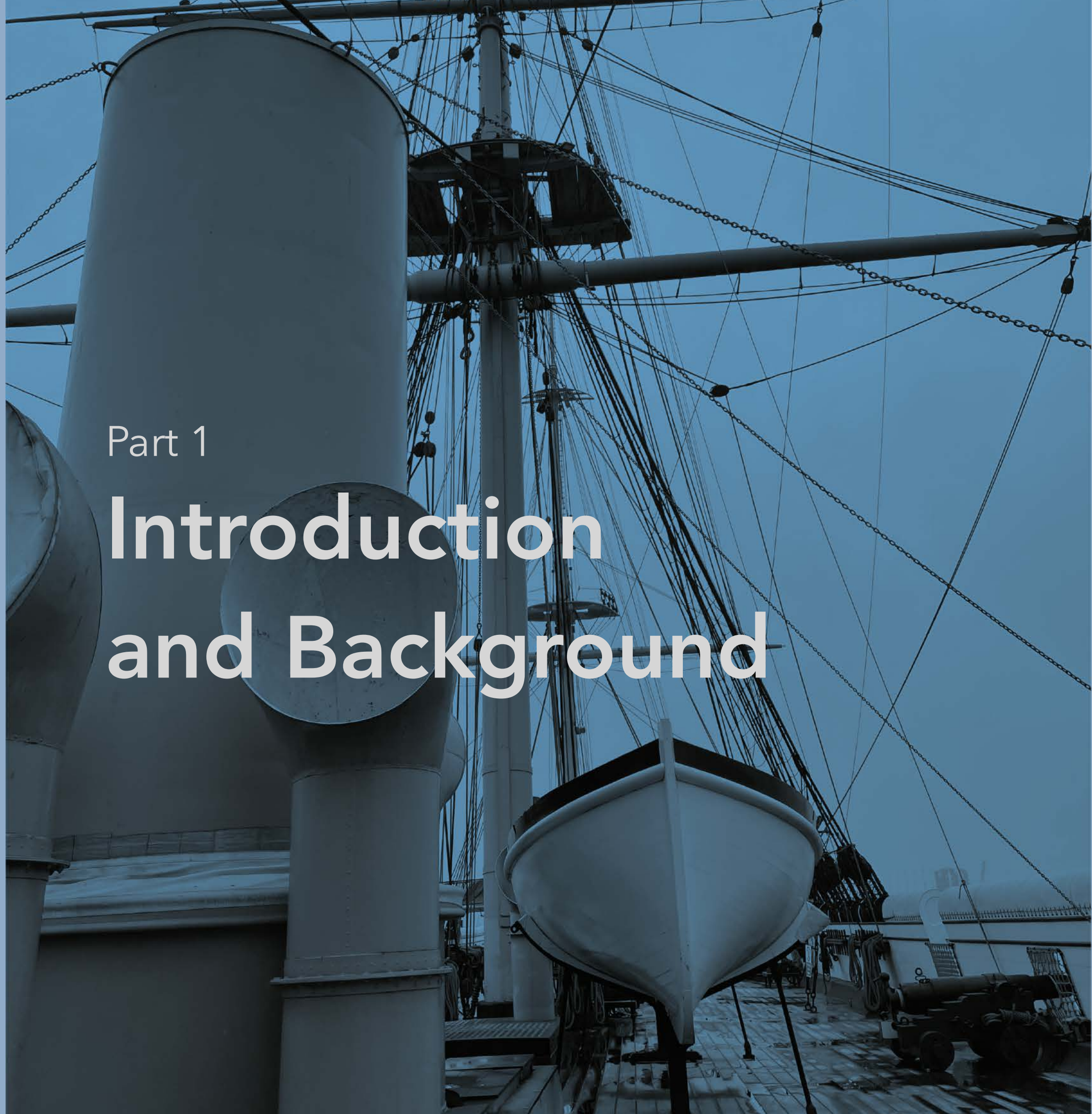
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Part 1

Introduction and Background



1 Introduction

The National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) is embarking on an exciting period of change, which will see ambitious improvements to its sites and new galleries and temporary exhibitions delivered over the short to medium and long term period.

Lima Studio was commissioned in December 2020 to create an overarching Interpretation Strategy for the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN).

The process leading to the creation of this strategy has been led by Lima Studio in close consultation with the NMRN senior staff, nominated trustees, site managers and the heads of different departments. Together we have analysed existing interpretation and imagined how it can be conceived and delivered in the future. We have gained a perspective on where NMRN has been, where it is today, and where it should go given new opportunities and threats and internal organisational strengths and weaknesses.

The resulting overarching interpretation strategy can be applied and implemented across NMRN's interpretative realms including its digital and physical visitor experiences. It considers NMRN's Master Narrative, existing NMRN interpretation, projects in planning and in stream.

The strategy focuses on existing sites and collections, but provides a framework applicable to any partnership projects away from our current footprint and to any new sites or acquisitions into the collection.

Thanks to those who have contributed in consultations, workshops and site visits.

“The Interpretation Strategy will connect our Master Narrative and Audience Development Plan. It will be used to provide a thematic framework for our gallery redevelopments, exhibitions, public programming and site improvement planning. It will help inform our marketing and fundraising campaigns. We will actively use it to prioritise and organise the collections we share, the stories we tell and how we tell them.”

NMRN Interpretation Strategy Brief, 2020

1 Executive summary

This Interpretation Strategy concentrates on the big picture. It focuses on the wider act of interpretation; a statement of intent, highlighting high-level ideas around interpretation for NMRN.

- It is a guide to ensure all interpretation meets the specific and defined needs of NMRN as an organisation, bringing universality to NMRN sites while maintaining their unique propositions
- It provides the basis for the co-ordinated provision of interpretation across multiple sites, defining a common or complementary approach to interpretation
- It sets out how NMRN intends to approach interpretation with achievable and actionable recommendations for the short, medium and long term
- It creates a cohesive and impactful interpretative framework for the NMRN and its Master Narrative, collections, themes and stories and identifying any gaps/opportunities
- It sets out an approach for building cross-organisational working practices so the team can take action in the development of future interpretation
- It reviews the current visitor experience and makes suggestions for interpretation improvements seeking opportunities for innovation and engagement
- It provides a toolkit for NMRN to action future interpretation in coordinated and harmonious ways across all of its sites

1 Summary of key findings

The following is a summary of key findings further detailed in the body of the Interpretation Strategy and is informed by research, consultation and visits to NMRN sites.

- In order to understand The National Museum of the Royal Navy, we must first provide visitors with baseline interpretation to help them understand The Royal Navy
- The **NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL NAVY** as a name, as a brand and as a family of sites and collections needs to be interpreted more strongly to visitors
- The Master Narrative spans a long period of time, from 625 to the present. At the moment some sites are dedicated to specific eras within this master narrative chronology, while others have a much broader focus. In future we will make the chronological sweep of each site more explicit to visitors and understand the chronological mapping across NMRN collectively
- Creating experiences inspired by museum collections and illustrating stories through the integration of both tangible and intangible assets will help deliver the chronology across the museum sites
- People will become the main focus of NMRN's interpretation. This means putting our visitors at the heart of what we do, but equally putting people at the heart of the stories we tell and how we tell them
- Place-based interpretation will be made more prominent, drawing out connections with the Royal Navy, the dockyard, the air base and local communities
- The on-board experiences are the significant 'walk in the past' moments for visitors at all NMRN sites, especially when led by veterans or costumed interpreters. The presentation of the historic fleet is exceptional, and the conservation of the ships impressive
- Conservation is a key part of the NMRN story and a major part of the organisation's activity, conserving historic vessels and collections as unique records of the Royal Navy's history. The conservation story can be told even more strongly, and tied in more purposefully to STEM subjects
- We will express different perspectives and interpretations of the past, present and future to engage new and diverse audiences
- The NMRN museums will continue to work collaboratively to make the most of our collections and subject expertise both internally across departments and externally on partnerships projects. The sharing of subject and collections knowledge is essential to the development of good interpretation, both internally and externally
- The development of a unique design language for NMRN that is not prescriptive but brings harmony to interpretation, visual language and communication across our sites will build NMRN's identity and improve the overarching experience for visitors



Part 2.1

Where we are now: Current situation

2 Introducing NMRN

NMRN is the UK's newest national collection, being just over ten years old.

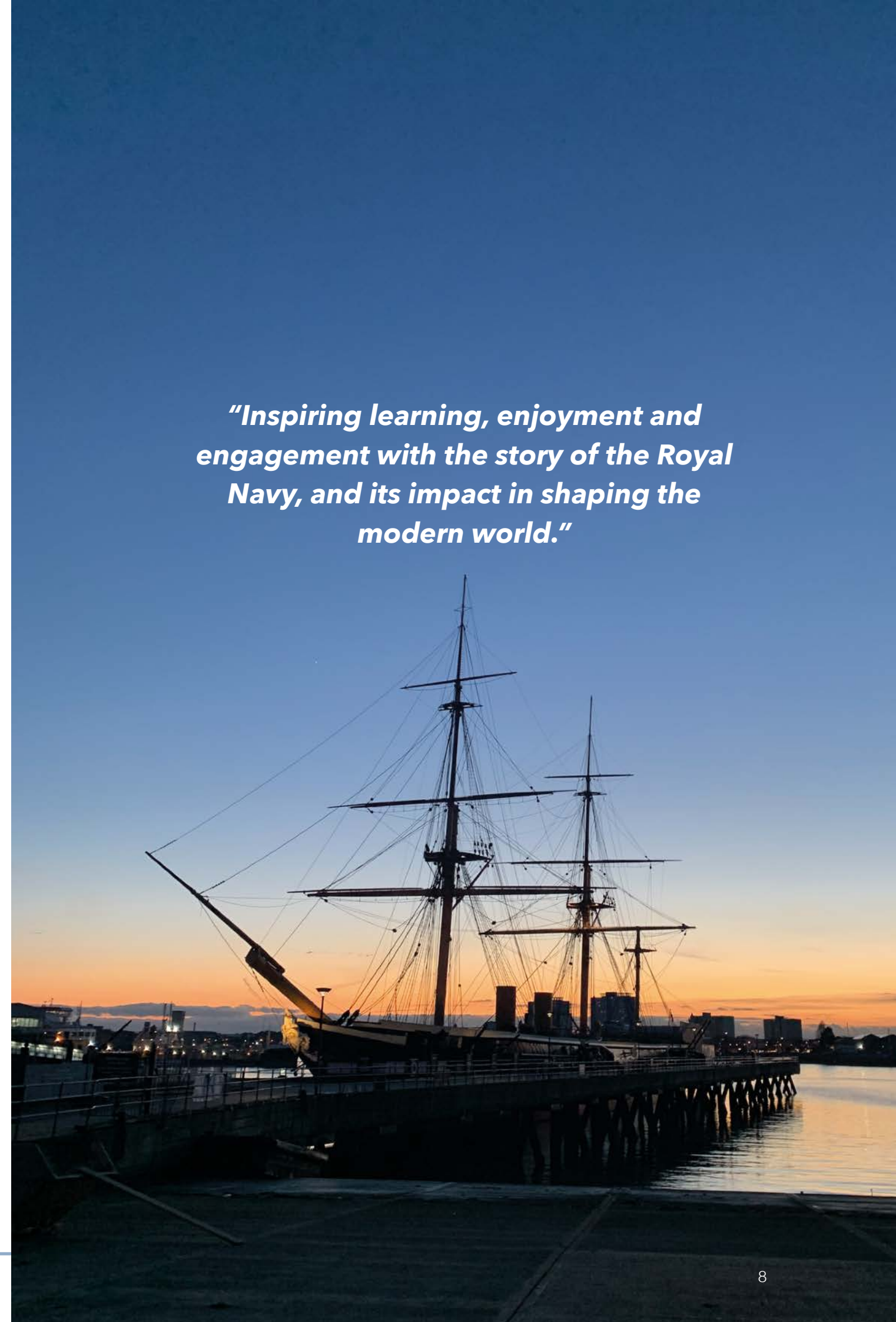
The National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN) was formed in 2009. Today it encompasses five main museum sites across the UK, they are:

- NMRN Portsmouth (NMRNP)
- The Royal Navy Submarine Museum (RNSM), Gosport
- Explosion Museum of Naval Firepower, Gosport
- Fleet Air Arm Museum (FAAM), Yeovilton
- NMRN Hartlepool (NMRNH)
- HMS Caroline, Belfast (closed at time of writing)

The Museum boasts the largest fleet of historic vessels in the world, the most well-known being HMS Victory, HMS Caroline, HMS Warrior, HMS Trincomalee and HMS Alliance. The epicentre of National Museum of the Royal Navy is located at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard (PHD) which shares a site with Her Majesty's Naval Base, Portsmouth. HMNB Portsmouth is one of three operating bases in the United Kingdom for the Royal Navy and is part of the city of Portsmouth. It is the home to a series of other attractions, the Royal Naval Submarine Museum and Explosion make up the PHD offer along with partner organisations, Mary Rose Trust (MRT) and Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust (PNBPT). Affiliates include the Medusa Trust; the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust and The D Day Story.

The museums have come together under the NMRN umbrella relatively recently, and now require an overarching interpretation strategy to guide them forward together over the next five years. The sites themselves are very different as they have been developed in isolation from one another. Some present galleries and interpretation that is 20 plus years old and have plans in place for future site development. Other sites are about to open new galleries and experiences to visitors. NMRN also operates in the online and digital realm and this is considered another 'site'.

"Inspiring learning, enjoyment and engagement with the story of the Royal Navy, and its impact in shaping the modern world."



2 A vision for NMRN

NMRN is committed to delivering high quality interpretation and visitor experiences and aspires to become a sector leader.

At this point, NMRN recognises that it is time to reflect, assess and plan for the future as a team, embracing the commonalities and expressing the uniqueness of its museums, sites and collections to present a unified organisation.

NMRN's vision, mission and objectives are shown on the right. They provide the foundations on which interpretation will be based.

NMRN's vision, mission, strategic objectives:

Vision

To be the world's most inspiring Naval Museum

Mission

Inspiring learning, enjoyment and engagement with the story of the Royal Navy, and its impact in shaping the modern world.

Strategic Objectives

We will deliver the vision and mission by:

- Building alliances to promote the wider understanding of the Royal Navy
- Recording and interpreting and expressing the traditions, values, behaviours and ethos that make the culture of the Royal Navy unique
- Conserving, collecting, studying and interpreting objects, archives, ships and sites to bring to life the story of the Royal Navy
- Being socially, intellectually and physically as accessible as possible
- Developing a stimulating and engaging learning offer
- Providing extraordinary and enriching days out
- Valuing and empowering our people
- Continuously improving to ensure our organisation is sustainable, outward looking and commercially-minded
- Ensuring we are driven by a culture of enterprise and adventure

2 NMRN audiences

Understanding NMRN's audiences, those who visit and those who don't, their mindsets and motivations, knowledge and understanding of the Royal Navy and expectations of a visit are all critical to delivering successful interpretation.

NMRN's current core audiences are:

- Families
- Adults
- Seniors
- Naval personnel
- Veterans and their families
- Education groups
- Special interest e.g.military history
- Local audiences and tourists (national and international)

NMRN recognise the need to reach wider audiences to increase visitor numbers and to remain relevant. There are also local audiences surrounding the NMRN sites that can be better engaged with interpretation.

Our understanding of our audiences is currently evolving and will we commission an audience review to help us better connect to our existing audiences and reach out to new ones.

"We want our visitors to have 'extraordinary and enriching days out' and we strive to remove and reduce barriers to make this happen. We will listen to the views of our people and audiences as equal partners in this work."

"We also understand the role that collections have in shaping personal, community and national identities. We know that collections spark debate. Our intention is to represent the stories contained within our collections in a fair and balanced way and ensure as wide an audience as possible can engage with the objects in our care."

NMRN Diversity and Inclusion Policy (in draft)

2 NMRN Portsmouth

Sense of Place

Located in Portsmouth's Historic Dockyard, the Royal Navy's home for centuries and still a working naval base.

Experience

Visitors can board HMS Victory, HMS Warrior, HMS M33 and explore the museum's galleries at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard (PHD). Exhibitions are located in three buildings, including Action Stations. Boathouse 5 acts as a venue for special exhibitions, currently housing the Horrible Histories exhibition, Pirates. A flexible exhibition space in the museum currently presents a temporary exhibition entitled Diving Deep.

Must Sees

- HMS Victory
- HMS Warrior
- HMS M33
- Enigma Machine
- Figureheads
- Panorama of Battle of Trafalgar
- HMS Hood's bell
- Nelson's life mask
- HMS Lance's gun

Short to medium-term vision (0-3 years)

- Storehouse 12 Collections Store open and functioning
- Redeveloped Victory Gallery opening
- Refresh displays in Action Stations
- Multi-million pound conservation works around HMS Victory
- Redevelopment of the Nelson and Sailing Navy galleries
- General programme of site improvement
- Continue to develop a programme of temporary exhibitions
- Visitor Centre refresh
- New entrance for NMRN galleries and Collections Centre

Long term vision (3-5 years)

- Delivery of the Royal Marines Museum
- Ongoing conservation works around HMS Victory



2 Explosion Museum of Naval Firepower, Gosport

Sense of Place

The Museum sits at the heart of a former ordnance depot, which for two centuries supplied gunpowder and armaments to the Royal Navy's ships in Portsmouth.

Experience

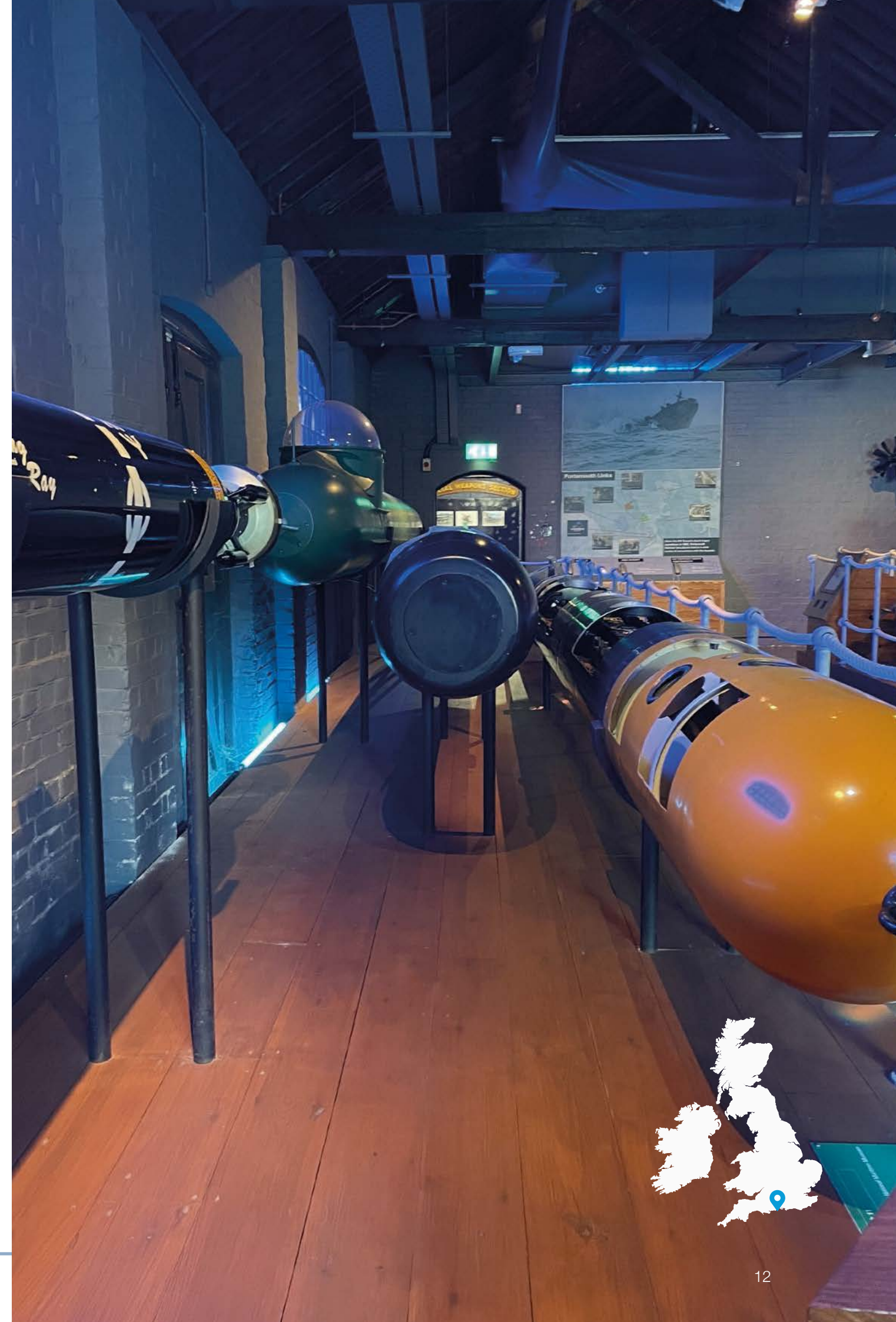
Visitors can tour the old munitions stores, find out about the workers of days gone by and view galleries full of Royal Naval firepower, from gunpowder and dynamite to torpedoes, mines and guided missiles.

Must Sees

- Grand Magazine
- Sea Dart, Sea Wolf and HMS Liverpool's 4.5 inch gun (as one collection)
- Red Beard and WE177 (nuclear weapons)
- Whitehead Torpedo (the first torpedo)
- Breech and barrel from a massive 15 inch gun (the biggest guns used at the Battle of Jutland)
- Coastal forces boats MTB1 and CMB 331

Short to medium-term vision (0-3 years)

- The Night Hunters: The Royal Navy's Coastal Forces at War opening Summer 2021
- Site improvement planning within the context of wider developments at Priddy's Hard which will open up access to new areas, such as the Ramparts



2 Royal Naval Submarine Museum, Gosport

Sense of Place

The Museum is located close to HMS Dolphin, home of the pioneers of the Royal Navy's Submarine Service for nearly a century.

Experience

Visitors can board and explore HMS Alliance as well as visiting the first RN submarine and experience the associated object rich and interactive galleries.

Must Sees

- HMS Alliance
- Holland I
- HMS X24
- Polaris
- Jolly Roger flags
- Captain's Cabin from HMS Conqueror

Short to medium-term vision (0-3 years)

- Opening of memorial garden
- Site improvement planning
- Conservation

Long term vision (3- 5 years)

- To develop a Museum of Naval Medicine at the former Royal Hospital Haslar site



2 Fleet Air Museum, Yeovilton

Sense of Place

FAAM tells the story of over 100 years of naval aviation, next to a working Royal Naval Air base which has been in operation since the Second World War.

Experience

FAAM is located on the perimeter of Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) Yeovilton airfield, HMS Heron, the largest active naval airbase in the UK. Through several halls, visitors explore an extensive collection of naval aircraft, aero engines, aircraft and ship models, and paintings and drawings related to naval aviation. Visitors journey through the immersive Carrier Experience. Flexible exhibition space is located in Hall 2 on the upper floor and currently houses the exhibition Pioneers to Professionals: Women and the Royal Navy commemorating 100 years of the WRNS in 2017.

Must Sees

- Seafire
- Concorde
- De Havilland Sea Vampire (used by Winkle Brown - the first jet to land on a ship)
- Harriers
- Sea King
- Fairey Barracuda rebuild

Short to medium-term vision (0-3 years)

- A major project to redevelop the Carrier Experience in 2022

Long term vision (3-5 years)

- Wider site redevelopment



2 NMRN Hartlepool

Sense of Place

Situated within a key part of Hartlepool's shipbuilding heritage landscape, the Museum is centred around a re-created Georgian quayside.

Experience

Visitors can explore the quayside, board HMS Trincomalee, watch weapons demonstrations, experience Fighting Ships, a walkthrough battle experience and explore a series of galleries. Flexible display spaces are located within the quayside buildings adjacent to the Children's Maritime Adventure Centre. A purpose-built building on the site temporarily houses RML 497 and requires special access. The Museum of Hartlepool can also be accessed from the site.

Must Sees

- HMS Trincomalee
- HMS Trincomalee figurehead
- RML497 (Second World War Rescue Motor Launch)

Short to medium-term vision (0-3 years)

- Conservation of the former Humber Estuary ferry Wingfield Castle in collaboration with local council
- Conservation and interpretation of RML497
- To re-imagine HMS Trincomalee, re-fitting her interiors and interpreting her through a team of first person interpreters, who could be her builders, crew or passengers

Long term vision (3-5 years)

- The creation of a new, vibrant heart for the town which will draw in visitors and thus supporting the regeneration of the local economy, putting NMRNH on a more sustainable footing and protecting HMS Trincomalee and RML 497
- Planning and implementing the regeneration of the wider site, connected to a wider waterside regeneration project in collaboration with local government
- To develop a heart for Hartlepool around the existing Harbour basin which will be the epicentre of a vibrant day and night-time economy serving both the local population and the tourism market



2 NMRN's digital offer

The NMRN's website is essentially its sixth site, along with the social media offer via YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This has been brought even more sharply into focus during the last year with NMRN's sites closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. As sites reopen, there will no doubt be a more hybrid approach to interpretation blending the digital and physical.

NMRN has no shortage of fantastic collections and histories to share on digital media and with visitors to its sites - the chronological and global history within our remit means we can tell stories and make connections stretching across 800 years and around the globe. Real objects from our collections are one of the high points of physical visits to NMRN's sites, but visitors to the website and social media platforms also enjoy the experience of authenticity which NMRN's stories and collections can provide even via a screen.

Website

A website review is currently underway. From an interpretation point of view, the website needs to shift from being a shopfront explaining who the NMRN is and with practical information for visitors about their visit, to also being a platform both for supporting our on-site interpretation and enhancing what visitors learn there.

We are currently working on online digital exhibitions and these will become a permanent online resource. These also allow us to be more flexible and agile in responding to particular stories and subjects in which the public are interested. Exhibitions on NMRN's website will be linked to physical displays on site, or developed as stand-alone exhibitions. Digital exhibitions are also something with which visitors will have become more accustomed in the last year.

There is currently some strong content on the site, including on the blog (currently titled 'Latest News' on the website home page) and on the Collections & Exhibitions page but it's hard to find.

Social media

In terms of showcasing a unified NMRN brand, NMRN social media is already leading the way, detached as it is from individual sites. It is also telling a coherent, diverse and engaging story about the Royal Navy. The digital team have worked hard through the pandemic to keep NMRN's profile high and indeed to raise it. With so many sources of digital content available, museums have benefitted from people wanting to connect with real, authentic objects, stories and experiences, an area in which museums have a real advantage over other providers.

The NMRN brand is less coherent at the level of individual sites. Individual sites have their own social media which does not always appear connected to NMRN, for example the FAAM and HMS Warrior Twitter profiles do not mention either is part of the NMRN family.

Audiences

NMRN's website and social media have maintained the organisation's presence during the pandemic when sites were shut. They have allowed NMRN to reach much more diverse audiences geographically and potentially amongst previously non-museum going audiences too, although more research may need to be done on this. Can new digital audiences be converted into visitors to NMRN's sites?

Making connections

Interpretation of NMRN's stories and collections online enables the organisation to make connections which just aren't possible in the 'real' world. On our website, we can more quickly create content with partners in the museum and academic worlds, with voluntary groups and with local communities than we can in a physical exhibition. On social media, NMRN can create content which is part of a larger conversation for example marking anniversaries, discussing controversial topics and linking to specific hashtags, as well as relating to newsworthy topics. At a practical level, the NMRN digital team works with other service museums, a good example of collaboration with peers in the sector.

Challenges around content creation for website and social media

There are challenges around creating good content for NMRN's website and social media. There needs to be quality control ensuring all digital content is well researched, well written and of a consistently high standard. There are demands on staff time to write and research for the website and social media, on top of other responsibilities. Social media needs digital assets, so this puts pressure on digitisation projects for audio, film and images. There also needs to be suitable internal systems to service digital media output including good collections cataloguing.



Part 2.2

Where we are now: Site Visits

2 NMRN site visits

During February and March 2021, the Lima Studio team carried out site visits to NMRN's museums. This section gathers together positives and challenges of each site which has informed the development of the Interpretation Strategy.

Note that site visits were safely undertaken during Covid-19 lockdown restrictions and therefore visitors were not observed on-site.

2 NMRN Portsmouth

Positives

- Ships are visually impressive, as is the site and situation in terms of size and scale
- Being able to climb on and walk round HMS Warrior, HMS Victory and HMS M33 remains a highlight of the visitor experience
- Newly opened walkway under Victory is a very impressive addition enabling visitors to see the underside of the ship
- Views of operating naval base both impressive in themselves, and as a context for telling story of the Royal Navy
- HMS M33 audio-visual very powerful and good use of interior
- Costumed interpreters on HMS Warrior are very popular, and really nice interpretative touches (e.g. kit bags with names of individual sailors painted on to them)
- Exhibition galleries feel comprehensive telling the story of the 18th century on; well-designed and good use of objects and different display techniques
- Hear My Story exhibition - thematic approach works well; good design, use of AV; lots of personal stories and artefacts
- The temporary exhibition gallery is a nice space, and current exhibition Diving Deep interesting and engaging, with good use of AV and interactives
- Big, modern welcome building with good views of HMS Warrior and the Harbour
- Horrible Histories Pirates exhibition is very good for target audience
- Actions Stations was not accessible

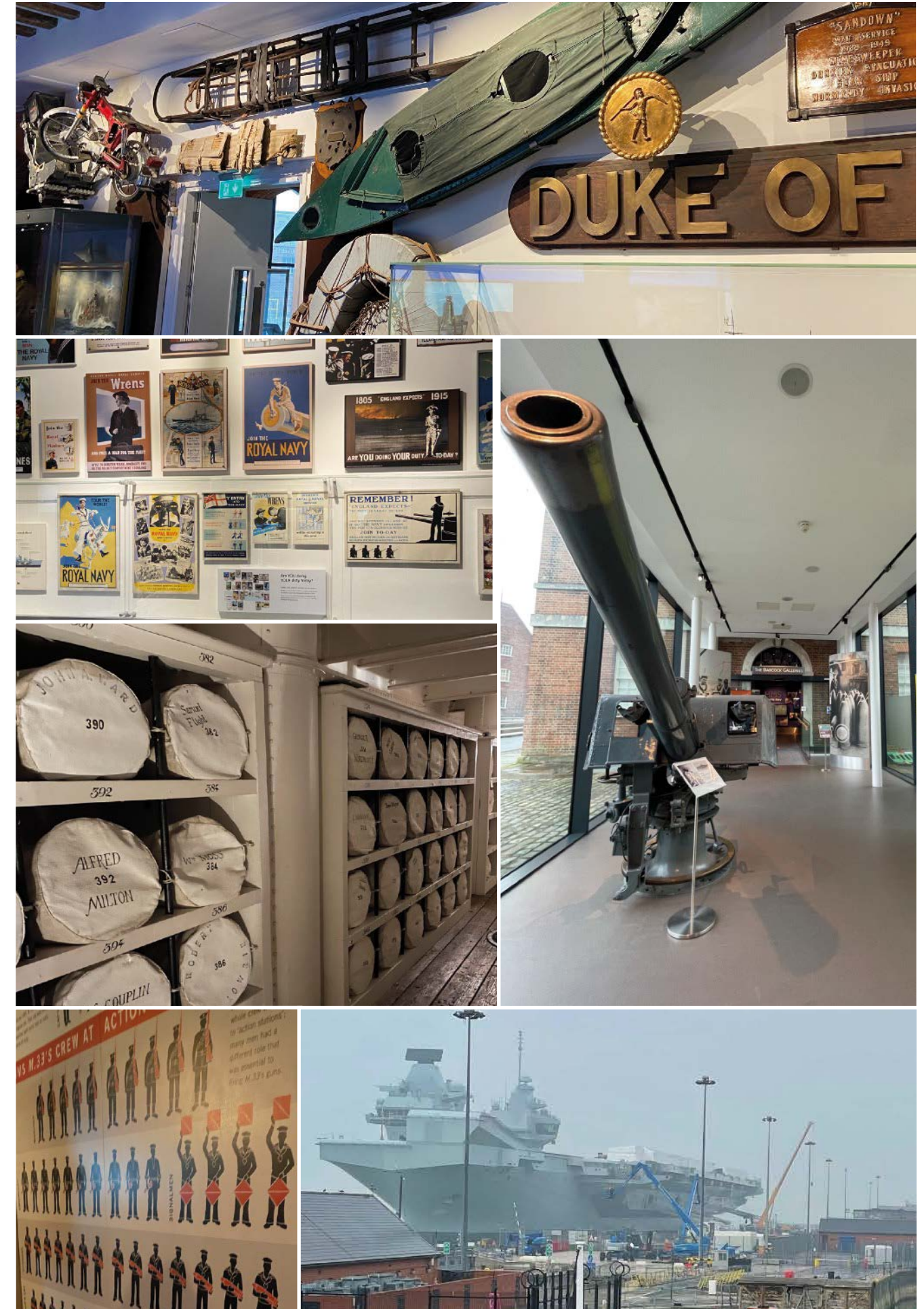
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2 NMRN Portsmouth

Challenges

- The big ships dominate, but apart from the new Victory Gallery, the exhibition galleries feel detached from the ships - the Mary Rose Museum is a good example of how they can be tied together more closely
- If a visitor to HMS Warrior does not encounter costumed interpreters, there is very little other interpretation on the ship
- There is nothing to tell the story of the RN pre-18th century
- For understandable historical reasons, the Nelson Gallery is large and object-rich but now dated, and using a lot of valuable display space to tell one story from one perspective
- The galleries vary widely in standards of design and interpretation - Nelson Gallery and The Sailing Navy are outdated
- There is little opportunity for visitors to stop and reflect
- Temporary exhibition gallery should be demarcated more clearly from main run of galleries - it's currently confusing to go from end of Hear My Story into Diving Deep with no threshold
- The context of Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and the story of place is currently not really addressed - there is one panel in the contemporary section of Hear My Story which summarises the historic and ongoing relationship between Portsmouth and the Royal Navy but it's buried - guidebook tells this story but is missed
- The activities of the modern Royal Navy are not interpreted enough
- Outside spaces between the ships and the galleries, and the visitor route up from the Welcome Building, can currently feel a bit bleak and hard to navigate



2 FAAM

Positives

- The large-scale artefacts - planes, helicopters - are in themselves very compelling, as is being able to climb inside some aircraft
- The Carrier Experience is a very strong part of the visitor experience even if a little dated in parts
- When personal stories are included they are well-chosen and well-illustrated e.g. Eric Brown and Vampire in Hall 2
- The *Pioneers to Professionals: Women in the Royal Navy* exhibition in Hall 2 is well designed, with good strong content including personal stories and engaging artefacts
- Good clear infographics particularly in Hall 1, in the area relating to the First World War e.g. 'So You Want to Fly from a Ship' and 'What Did you do in the War Great-Grandpa'. Strong, clear design and content, relating it back to visitors' families and experiences
- Projection mapping on to early plane, also in Hall 1, is a nice use of AV to bring to life an otherwise hard to understand object
- When large scale imagery is used it works really well, for example in Hall 2, the image of Vampire landing on air craft carrier with crew member waving it in

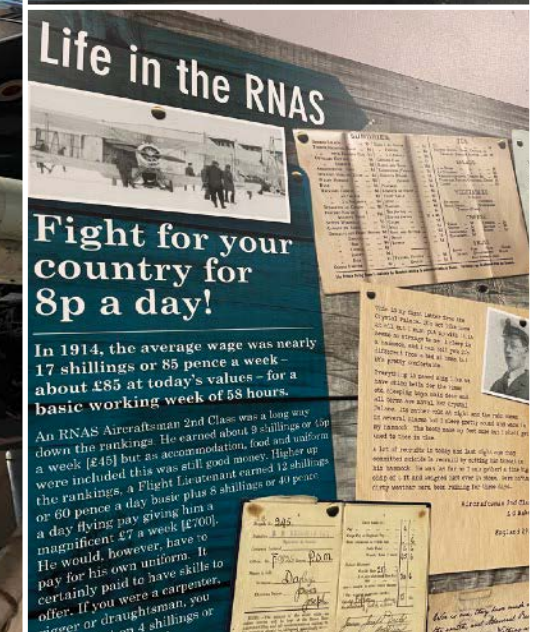
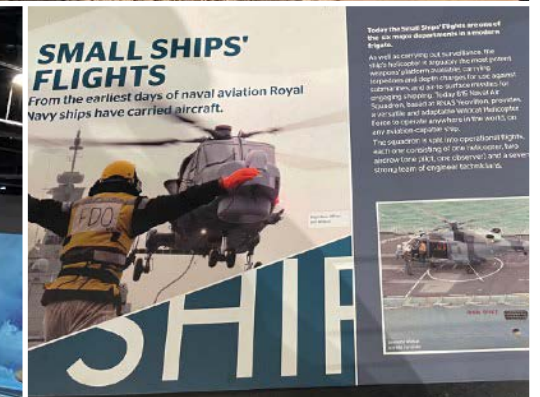
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2 FAAM

Challenges

- Confused chronology and visitor route, this is understandable given how the Museum has developed over time; no way of knowing as a non-expert which is the 'biggest', 'best' or 'first'
- Interpretation is currently inconsistent in its type and quality
- The introductory exhibition, while well-designed, could be more focused
- Visitors currently move from introductory exhibition into a very dense display on the mezzanine about early flight; taking them straight into the Hall 1 displays - could be more impactful
- Many of the big artefacts lack people stories to give them context and connection for visitors, to give them a human scale; plus stories often focus on flying crew, not ground crew, support staff, those who manufactured the plane - can tell many more stories through each plane
- Concorde needs to be woven more closely into the narrative
- Many graphic interpretation elements lead on statistics and have too much text, while assuming a base line of knowledge which most visitors probably don't have, for example the Battle of Taranto is referenced repeatedly but its significance is probably not well known outside the Fleet Air Arm
- Plane engines are a critical STEM story, but could be interpreted better and more inspiringly
- Live flying from adjacent naval air base currently not interpreted enough



2 NMRN Hartlepool

Positives

- The site definitely feels like an attraction rather than a museum and gives the visitor an immersive 'walk in the past'
- HMS Trincomalee is the star of the show, a globally significant ship with incredible stories to tell
- Hartlepool Museum is on the same site, helps with the reinforcement of the story of place
- Fighting Ships is an immersive experience, although very dated
- RML497 is housed in a purpose built building and can extend the sites storytelling in the future
- Exciting opportunities to connect to wider waterfront project and become anchor point in the new developments
- Good retail and café

Challenges

- It is hard for visitors to know how to connect the disparate elements of the site that have come together over time
- No narrative thread
- The difficulty of understanding what's real and what is not - reconstructions are very high specification, but not authentic, set alongside a real ship
- No NMRN interpretation at all, apart from in the shop
- HMS Trincomalee gallery feels disconnected from the ship
- Fighting Ships could be tied in more closely to the narrative of the site
- HMS Trincomalee needs more engaging interpretation to tell its stories on board
- Hartlepool Museum could be updated, ensuring interpretation and narrative are complementary to NMRN



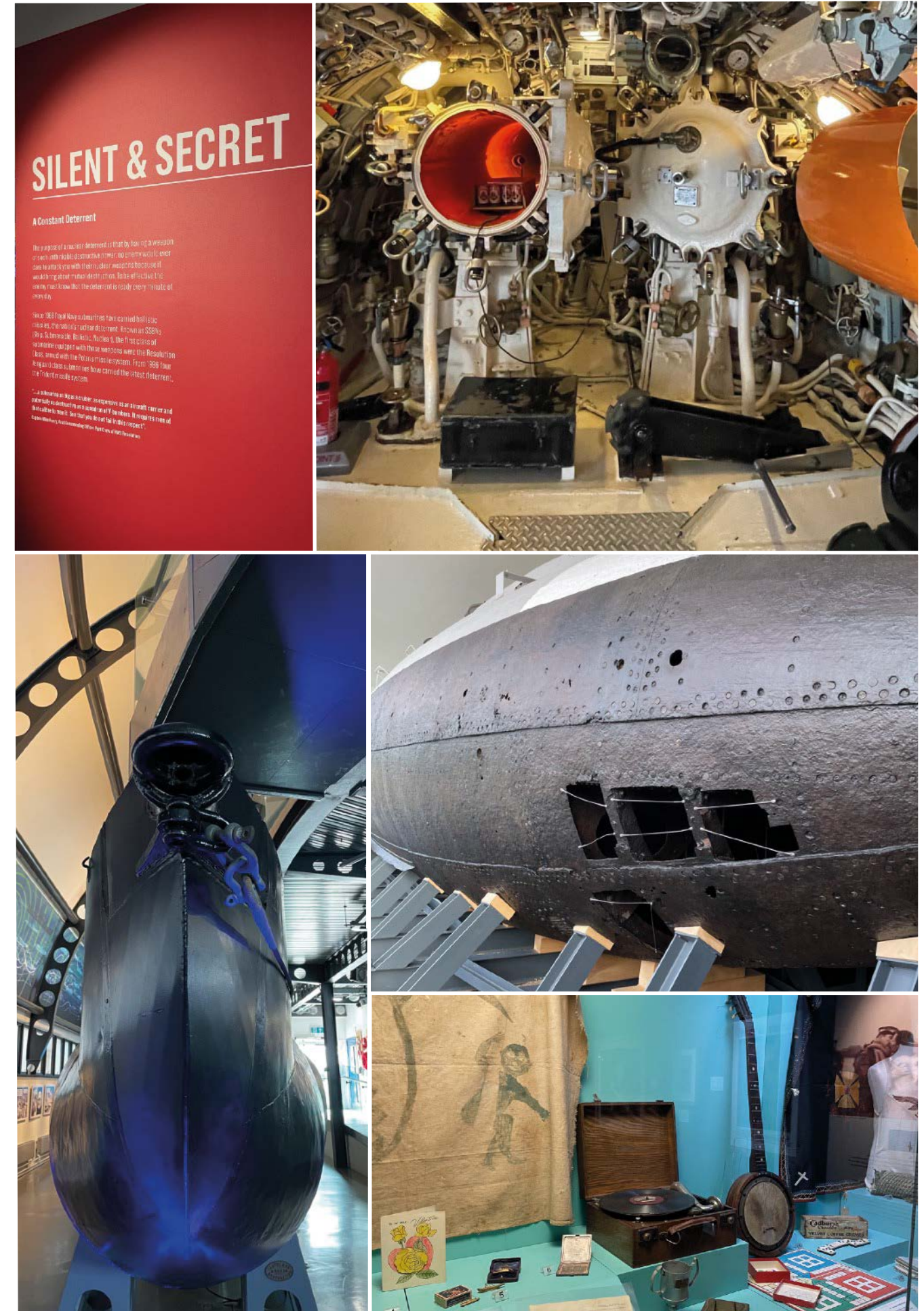
2 RNSM

Positives

- Connectivity with Harbour Tours
- Memorial garden ready to launch - an attractive, reflective space, with planting - high impact statistics of deaths
- Interesting panel interpreting the Submarine Escape Tower, which dominated the skyline - RN impact on the local landscape is fascinating
- The actual museum is well-paced has good variety, traditional gallery, science interactives and good filmic interpretation
- X24 is well presented, although gallery behind is a little lost
- Good range of hands-on interactivity in upper gallery
- HMS Alliance is immersive, fascinating, claustrophobic, really makes you think about living and working conditions and being underwater for long periods of time - led by veterans it is very impactful
- Holland I is an incredible story of the first RN submarine
- Cold War gallery is modern and feels 'on-brand' for NMRN in terms of its style
- The whole experience feels cohesive, considered and well-paced
- Good retail space

Challenges

- Arrival by car is not clear and feels a little uninspiring
- Holland I gallery is missed by visitors
- Most visitors prioritise the HMS Alliance tour above the galleries



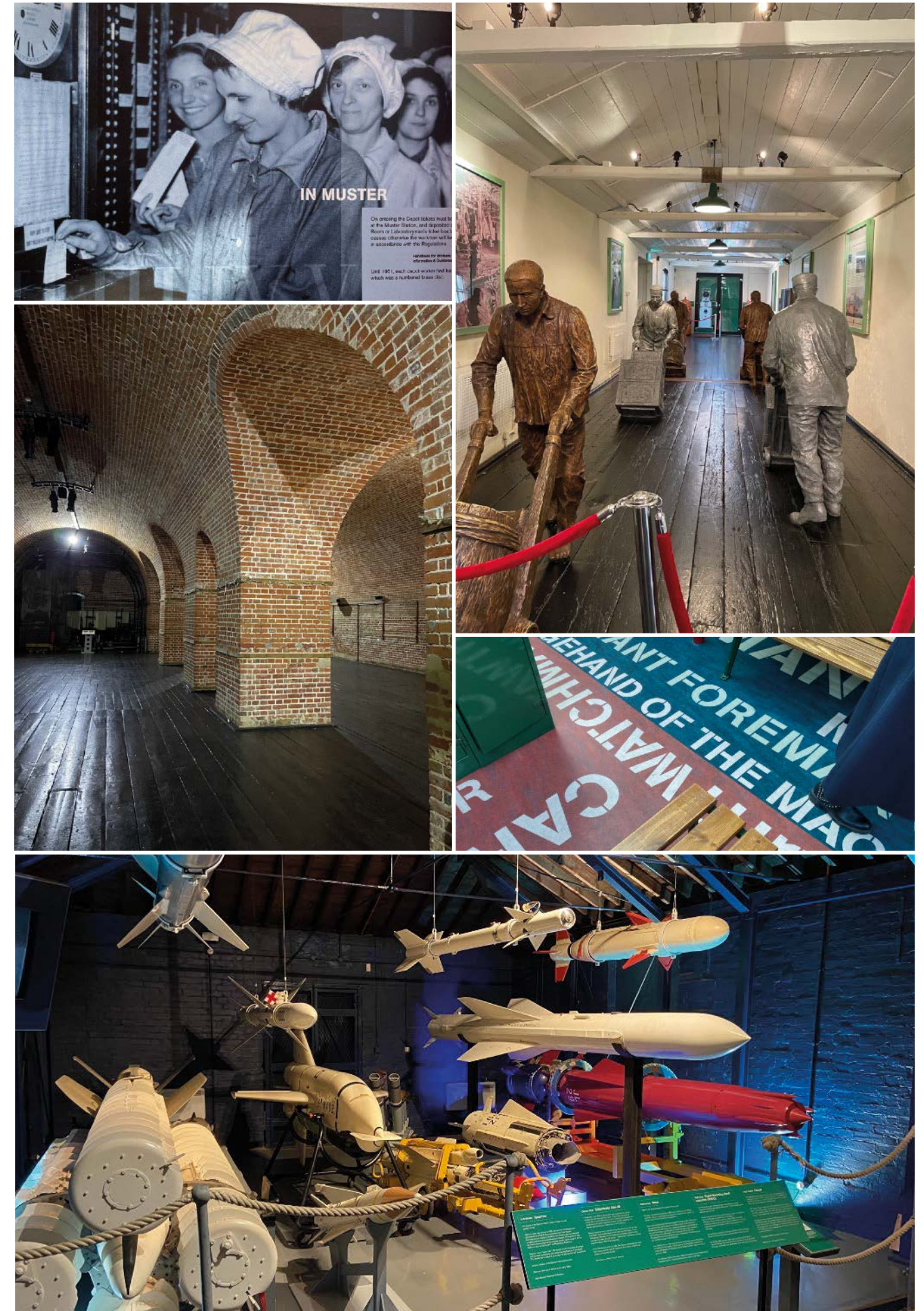
2 Explosion

Positives

- Connectivity with Harbour Tours
- Interesting site, built heritage
- Grand magazine is atmospheric, also an event space
- Statues, friezes reconstructions are quality but feel dated and static
- Good overall use of archive images
- Café is very popular with locals, outside café space has a fantastic view
- Lots of work ongoing on site by landlords, guest accommodation, a new pub, connecting waterfront walkway to RNSM
- Outside picnic area

Challenges

- Displays are generally dated
- Introductory gallery has a series of lockers which contain objects and audio relating to 20th-century factory and workers, interpretation feels hidden
- Some of the AV and interactives are not working and so interpretation is limited or not as originally intended
- Place-based interpretation is good but delivered through framed pictures and maps on a mesh structure which feel temporary and low quality
- Mines gallery has audio and light effects/interactives but again feels dated
- Objects are crammed in, guns, missiles, very technical interpretation
- Kids mouse trail is popular but could be better related
- Outside are a series of external displays, large guns and panels but the actual site isn't interpreted
- Because of the timings of Harbour Tours, visitors get delayed here for longer than there is enough to engage them, leading to disappointment





Part 3

Take Note: Key findings



3 Key findings

Through consultation with NMRN and a series of site visits, key findings are detailed in this section of the document.

They relate to the common primary themes that were discussed in consultation meetings and workshops and issues that were most evident during visits to NMRN sites in February and March 2021.

Assessment of the key findings set out in Section 3 has enabled the development of Section 4 - Interpretation Strategy.

3 Telling the Royal Navy story

In order to understand The National Museum of the Royal Navy, we must first have an understanding of The Royal Navy.

The sense of pride that the Royal Navy has in its role will be echoed in the sense of pride that NMRN has in its role telling that story.

Not all visitors come to NMRN with any prior knowledge of the Royal Navy and naval history. Indeed, there is a wider lack of understanding of maritime affairs which has been referred to as 'sea blindness'. It is important to provide visitors with an introduction to give them a context for an exciting and engaging onward experience. Without an understanding of the structure of the Royal Navy and its division into five arms, it is difficult for visitors to understand our sites and collections and the stories we tell.

The quote opposite and branch summaries below are taken from The Royal Navy's website.

“In times of peace and conflict, the Royal Navy is key to Britain’s prosperity and success. We help to stabilise the seas, keeping the maritime trade that’s the lifeblood of the UK economy flowing. We act as a guardian and a diplomat, as a humanitarian force for good, and a peacekeeper on the global stage.”

THE SURFACE FLEET

The Royal Navy's warships provide the maritime might and backbone of the Royal Navy.

SUBMARINE SERVICE

Unseen and unhindered, the silent Submarine Service gives the Royal Navy strength beneath the waves.

FLEET AIR ARM

The aviation branch of the Royal Navy, delivering airpower in support of operations and projecting the UK's influence over land, air and sea.

ROYAL MARINES

An elite amphibious force of the Royal Navy, held at very high readiness for worldwide rapid response and threat neutralisation.

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY

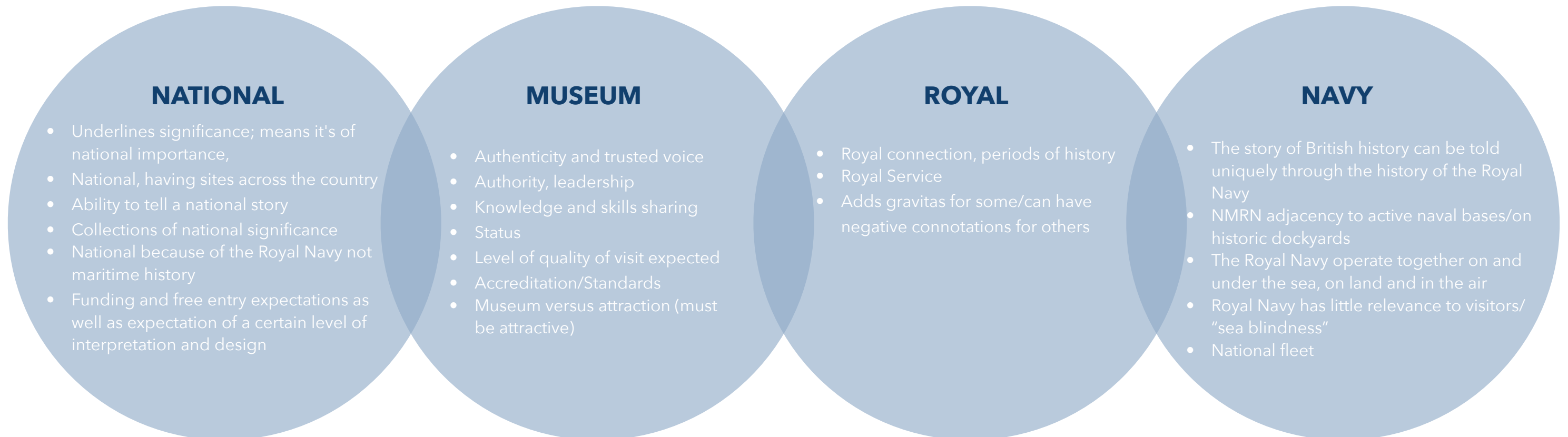
The civilian support branch of the Royal Navy, providing vital logistical and operational support to military operations.

3 Building a strong identity

The discussions undertaken in our workshops around the constituent parts of our name NMRN, could be seen to emphasise both the strengths and weaknesses of current interpretation.

The **NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE ROYAL NAVY** as a name, as a brand and as a family of sites and collections needs to be interpreted more strongly to visitors. At the most basic level, an introduction to NMRN online and at each site - what it is, what it does and what it represents - will reinforce identity.

This interpretation can provide a clear framework to a visit. It will give those who arrive with no prior knowledge some core messages relating to the NMRN and the Royal Navy and its relevance past, present and future, to unlock their wider interpretative journey and onward exploration of the site, its collections and stories.



3 Branding and marketing

In order to help define the personality of NMRN as an organisation and as an experience for the visitor, a high level analysis via an organisational brand matrix is set out below.

This is based on NMRN's strategic objectives and gleaned through the speed consultations, workshops and site visits. It will be shared and reviewed internally and updated regularly.

The three pale blue cells highlight the strategic element to the analysis, identifying internal, external and shared elements of the NMRN brand promise that are critical strategic touch-points to inspire visitors and team members alike.

We have used it to refine and get closer to the essence of NMRN, informing our direction and recommendations. This could form the basis of further development by a specialist branding consultant in the future.

	Proposition What is the Museum's proposition to its visitors?	Relationship What is the nature of the relationship that the museum fosters with its audiences?	Positioning What is the museum's intended position in the hearts and minds of our audiences?
External	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience the history, stories and incredible achievements of the Royal Navy • Be engaged and inspired by interacting with the actual vessels, objects and places where it happened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A guardian of Britain's Naval Heritage which evocatively brings its stories to life • A builder of alliances and partnerships to promote the wider understanding and appreciation of the Royal Navy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want our visitors to have 'extraordinary and enriching days out.' Sharing the whole navy story from the earliest times to the present day
	Fame What are the things that the Museum wishes to be most famous for – the common knowledge that defines us in the minds of global audiences?	Essence What are the core ideas that sum up what the Museum stands for and define its reputation?	Personality What combination of human characteristics or qualities forms the Museum's character?
Shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserving, collecting, studying and interpreting objects, archives, ships and sites and making them accessible to bring to life the story of the Royal Navy 	<p>Take an authentic adventure of discovery through an inspiring showcase of the ongoing impact of the Royal Navy on the nation's history and its role on the global stage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspiring • Respectful • Trusted • Knowledgeable
	Vision / Mission What engages the Museum team (mission) and what is their direction and inspiration (vision)	Culture What are the attitudes and behaviour of the Museum team?	Competencies What is the Museum team recognised as being particularly good at, and helps it be different and better than other experiences?
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be the world's most inspiring Naval Museum • To promote the traditions and public understanding of the Royal Navy and its constituent branches, past, present and future • Inspiring learning, enjoyment and engagement with the story of the Royal Navy, and its impact in shaping the modern world • To deliver Quality in everything we do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are driven by a culture of enterprise and adventure • Sense of pride that the Royal Navy has in their role and the sense of pride that NMRN has in its role telling that story 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep understanding of Royal Naval history and collections • Operational excellence of sites • Recording, interpreting and expressing the traditions, values, behaviours and ethos that make the culture of the Royal Navy unique

3 Unlocking the Master Narrative

The Master Narrative is ambitious, wide-ranging and important, gathering together as it does the chronological and thematic story of the Royal Navy that the NMRN aims to tell. It is the glue that binds all sites together.

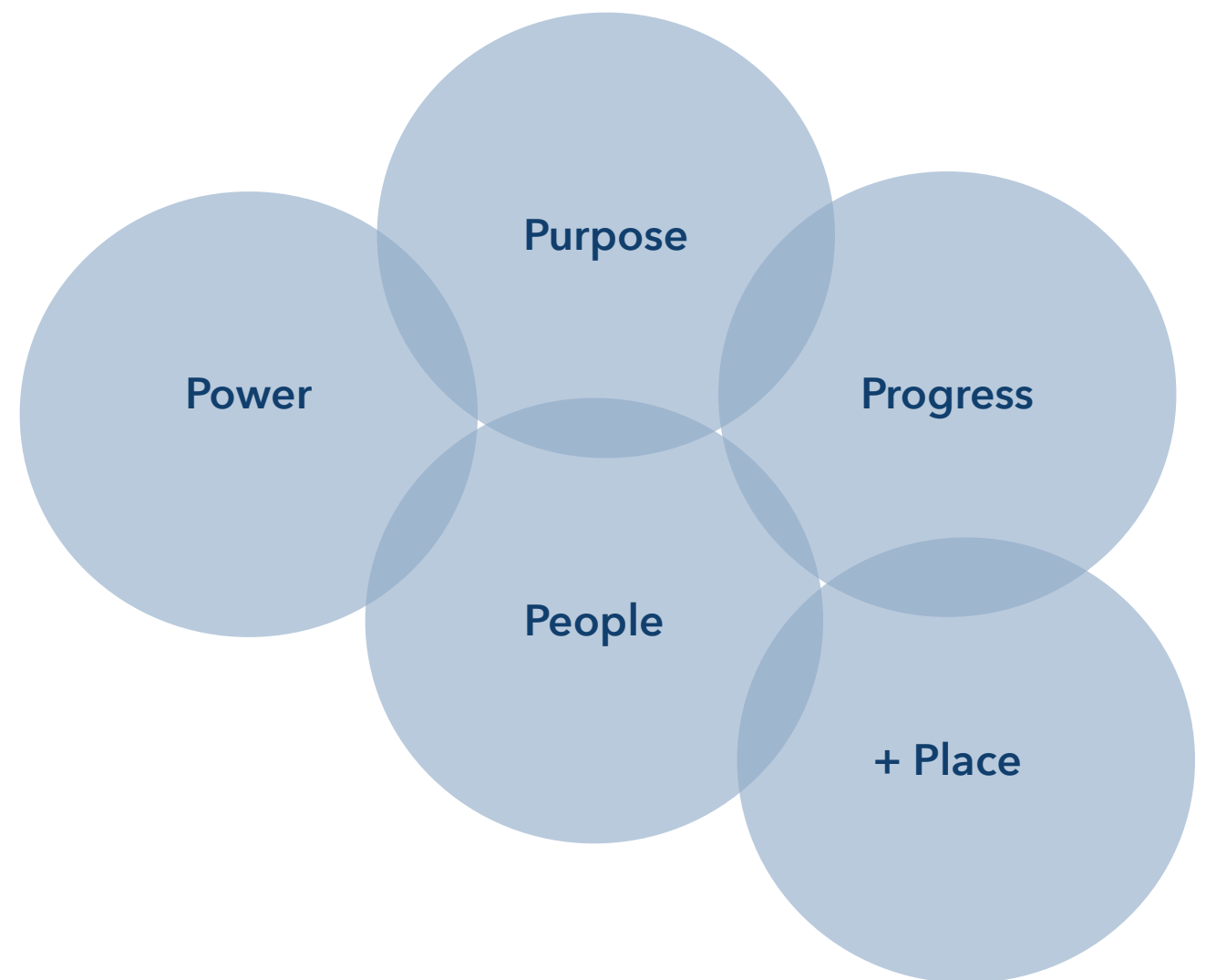
The Master Narrative spans a long period of time, from 625 to the present. At the moment some of our sites are dedicated to specific eras within this chronology, while others have a much broader focus.

- RNSM and FAAM are focused on the 20th and 21st centuries
- NMRN Portsmouth aims to tell the full sweep of RN history but given the lack of collections 625-1450 and 1450-1660, these periods are not given the same weight as the later ones
- NMRN Hartlepool's Georgian quayside setting with HMS Trincomalee at its heart is rooted in the 18th and 19th centuries. With the addition of RML 497 the chronology is broadened into the 20th-century story - up to and including the Second World War
- Explosion also focuses on these eras, as the site and collections support this strongly

A broadly chronological approach is taken at all the sites, intercut with thematic areas. Each of the NMRN's ships captures a moment, or a series of moments in time.

Some visitors feel more comfortable in interpretation which is grounded in a chronological framework, helping them to make sense of what can be a bewildering series of events, objects and stories. In future, we will consider making the chronological sweep of each site more explicit to visitors.

Within the Master Narrative are four key thematic threads - People, Purpose, Power and Progress. They provide a lens to view the Royal Navy story and help us to unpack new themes and stories in a consistent way across all sites. **Place** will become an additional thread to help unlock the significance of the NMRN sites, i.e. adjacency to RN bases, interpreting important built heritage and connecting to surrounding towns, cities and communities.



3 Master Narrative matrix

410-1066 Early medieval	1066-1485 Medieval	1485-1603 Tudors	1603-1714 Stuarts	1714-1837 Georgians	1837-1901 Victorians	1901-1910 Edwardian	1910-Present House of Windsor	
	625-1450	1450-1660	1660-1815	1815-1898	1898-1945	1945-1989	1990 onwards	
SURFACE						FLEET AIR ARM SUBMARINE SERVICE MARINES COMMADOS		
	MARINES ORIGINS							
Royal	Anglo-Saxons, Vikings and Normans	Tudors	Stuarts, Georgians	Georgians, Victorians	Edwardian, House of Windsor	House of Windsor	House of Windsor	
Navy	Origins	Towards Maturity	Empire Building	Great Power	World at War	Cold War	Changed World	
Personnel	Soldiers at sea	Mariners at war	Volunteers and pressed men	Career sailors	Citizen sailors	Professionals	Specialists	
NMRNP		Mary Rose (1511) Mary Rose Museum (1510 -present)	HMS Victory (1765) Victory Gallery (1765-Present) Sailing Navy Exhibition	HMS Warrior (1860) Sailing Navy Exhibition	HMS M.33 (1915) HMS Gallery (Last 100 years) LCT7074 (1942) outside D Day Story	HMS Gallery Mary Rose Museum (1510 -present)	HMS Gallery	
NMRNH			Fighting Ships Exhibition	HMS Trincomalee (1817) Georgian Quayside	RML 497 (1942) Wingfield Castle (1934)			
FAAM					FAAM Aircraft	FAAM Aircraft Carrier Experience Concorde (1969)	FAAM Aircraft	
RNSM					Holland I (1901) X24 (1943) John Fieldhouse Exhibitions	HMS Alliance (1947) John Fieldhouse Exhibitions Polaris (1968)	John Fieldhouse Exhibitions	
EXPLOSION			Grand Magazine (1771)	Explosion Galleries (1815 onwards) The story of naval firepower exhibitions		Night Hunters of the Coastal Forces Motor Torpedo Boats WWII		
HMS CAROLINE					HMS Caroline (1914)			

The matrix above illustrates how NMRN's Master Narrative chronology is delivered across NMRN sites.

3 Types of experience

Good interpretation offers many different types of experience, taking the visitor on an emotional and physical journey. There will be variations and layers in how the experience is designed physically, in density of information, in tone, in levels of emotional and intellectual engagement, and in potential for interaction with those in the visitors' own group and with other visitors.

At NMRN, the different physical elements of the sites, allied with the digital offer and NMRN publications all provide a whole different set of experiences and choices for visitors. These should always be considered as part of the whole visitor journey.

- Onboard ships, planes or carrier experiences, as well as costumed interpretation elsewhere on site, are for visitors a 'moment' in time, wholly immersive and engaging, a chance to connect with the people who lived, worked and fought on those ships or aircraft
- Galleries which give context to these 'moments' are more thoughtful but also connect with personal stories
- The spaces in between onboard/aircraft experiences and galleries can be used to give moments of contemplation, a chance to rest or digest what has been seen
- The NMRN's website complements or extends an experience, reaches a wider audience and broadens awareness
- NMRN publications can complement a visit and/or allow for more detail and depth

3 People-focussed interpretation

People will become the main focus of NMRN's interpretation. This means putting our visitors at the heart of what we do, but equally putting people at the heart of the stories we tell and how we tell them.

Across our sites and in all our interpretation, the NMRN will continue to tell the stories of ordinary and extraordinary lives. As everyone who works in museums knows, people connect to people. Personal stories provide our visitors with a way in to the 'big' narratives we are telling. They help our visitors to make their own personal connections across time and place and most critically help visitors understand that people in the past were the same as them.

As well as embedding people's stories throughout our interpretation, it's also critical to use people to deliver interpretation, providing as many opportunities for onsite encounters with real people as possible.

The NMRN's existing costumed interpretation is very popular with our visitors - in Portsmouth on HMS Warrior, as observed during the Dockyard Alive programming series and also at Hartlepool. We will build on this where possible, involving not just costumed interpreters but also other staff members, volunteers, naval veterans and 'meet the curator or conservator' public programming

Promoting people is critical - both by bringing out more personal stories across all of the sites and by putting the visitor at the heart of a visitor experiences.



3 Creating a sense of place

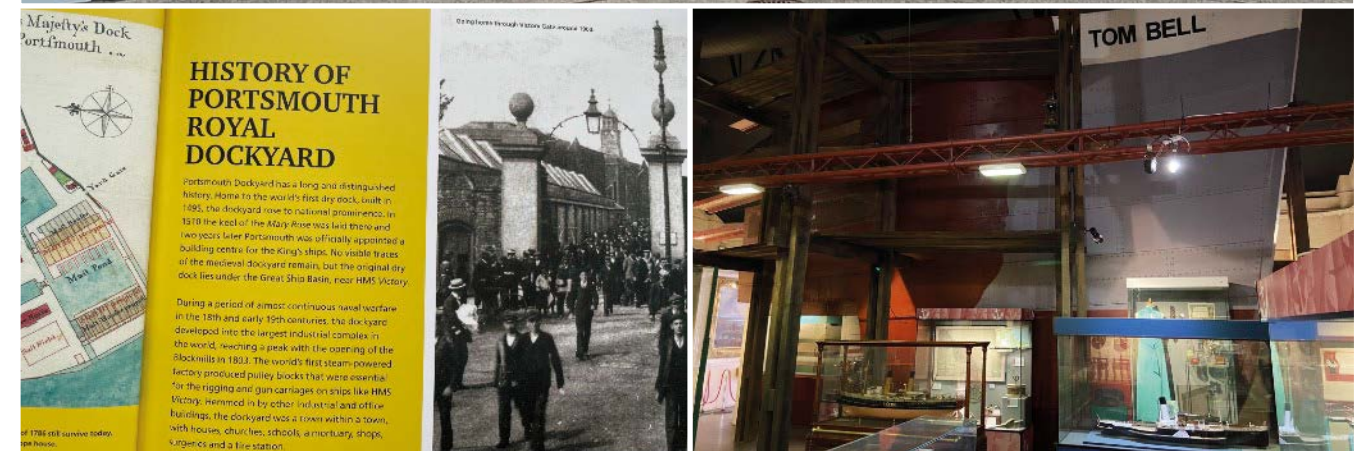
Place-based interpretation will be made more prominent, drawing out connections with the Royal Navy, the dockyard, the air base.

NMRN Portsmouth, RNSM and FAAM sites have strong adjacencies with Royal Navy and MOD bases today. Explosion and Hartlepool have historical connections, Priddy's Hard as an armaments depot and Hartlepool as a historic dockyard within a strong shipbuilding community.

All sites do interpret place in one way or another, but it is inconsistent, varies in quality and can be easily missed by visitors:

- NMRN Portsmouth - through guide book/panels on exterior viewing area outside the Figureheads Gallery
- RNSM - through guide book/exterior panel
- FAAM - both air base viewing areas have little or no interpretation
- Explosion - in gallery, but temporary in nature of presentation
- Hartlepool - in the attached Museum of Hartlepool

Consistently promote interpretation relating to the significance of place across each site. Let visitors know that they might see naval personnel on HMS Victory or in the viewing area at FAAM going about their daily duties, this is part of interpreting the Royal Navy today. This is a unique window on RN activity that NMRN can interpret, it can be an engaging part of the experience, an exciting and memorable moment.



3 On-board experiences

The on-board experiences are the significant 'walk in the past' moments for visitors at all NMRN sites, especially when led by veterans or costumed interpreters. The presentation of our historic fleet is exceptional, and the conservation of the ships impressive.

Research consistently identifies the opportunity to step on to historic vessels and craft as one of our USPs. Being able to board a ship or submarine and walk in the shoes of RN personnel past and present is unique yet also ties our sites together. The custodianship, conservation and interpretation of these is a core NMRN activity.

Bring into line across all sites, removing mannequins and anything that detracts from the core theme and message. People the spaces by using more theatrical techniques, props, audio as illustrated on HMS Victory, HMS Warrior and HMS M33 which are preserved as time capsules to specific moments in time.



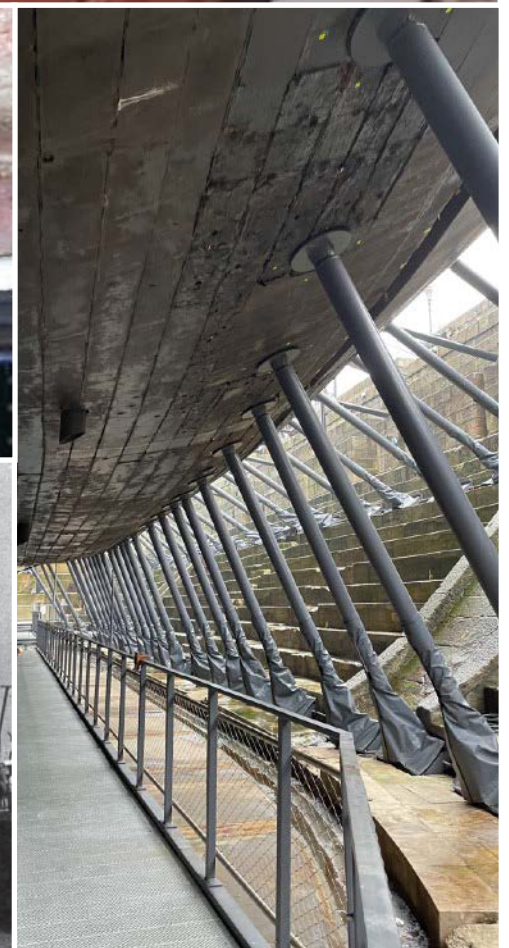
3 Conservation

Conservation is a key part of the NMRN story and a major part of the organisation’s activity, conserving historic vessels and collections as unique records of the Royal Navy’s history.

Their conservation also allows the public to continue to go on board. Walking around a historic ship or submarine, or sitting in a historic aircraft, are one of the most often identified highlights by our visitors and in addition, are an experience that links all the NMRN sites together. NMRN’s work in this area will be more widely appreciated by our visitors, by increasing public understanding that conservation work is not just, as our Head of Conservation puts it, “about beetles”.

The conservation story is already told as part of the interpretation of HMS Victory in Portsmouth and with the Conservation Area being on open-view at FAAM. However, this story will be told more strongly, and tied in more purposefully to STEM subjects. This can be linked to specific ships - for example at Hartlepool the ongoing work on HMS Trincomalee and the Wingfield Castle - but also to smaller items in our collections.

Our collections range from art to uniforms, flags and medals to archives, medical equipment to weaponry, there are so many facets of conservation work that is interesting to visitors.



3 Hidden and contested histories

“People talk about hidden histories, they’re not actually hidden, they’re simply hard to access, mostly through historic neglect....”

Ray Costello in NMRN’s 2020 Black History Month podcast
“In Conversation: Examining the Evidence”

As Ray Costello remarks, these stories are already in our collections and narratives, they just need to be made accessible. There is currently good content on the NMRN website relating to black, Asian and minority ethnic history, and to a lesser extent to LGBTQ+ experiences, but it is hard to access and needs to filter across into interpretation within galleries and across public programming. We cannot wait until a gallery is refurbished or replaced to do this, there are many ways to include these stories now.

At the moment, the role of the Royal Navy in both supporting and then suppressing the slave trade is uppermost when we have explored black history and the Royal Navy, but in fact this strand also encompasses the identification and inclusion of the experiences of black sailors and their families as well as many other stories of minority experiences in the Royal Navy.

Similarly NMRN has recently foregrounded women’s experiences, for example with its exhibition Women and the Royal Navy: Pioneers to Professionals at FAAM and with the display of Eliza Bunt’s diary at Hartlepool, but there could be more done to embed women’s experiences in more of our galleries and public programming.

The NMRN will follow the lead of the Royal Navy in being more explicit about LGBTQ+ experiences within naval history in the past and in the present.

Express different perspectives and interpretations of the past, present and future to engage new and diverse audiences.

When interpreting hidden and contested histories, it is worth considering:

- Do they fall within our (expanded) Master Narrative and connect to our collections, so we are coming from a position where we have knowledge, collections and stories to support this interpretation?
- That there is a focus on weaving these stories into existing interpretation as well as including them in any major interpretation overhaul or new galleries
- That there is transparency and honesty about the challenges we face but also how we address these challenges
- That there is accurate collections cataloguing which will enable staff to find relevant objects and stories
- A focused new acquisitions policy
- Mapping where knowledge on these subjects can be sourced both internally and also externally, in the form of potential academic advisors
- Ensuring we build in community consultation from the beginning where appropriate
- Ensuring that when we are considering any new interpretation that it addresses these subjects up front, and ensure our public programming does too
- Stories in the context of the time, interpreting past, present and future in an open and transparent way

3 Sharing knowledge and expertise, creating connections

NMRN museums work collaboratively to make the most of their collections and subject expertise both internally across departments and externally on partnerships projects.

Interpretation and associated public programming is currently planned and developed across NMRN according to whether it is temporary or permanent.

The Central Public Programming Panel identify themes and strands which inform development at each NMRN site for both temporary exhibitions and public programming, while the development of permanent exhibitions and site masterplanning falls within the remit of each site's General Manager.

The work of the Public Programming Panel, and larger developments in terms of permanent exhibitions and masterplanning, will be informed by the Interpretation Strategy. Its recommendations can help identify themes and stories to inform everything from one-off public programming events right up to the reinterpretation of whole sites.

For 2021, the following programming strands have been identified as themes:

- Collecting and Conservation
- Royal Navy (Jubilee/Royal Connections)
- Expedition and Exploration (HMS Challenger/climate change)
- Our Island Nation (Armada, nationalism)

The sharing of subject and collections knowledge is essential to the development of good interpretation, both internally and externally.

Knowing who knows what about what within our organisation is important. It's worth remembering that this is not just within a specific team. The Collections & Research team are working on an NMRN 'knowledge audit' at the time of writing.

In addition, a central register relating to knowledge on NMRN's narrative, collections and stories held externally, in other museums, universities etc, but also veterans and community groups will be developed with input from the Research, Access and Learning Committee, and will be particularly useful when interpreting hidden and contested histories.

Related to this is the need for a centrally-held document mapping collections in UK and further afield which overlap and are linked with those of the NMRN. This is not just in the obvious places such as Royal Museums Greenwich, Imperial War Museums and RAF Museum. This will be useful in terms of potential object loans in and out and sharing information on collections and narratives. A significant piece of work, but as well as enabling us to make connections nationally and internationally to benefit both future exhibition development and curatorial knowledge, it will also have other benefits, for example improving knowledge and perceptions of NMRN, potential collaborations and cross-marketing.

3 Integrating thought provoking collections

Creating experiences inspired by museum collections and illustrating stories through the integration of both tangible and intangible assets will help deliver the Master Narrative across the museum sites.

There is no doubt that NMRN's collections are internationally significant in telling the story of the Royal Navy. We use our collections in many ways to tell many different stories.

- NMRN's ships and aircraft are the big stars - it's important to make sure smaller scale collections are not lost by making strong associations - displaying them close to or around the large scale object where appropriate, or making sure that there is better signposting between connected big objects and smaller ones
- More effort will be focussed on contemporary collecting, tied into the Interpretation Strategy and Master Narrative
- Our acquisitions policy will be adhered to ensure that new acquisitions meet criteria identified in NMRN's Collections Development Strategy, and fill gaps or tell new stories
- NMRN's collections 'belong' to the whole museum but are not necessarily dispersed across our different sites in the most logical way. We will explore ways of linking related objects held at different sites together, and how collections could be better employed across the different locations

In order for the collections to be interpreted in the best way possible, they need to be easily accessed digitally.

There is a significant amount of work being done by NMRN to development an effective collections database. The intention is that this should be made public facing when appropriate. We will make this a priority, both internally and externally.

NMRN is a museum with an amazing collection. This presents opportunities to tackle difficult issues using collections more effectively, and providing a 'safe space' for conversation and debate.

3 Approach and design language

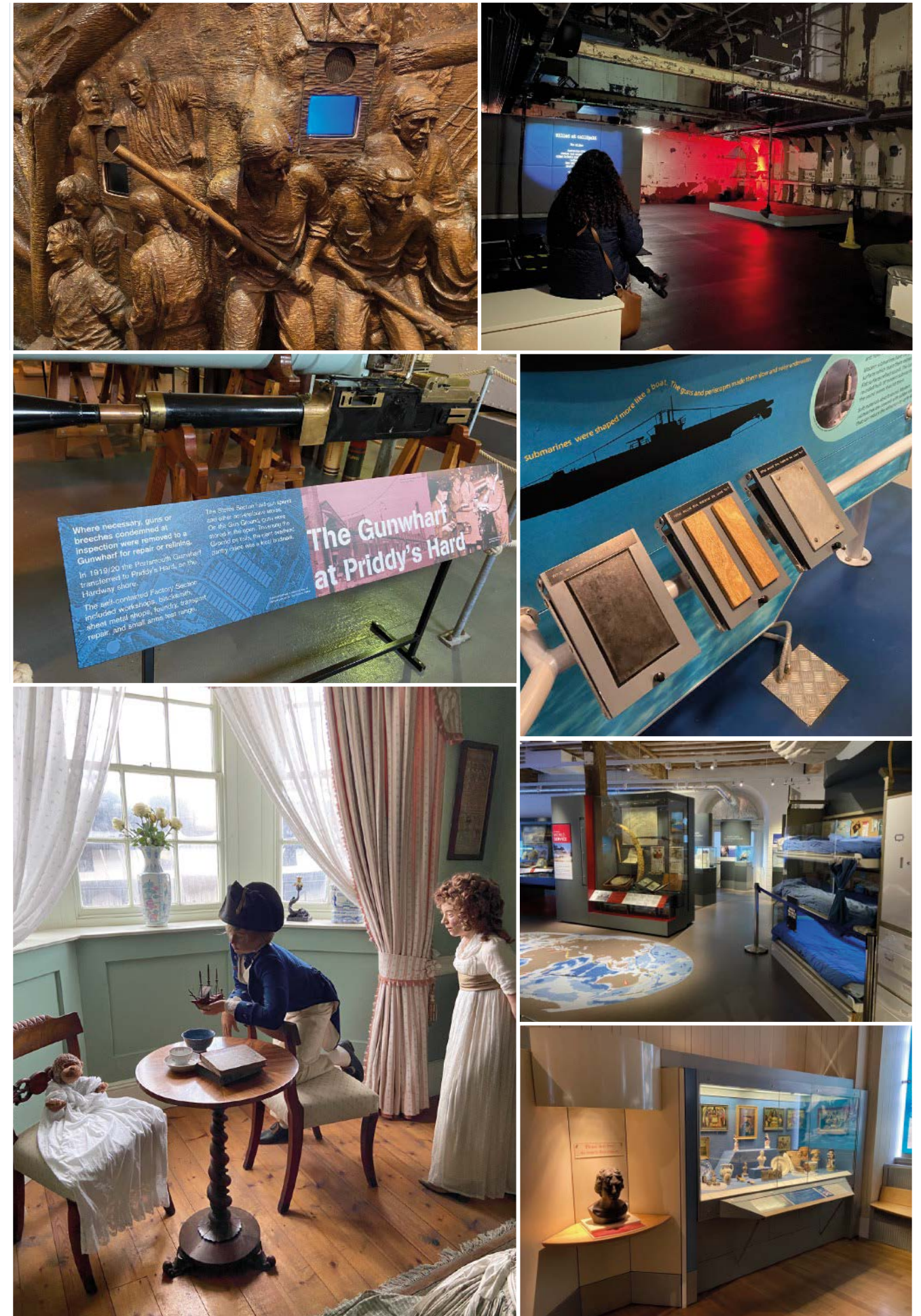
The development of a unique design language for NMRN that is not prescriptive but brings harmony to interpretation, visual language and communication can build NMRN's identity and improve the overarching experience for visitors.

Commissioning a range of design consultants over time has meant that many different design styles have evolved at all sites. The build quality is generally very high and although dated in places, has withstood the test of time.

The presentation of interpretation can be varied, and will be less formulaic in future exhibitions, offering a variety of interpretative experiences for wide-ranging visitors.

A good example of this is on M33 at Portsmouth, where the fabric of the ship is creatively used as a canvas for storytelling through audio visual media.

NMRN will review our approach to design to create the development of a unique design language.





Part 4

Take Action: Interpretation Strategy

4 Developing interpretation

Interpretation is at the heart of everything that we do. It connects us to audiences through quality communication, taking our collections and assets and drawing out stories to share through a variety of interpretative touch-points.

This section of the strategy sets out the interpretative framework for NMRN and includes the following:

- Manifesto for interpretation
- Context for interpretation
- Visitor-centred experiences
- Visitor outcomes
- Overarching theme and key messages
- Content parameters
- Identifying common themes
- Exploring the themes

4 Manifesto for interpretation

The following list of guiding principles has been drawn up as a manifesto for NMRN interpretation and will be adopted across the organisation.

- Interpretation will reflect the history of the Royal Navy in the context of local, regional, national and global events
- People will always be at the centre of NMRN's interpretation:
 - telling of both ordinary and extraordinary lives
 - through public programming and online content to help visitors connect with those lives
 - by placing visitors and their journey at the heart of everything NMRN does
 - by providing as many opportunities for onsite encounters with real people as possible, with staff, volunteers, naval veterans and personnel, costumed interpreters, 'meet the curator or conservator' programming
- Interpretation will be accessible, diverse, multi-layered, engaging and provide multiple perspectives for a range of audiences and learning styles, meeting and exceeding their needs and expectations.
- The Master Narrative and Interpretation Strategy will draw the sites together to give coherence but allow individuality as well. Each site does not and cannot tell the whole story - but has its own unique angle
- Interpretation will underline the historical integrity, authenticity and uniqueness of NMRN objects and stories and connect to the Master Narrative
- Interpretation will link our collections and stories to their geographical, historic and chronological context while allowing visitors to make connections across time and space, as well as to other sites where appropriate
- Interpretation will not shy away from engaging with complex and difficult stories and controversial topics, but always be grounded in the NMRN's Master Narrative and collections
- Interpretation will be of a consistently high standard throughout NMRN, it will be innovative, multi-sensory and emotive
- Interpretation will be developed in a collaborative and integrated way across NMRN, engaging and involving staff throughout the organisation and external experts where appropriate
- Interpretation will follow a common approach both in terms of a thematic framework, standard, tone of voice and general design adopting some common elements to make improvements easier and quicker
- Interpretation will deal with tricky subjects (e.g. war, military history, death, politics, nationalism) by using an authentic voice to open up conversations, exposing people to different perspectives, but creating space for people to explore or be comfortable with their own views

4 Context for interpretation

Understanding the visitor experience in its broadest sense from the moment a person decides to visit, throughout their online, on-site and post-visit journey is imperative to providing comprehensive interpretation and positive visitor outcomes.

The scale of NMRN sites allow for multiple experiences to draw and engage wide-ranging audiences. Coherent visitor experience planning is the key, and visitor requirements must be considered at all stages of the visitor journey and how it forms a total experience. In essence, NMRN must move towards a visitor-centred approach.

Alongside core interpretation delivered on-board and in gallery, programmed events and activities and retail and commercial experience offerings are important. Ensure connectivity between the key points in a visitor journey to reinforce each site as a destination and therefore creating a seamless and coherent visitor journey. This can be continued off-site through souvenir guide books, other publications and digital outputs.

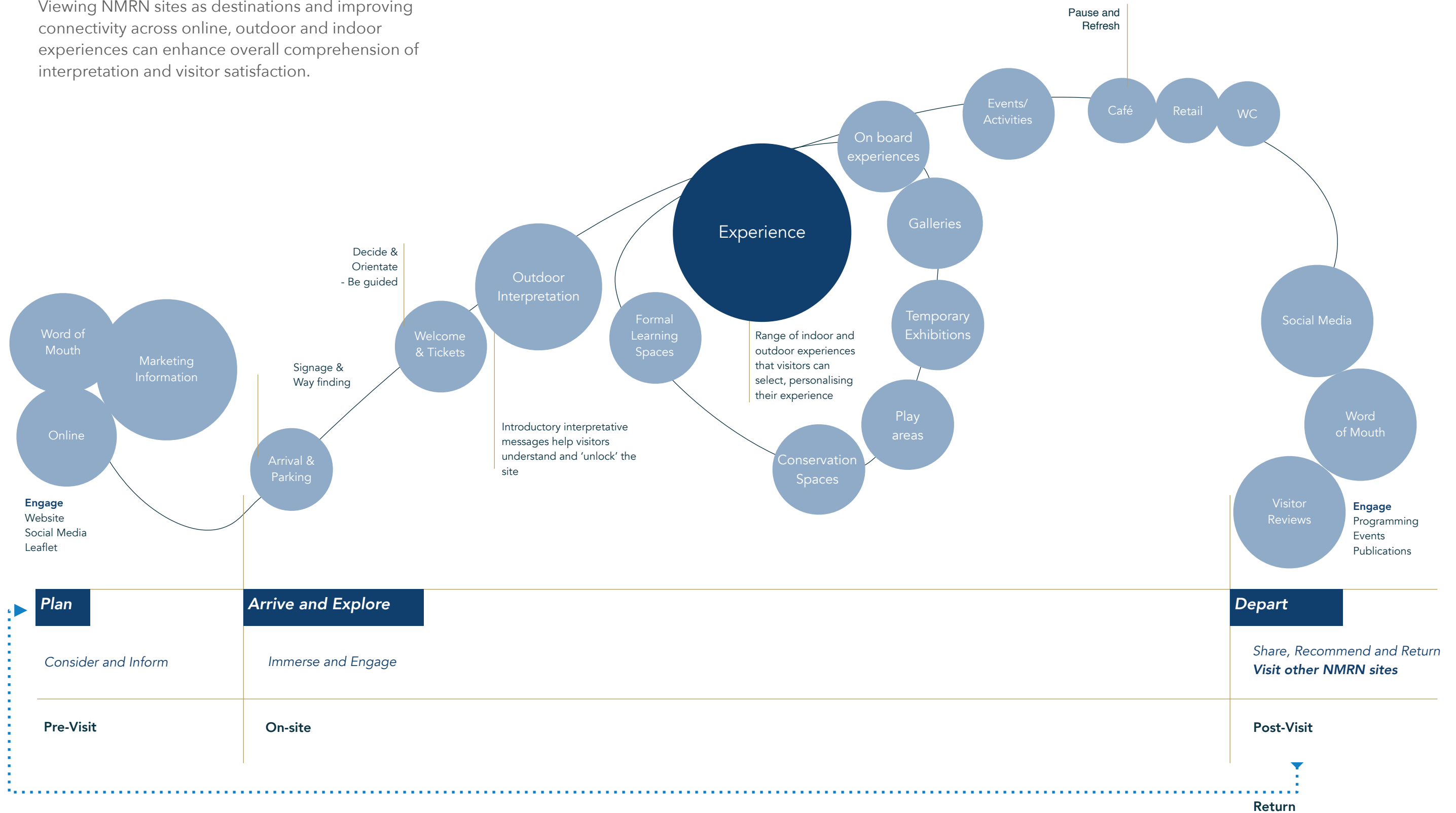
The value of quality interpretation can be leveraged on the website as a hook to trigger those visits and reach visitor who are not able to visit sites physically.

The diagram on the following page maps out an overview of a generic visitor experience journey as an example of the approach to visitor experience planning.

- **Making connections across sites is critical to broadening understanding and to help visitors make sense of the site as a context to storytelling.**
- **Sites can be complex in terms of ownership and operation. Remember that the visitor isn't aware of any of these factors, try to create seamless experiences with other stakeholders.**
- **Acknowledge realistic dwell times and encourage potential for repeat visits.**
- **Think about the spaces between exhibitions and the outdoor spaces. Create thresholds and stopping points to act as 'decompression chambers' in between galleries or historic ships to allow for interpretation to be assimilated by visitors, and for intermittent periods of rest.**

4 Visitor-centred experiences

Viewing NMRN sites as destinations and improving connectivity across online, outdoor and indoor experiences can enhance overall comprehension of interpretation and visitor satisfaction.



4 Visitor outcomes

Above all else, NMRN want their visitors to have 'extraordinary and enriching days out.' It's important that visitors leave having learnt more about the history of the Royal Navy and its significance.

Aims and objectives are identified for interpretation and used to evaluate and measure its success. Below are suggested outcomes for interpretation across all NMRN sites, however more generic, site specific, gallery or experience-focussed aims and objectives should be set in the development of new offers that are aimed at key audience segments. Speak to audiences, listen to them, find new ones, above all, put visitors at the heart of everything.

Learning objectives

After engaging with interpretation audiences will:

- understand more about The Royal Navy and it's position in history and on the world's stage
- understand and appreciate the significance of the historic fleet, collections and stories on display
- be encouraged to learn more

Behavioural objectives

After engaging with interpretation audiences will:

- be motivated to explore and expand their knowledge further
- be motivated to reflect and discuss with others (during a visit or beyond)
- return to see new exhibitions and to attend programmed events and activities
- get involved through memberships, volunteering and partnership opportunities
- confidently recommend NMRN to others via word of mouth and social media

Emotional objectives

After engaging with interpretation audiences will:

- be amazed by the scale and variety of quality experiences on offer
- feel transported as they experience the history or a 'future vision' of the Royal Navy
- be inspired and engaged by the stories and collections
- be moved by the stories told, from hardship to bravery and recognition
- feel connected to people through personal stories and encounters with real people
- be surprised by the variety of innovative, immersive and interactive opportunities
- be impressed by the conservation work that NMRN do to preserve the historic fleet and collection for future generations
- Feel connect to The Royal Navy and NMRN
- feel a sense of pride (for naval personnel and veterans)

4 Overarching theme and key messages

NMRN is a national museum because it is the custodian of the Royal Navy story and keeper of significant Royal Navy collections. At the highest level, the Royal Navy is the unique overarching interpretative theme that all NMRN museums share.

Although this may appear obvious, not all museums have a unique overarching theme, which is advantageous for reasons of identity and recognition. To reinforce identity and connectedness across the organisation and its role and relationship with the Royal Navy, each site will deliver the same overarching key message, preferably at a point early in the visitor experience.

Not all visitors have prior knowledge of the Royal Navy. Don't be afraid to state the obvious to make your interpretation more accessible.

- **Connect themes, stories and collections back to the central Royal Navy theme**
- **Link museums through marketing and online platforms and together tell a holistic Royal Navy story**
- **Consider local, national and international threads**

The following key messages have been identified to support all NMRN interpretation:

The Royal Navy operates on the sea, under the sea in the skies and on land

The Royal Navy is the oldest British military service, through it we can chart the story of Britain and its place in the world

How The Royal Navy is relevant to us today and in shaping our future lives

Why The Royal Navy maintains a fleet of ships, submarines and aircraft and what that means for the country and wider world

NMRN cares for and conserves collections relating to the Royal Navy and its personnel

NMRN museums together tell the whole Royal Navy story

4 Content parameters

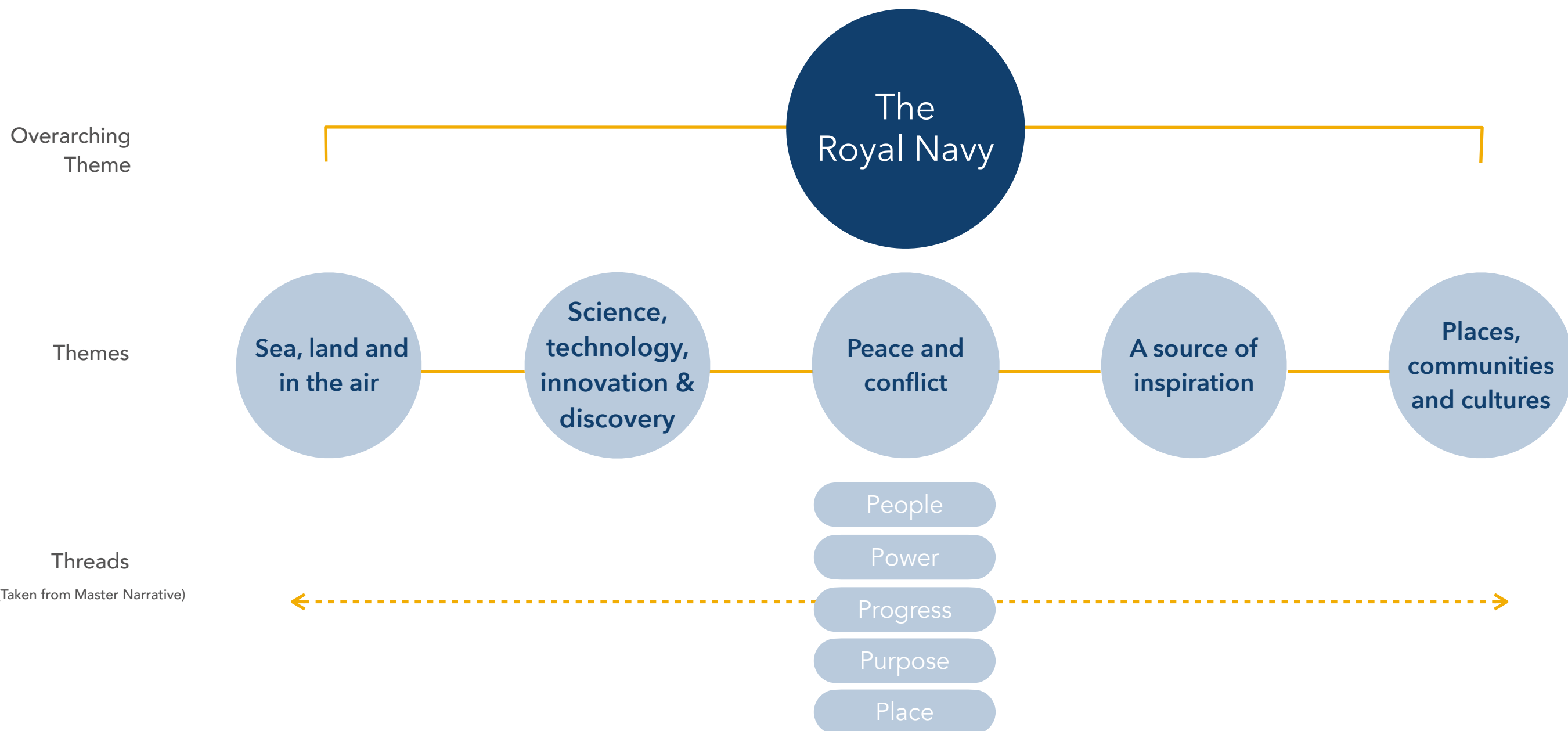
NMRN’s goal is ‘to promote the traditions and public understanding of the Royal Navy and its constituent branches, past, present and future.’

Each NMRN site has its own unique characteristics, focus and angle in supporting this goal. The table below outlines how each site can effectively deliver elements of the Master Narrative weighted towards its specific focus.

<p>NMRN Portsmouth</p>	<p>The story of the Royal Navy from Tudor times to today, in a historic setting next door to the modern Navy’s base in Portsmouth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Come aboard the world’s most famous warship, HMS Victory, as well as exploring historic HMS Warrior and HMS M.33 • Learn about the global history and impact of the Royal Navy through our ships and in our exhibitions • Find out about the long connection between the Royal Navy and Portsmouth
<p>Royal Navy Submarine Museum</p>	<p>The story of the Royal Navy’s submarines and submariners and their underwater operations from the early 20th century onwards.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discover submarines inside and out, by climbing on to HMS Alliance and visiting our exhibitions • Explore the underwater world of submarines in the 20th and 21st centuries
<p>Explosion Museum of Naval Firepower</p>	<p>The story of how the Royal Navy was supplied, told at a historic site which provided the Navy’s firepower for 200 years.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out how the Royal Navy was supplied, from torpedoes to tinned food, from shipbuilding to sails and from rifles to rum • Inspired by the wartime munitions workers who worked here, discover the stories of the people who have equipped and supplied the Royal Navy • Starting with our historic buildings, explore the places which supported the Royal Navy at home and abroad
<p>Fleet Air Arm Museum</p>	<p>The story of the Navy’s Fleet Air Arm from the early 20th century to today through a significant collection of aircraft.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out about the flying Royal Navy, from the invention of flight until today • See more than 90 aircraft spanning over 100 years, some of which you can climb inside • Discover the stories of the Royal Navy’s pilots and planes and those who got them into the air
<p>NMRN Hartlepool</p>	<p>The story of the world’s most powerful navy from the mid-18th century through the peak of the British Empire to the end of the Second World War.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit HMS Trincomalee, a Georgian-era ship of the British Royal Navy built in India • Discover how the Royal Navy became the largest in the world, from Georgian times until the Second World War • Inspired by the North-East’s famous shipbuilding industries, find out how ships are built

4 Identifying common themes

The purpose of themes is to provide an interesting common focus for interpretation, and to identify stories and display material that can be universally shared across the organisation.



4 Exploring the themes

1. The Royal Navy on Sea, Land and in the Air

The different fighting arms of Royal Navy have always worked together, and telling this seamless story can unite the NMRN museums and collections.

Suggested Applications

Short term:

- **Object portals** feature assets from one site on another, signposting and spring boarding one to another to aid understanding and comprehension of NMRN as a whole. Identify spotlight objects that can provide an entry point to help visitors understand what is on offer at each site e.g. flying helmet displayed in HMS gallery at NMRN Portsmouth (pictured right) could direct visitors to FAAM. This was a successful approach when a FAAM helicopter was displayed at Portsmouth.

Medium term:

- **Falklands 40 temporary exhibition** Develop a temporary exhibition on the Falklands campaign (40 year commemoration in 2022). All NMRN museums can tell the story of the Falklands through their collections from different angles at each site (40 years on) option to highlight them in situ or bring them together to form a temporary travelling exhibition (45 years on). It could cover contemporary relevance, impact, influence, legacy and illustrate a coordinated naval attack bringing together the NMRN sites.



Flying helmet

Worn by John Griffith during operations against the Japanese in the Pacific during 1945.

Consider:

Crews and Personnel

Strategy

Communication

Coordination

Skills

Working at sea

Life on board

Orders /discipline

Recreation and pastimes

Docks

Dockyards

Naval bases

4 Exploring the themes

2. Science, Technology, Innovation & Discovery

The Royal Navy has always innovated and explored, continually adopting new discoveries and technologies, but also through naval expeditions itself exploring and mapping the globe.

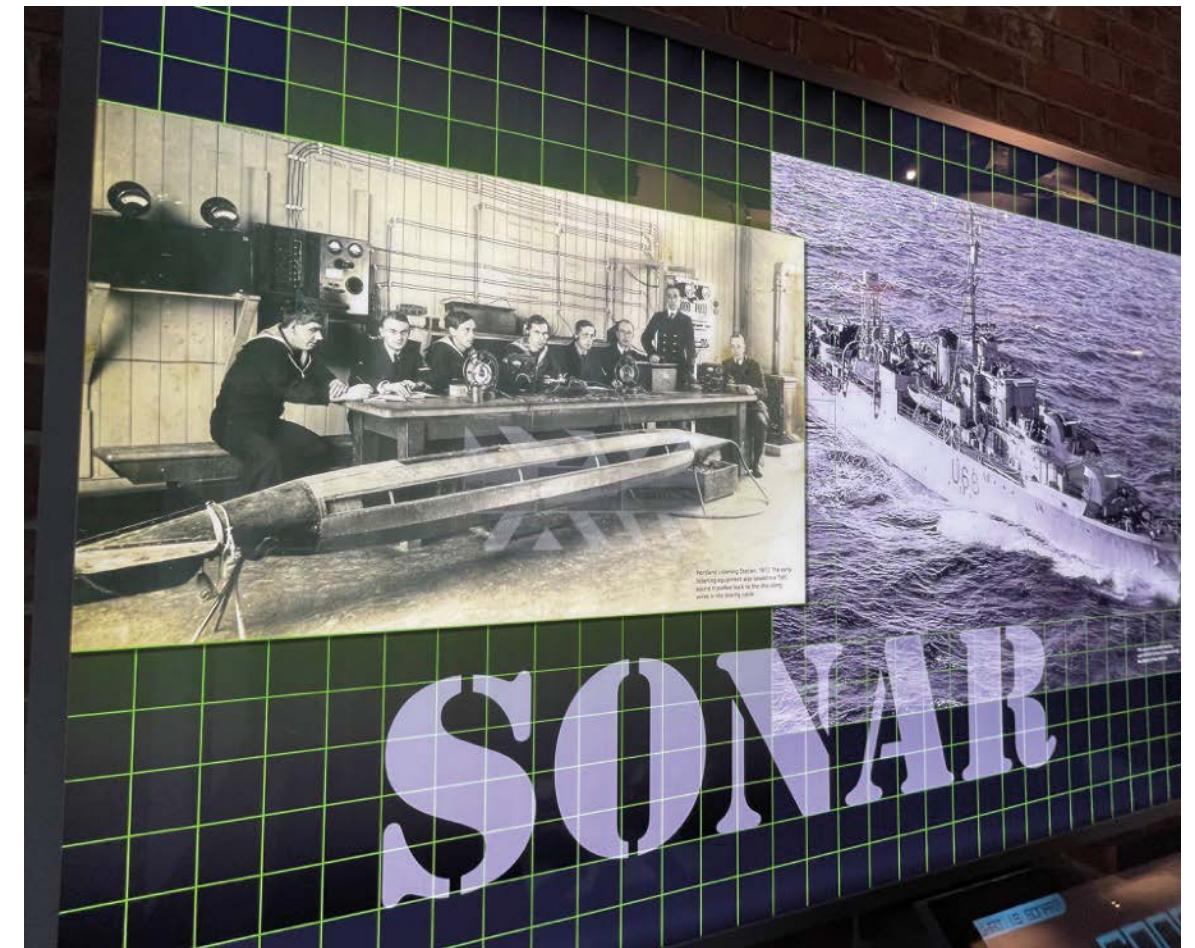
Suggested Applications

Short term:

- **Conservation blog** Continued updates to the conservation and collections blog that looks at the science of conservation around the historic fleet and NMRN collections.

Medium term:

- **Changing nature of warfare** Temporary Exhibition to compare past with present and future (Navy X).
- **Reinterpretations of history** through scientific advancement, e.g. the temporary exhibition in the Mary Rose Museum that has used DNA taken from human remains in the collection to interpret the diversity of the crew onboard when it was lost.
- **Interactive exhibit** comparing modern and historic technology and innovation.
- **Science fairs, museum hacks, maker events.**



Consider:

Exploration
Mapping Oceans
Technological innovation
Engineering
Powering ships
Scientific discovery
Astronomy

Sailing
Navigation/Weather
Climate Change
Cartography
Anthropology
Botany
Conservation

4 Exploring the themes

3. The Royal Navy during times of peace and conflict

While including the conflicts in which the Royal Navy took part, also interpreting the stories of the Royal Navy in its many peacetime roles.

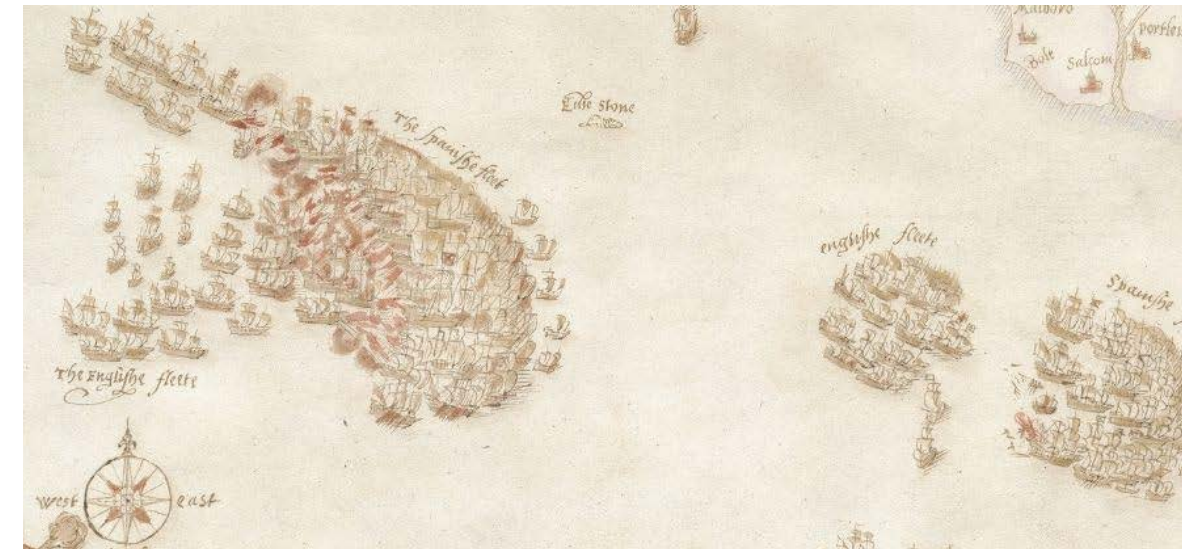
Suggested Applications

Short Term:

- **Armada Maps** touring exhibition could become a digital as well as touring exhibition. Maps could be animated creatively to tell the Tudor navy story. Special guides or catalogues could be published for temporary exhibitions to extend the visitor experience beyond the on-site experience and provide more depth and detail.

Medium term:

- **Social spaces** Introduce spaces within galleries for discussion/social interactions and reflection (also good for programming and education groups).
- **Programming and temporary exhibition around Royal Navy preparedness**, training and training ships.



Consider:

- **Securing the seas**
- **Protecting shores and maritime trade**
- **Guardians and diplomats**
- **Humanitarian force for good**
- **Global peacekeeper**
- **Fighting terrorism**
- **Peace Keeping**
- **Exploration**
- **Enterprise and adventure**
- **Nuclear Deterrent/Trident**
- **Saving Lives**
- **Injury and death**

- **Humanitarian Memorial**
- **Bomb disposal**

Conflicts:

- **Spanish Armada**
- **Trafalgar**
- **Gallipoli**
- **Battle of the Atlantic**
- **Cold War**
- **Falklands**
- **Afghan Wars**

4 Exploring the themes

4. The Royal Navy as a source of inspiration

The Royal Navy is a source of inspiration both for its own people and for others looking in.

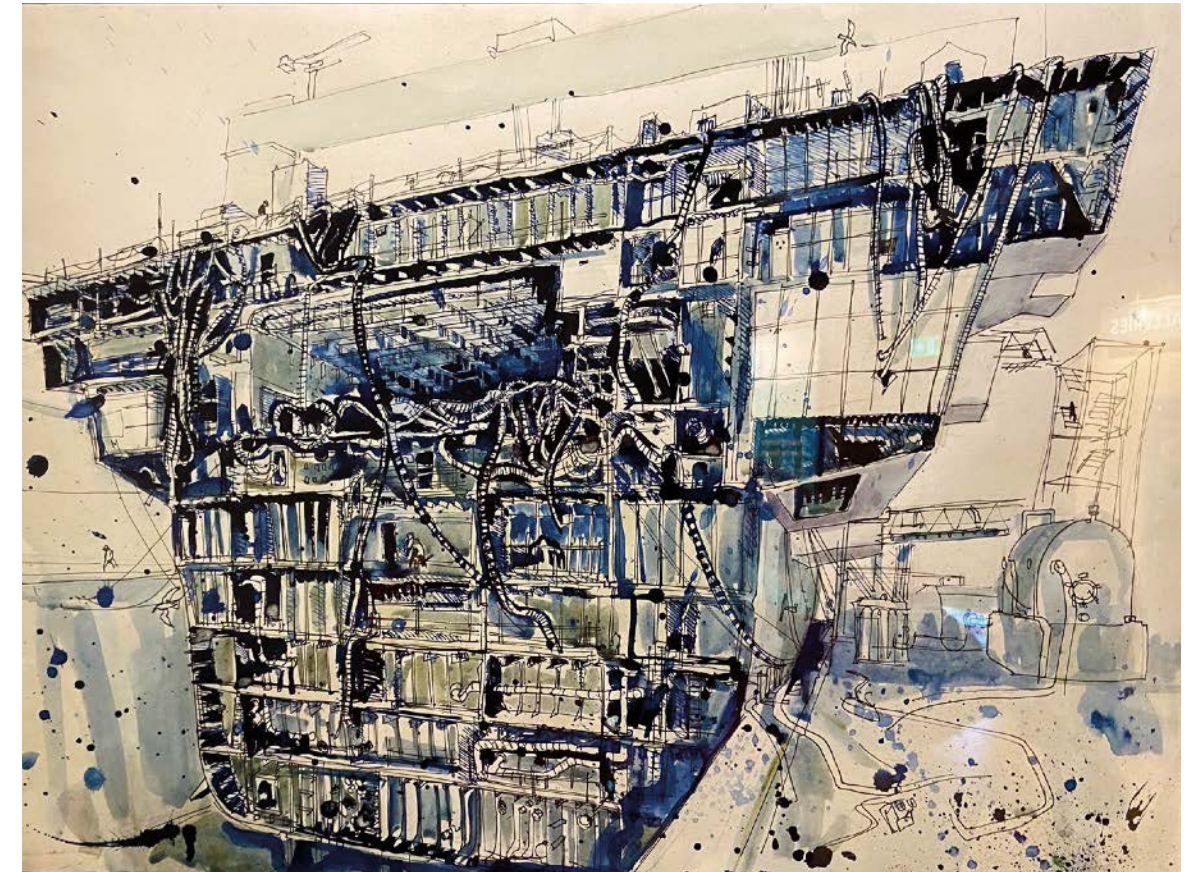
Suggested Applications

Short Term:

- **Creative performance**, music, poetry, artists in residence and craftspeople on site
- **Quick response pop up exhibits/events** - build on popular culture links
- **Artistic responses** to stories, sites, collections
- **Art trails**
- **Sailmaking/rope making activities** (as at Hartlepool)
- **Women & mythology of the sea** digital output around feminine imagery closely associated with the sea, including mermaids. Superstition that it's bad luck to have women on ships but in actual fact, there were women aboard RN ships. Ships are called she.

Medium Term:

- **Treasures of the NMRN temporary exhibition** which tours all museum sites outside Portsmouth e.g. with 10 objects. From naval portraits, to landscapes, seascapes and ships, documenting events, battles scenes or crew members using the items at their disposal to craft a token or memento.
- **Outdoor** projection/outdoor cinema/light shows
- **Green graffiti** (temporarily greening spaces)
- **Art interventions/takeovers**



Consider:

Craftsmanship in shipbuilding and decoration

Art and design

Music

Theatre

Folk art

Popular culture

Language, literature and poetry

Toys and games

Fashion, tattoos

Film and Drama

Sport

4 Exploring the themes

5. The Royal Navy shaping places, communities and cultures

Port cities and docks have shaped and been shaped by the Royal Navy, but so have places and communities across the UK and the globe, with a supply chain delivering people, ships and goods.

Suggested Applications

Short Term:

- **Eliza Bunt's diary** Digital output on recording her voyage on HMS Trincomalee from Sri Lanka to Portsmouth. Can explore the British female experience both of colonial life and of the Royal Navy
- **Local history events at Explosion** to attract local people to explore family connections with the site

Medium Term:

- **Place-based interpretation** on all sites close to points of entry - The significance of the Historic Royal Dockyard, Naval Port and Navy's history the in Portsmouth/Portsmouth Harbour, Yeovilton through time, Hartlepool Dockyard, Hard Gosport
- **Interventions in Nelson gallery** - stage a history hack, asking questions and inviting opinion and audience views before redeveloping the gallery
- **Costumed interpretation** on HMS Trincomalee (Master shipbuilder Jamsetjee Bomanjee Wadia)



Consider:

- Empire**
- Supply**
- Clothing**
- Food & drink**
- Ammunition**
- Shipbuilding**
- Weapons manufacture**
- Community/social history**
- Coordination**
- Communication**
- Working at sea**
- Docks**
- Dockyards**
- Naval bases**
- Naval families and Naval veterans**
- Language**



Part 5.1

Take Action Toolkit



THE
NATIONAL
MUSEUM

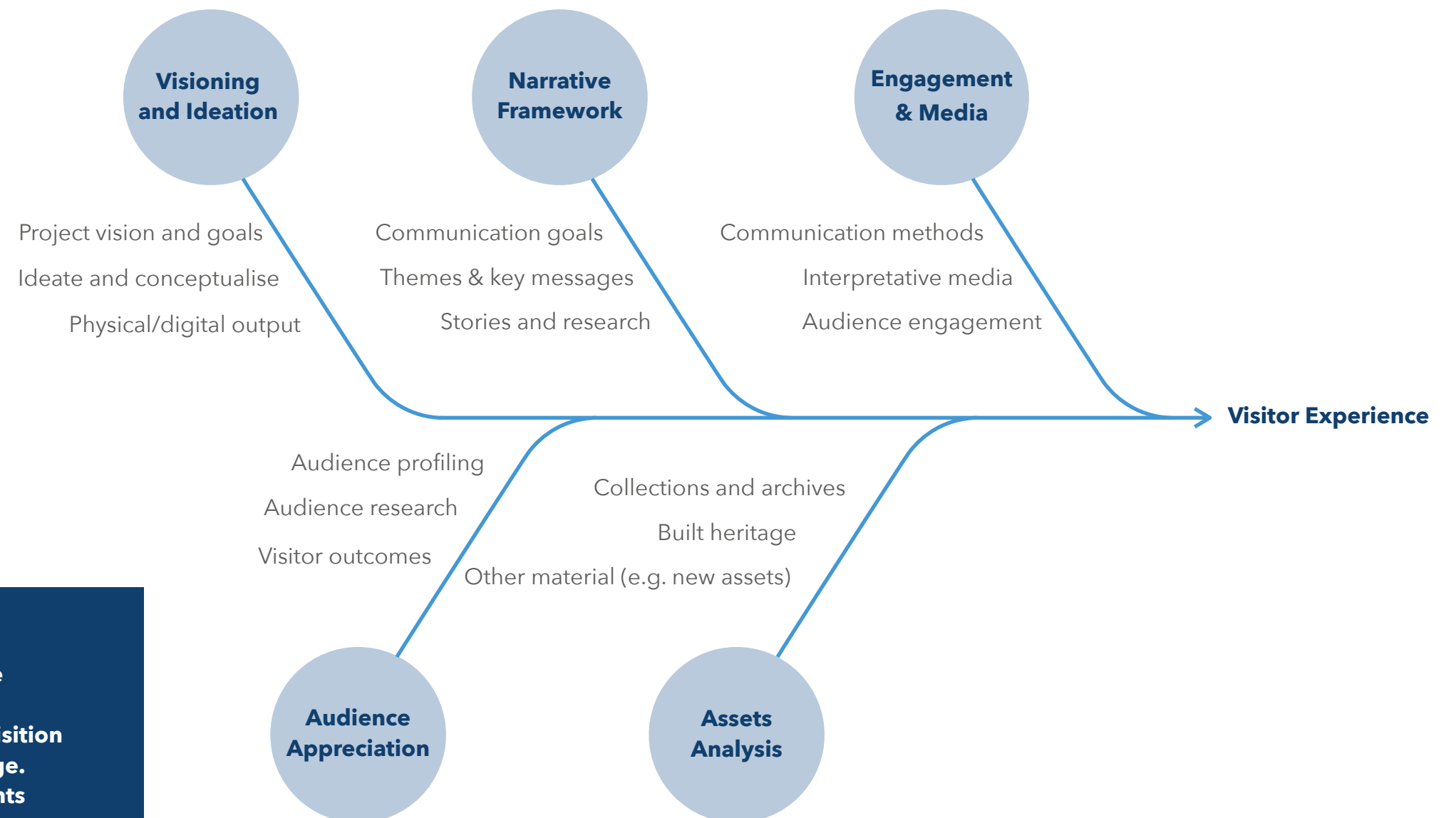


5 Interpretation toolkit

This interpretation toolkit outlines 5 key components intended to bring consistency to the interpretation planning and development process across NMRN museums and sites.

They are:

- Visioning and ideation
- Audience appreciation
- Narrative framework
- Assets analysis
- Engagement and media



Although ideally you would kick-off the process with visioning and ideation, in reality you might start with a new acquisition and therefore at the assets analysis stage. Make sure you review all the components and address those that are specific to your interpretation project.

Above: Stages and key components of building interpretation towards delivering a visitor experience.

5 Visioning and ideation

Start with your vision for the project and set realistic goals. What is the big idea?

- Establish the approach and output - digital, physical or outreach.
- Ask yourself Who? What? When? Where? How? questions.
- Write up a **simple statement** for your interpretation based on your big idea.

WHO?

Who is it for?
Who is it about?
Who do you need to help you achieve your goals?

WHAT?

What is it about?
What object or collection (tangible or intangible).
A theme, statement or question
What is the output?

WHEN?

When is it? Timeframe
When is it to be delivered?
Timescale

WHERE?

Where is it about?
Where is it to be delivered?

HOW?

How are you going to realise your vision and achieve your goals? Make a plan

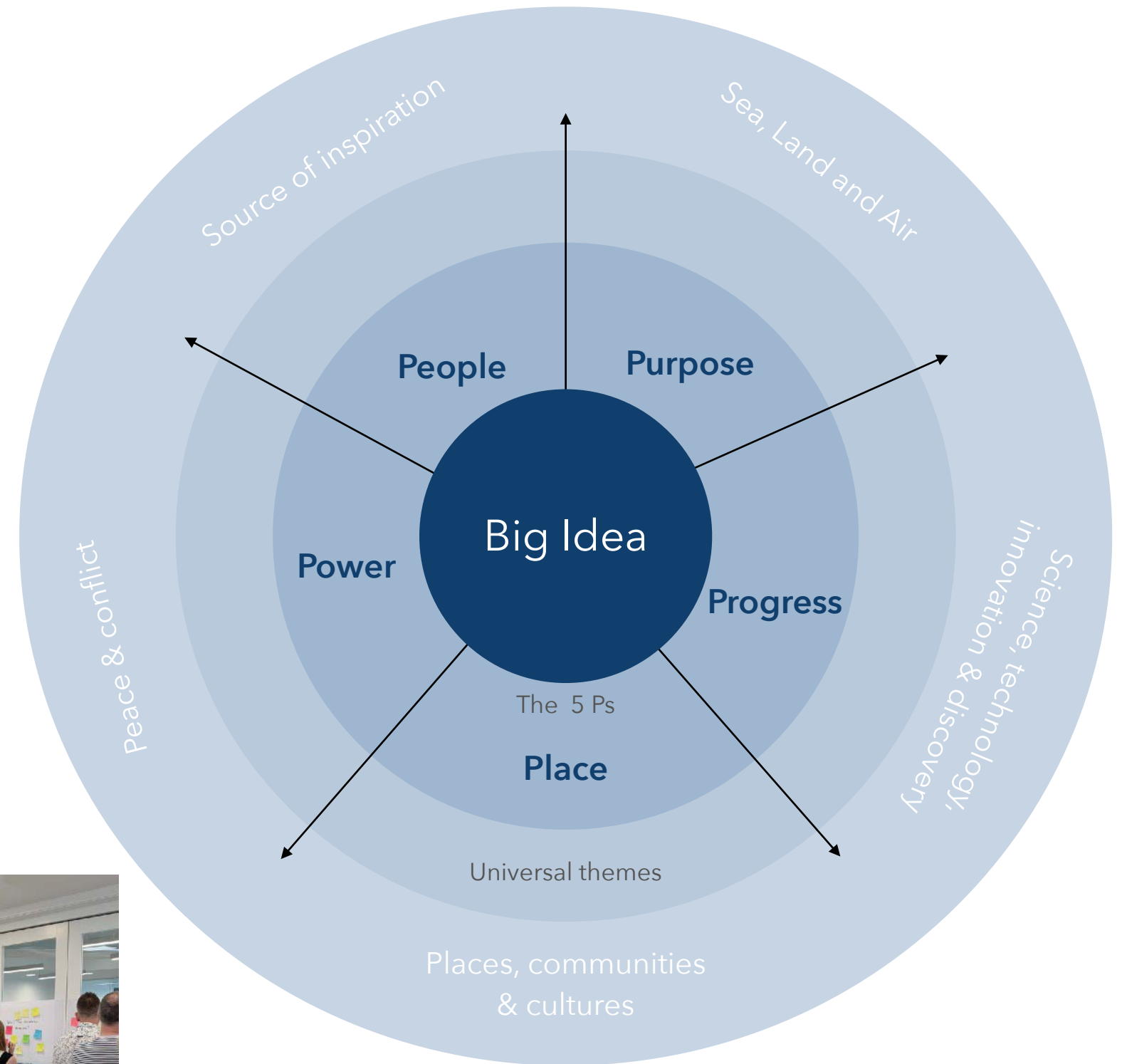
Set SMART goals for interpretation (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant/Resourced and Time-Bound).

Gather a team and follow a structured internal approvals process for the ongoing monitoring of interpretation.

5 Visioning and ideation

Explore your concept. Generate lots of ideas around your big idea. Create a mind map or set up an ideation workshop with your team.

- Individually write down as many words as possible that relate your **big idea**.
- Start with the **'5 Ps'** from the **Master Narrative** and use them as a lens to view your big idea.
- Does your big idea naturally fit into one of the **universal themes**? Use it to help interrogate your idea further.
- Now use the other universal themes to generate interesting ideas that you might have missed - create a more balanced all round view.
- Bring all the thoughts and ideas together, look for patterns, common themes, threads and interesting angles.
- Which ideas are most **significant** and have the potential to **reveal stories** that are worth telling?



Visualise your ideas by gathering inspiring images of the types of interpretation and experiences that you are aiming for. Ask the other members of the team to do the same. Create a visualisation board to your help evolve your vision.

Look out for emerging visitor experience trends - check outside of the heritage and cultural sector too.



Above: Start with your big idea and use the 5 P's and universal themes to generate as many ideas as possible.

Left: Gather a team in an ideation workshop, interrogate your big idea through inspiring **words** and **images**. Look for patterns, common themes, threads, interesting angles and interpretation outputs.

5 Audience appreciation

Take a visitor-centred approach when planning your interpretation. Meet audience needs and exceed their expectations.

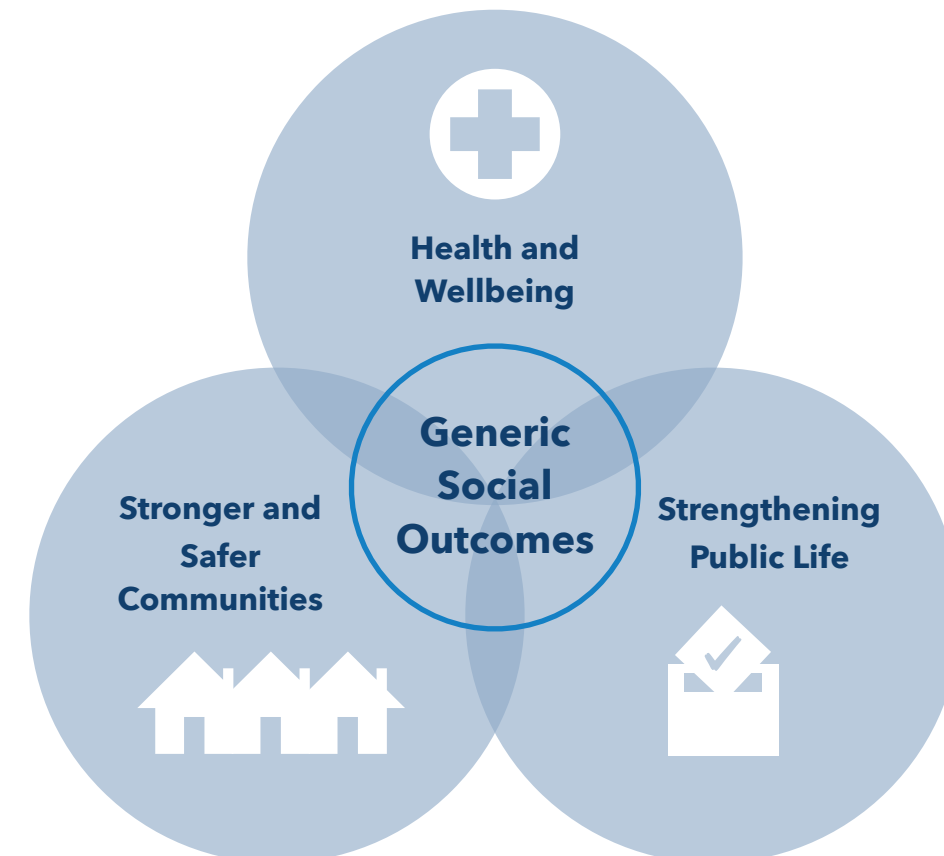
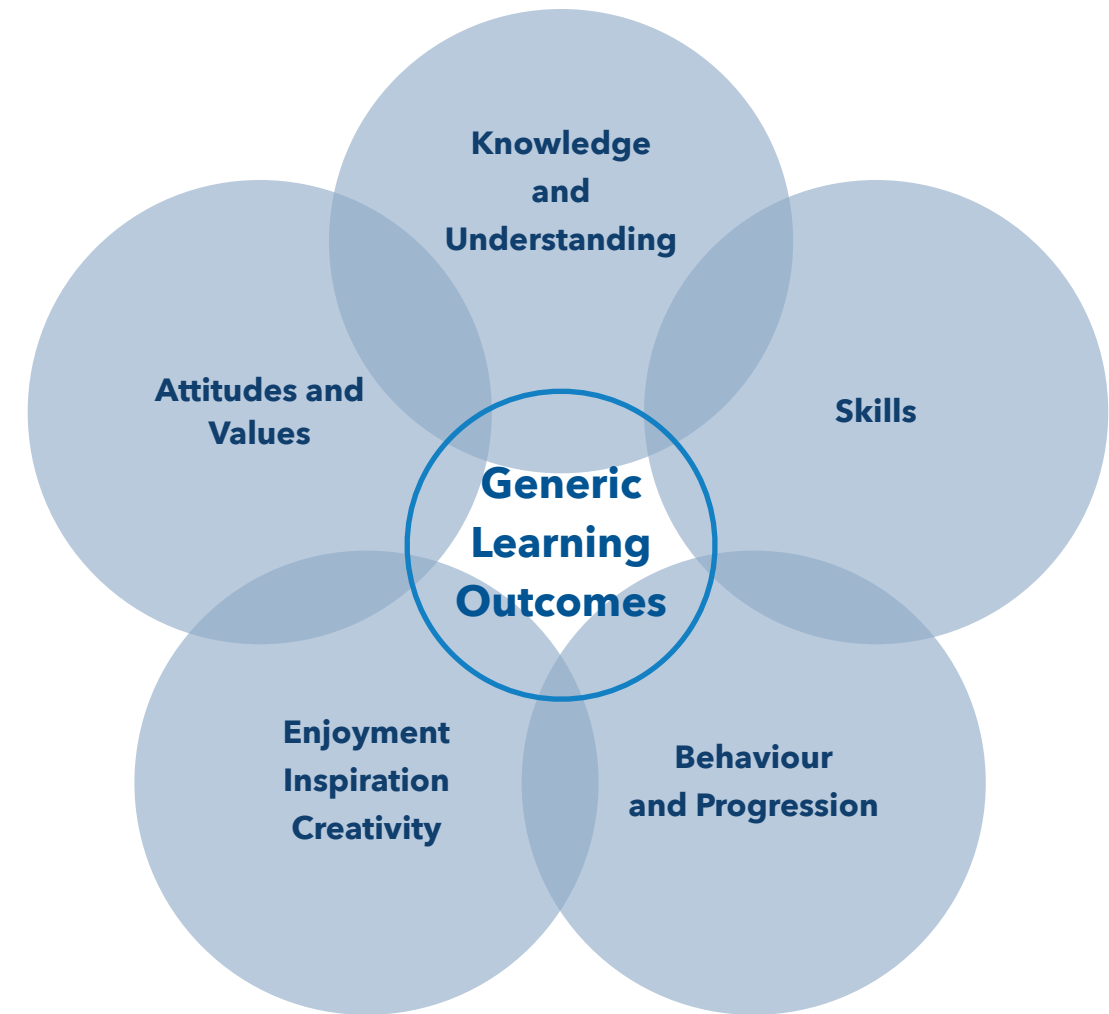
- Profile the **audiences** for who you are aiming interpretation
- Find out what your visitors want to do, think, feel, know
- Set visitor **outcomes**, reference the visitor outcomes on page 47 and review the generic learning and social outcomes (right)
- **Test** ideas with audiences, do quantitative and qualitative studies at appropriate times through the development of interpretation - from surveys to focus groups
- **Iterate** so that your ideas address visitor needs and expectations and then exceed them
- Work **collaboratively** on outreach, encourage co-curation, community curation, strengthen partnerships, and work with experts where appropriate

Factor in audience interests in planning museum exhibitions, programs, and services.

Rely on research to learn about customer needs, perceptions, and preferences.

Identify audience segments with different needs and interests and arrange programmes and experiences to satisfy each target segment.

Focus on market segments that you have a good chance of attracting and an advantage in serving.

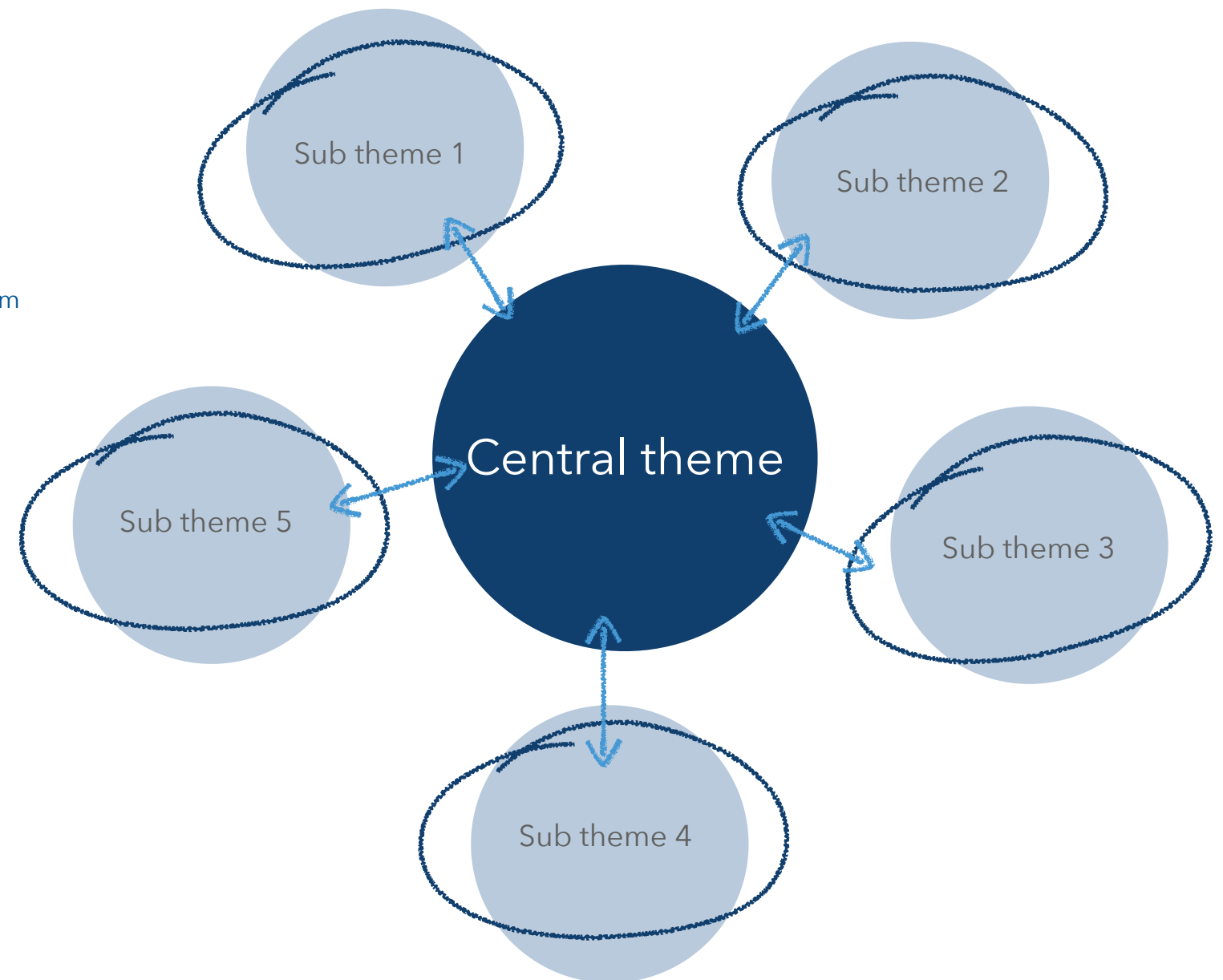


Top: Generic Learning Outcomes and Bottom: Generic Social Outcomes are key considerations for interpretation.

5 Narrative framework

Organise themes and sub themes for interpretation, creating a clear framework for storytelling. Consider the narrative framework within which your stories can unfold.

- Write a clear **thematic statement** and develop key messages for your central theme.
- Unpack the **next level of ideas** that you want to communicate to visitors through a series of sub themes - a good number of **sub themes** ranges from a minimum of three to a maximum of seven.
- Write an overarching statement to **outline** each sub theme.
- Set out three to five **key messages** you want to communicate under each sub theme.
- Craft a **storyline** that visitors can follow on their journey.
- Identify stories that can be told within each sub theme and gather **supporting material**.



Identify the areas of research required to inform your interpretation.

What expertise outside of the organisation might be required?

This activity will provide an outline for your content development and production processes e.g text writing.

Above: Structure interpretation with a central theme and a series of sub themes, which are underpinned by key messages.

5 Narrative framework

Part of the uniqueness of the National Museum of the Royal Navy is the wealth of rich stories that it can reveal. Consider the following when identifying and crafting stories.

STORY INGREDIENTS	STORY TYPES	WHO STORIES TARGET	HOW TO CRAFT STORIES	WHY STORIES
<p>Intrigue Captive audiences with a hook.</p> <p>Authentic Tell rich and authentic stories based in quality research.</p> <p>Relevant Aim to stimulate cognitive, emotional or behavioural responses.</p> <p>Strategic Ensure the message aligns with the NMRN brand and the Royal Navy overarching theme and key messages.</p>	<p>Stand Alone Stories One narrative is celebrated across many touch points.</p> <p>Story Sets One story arch is celebrated across many independent stories.</p>	<p>Audiences Inspiring learning, enjoyment and engagement with the story of the Royal Navy, and its impact in shaping the modern world.</p>	<p>Identify Identify a story and interpret it through story 'heroes' - e.g. a character, an object that audiences can identify with.</p> <p>Evaluate Ensure narrative quality and adhere to brand guidelines</p> <p>Strategise Tell the NMRN brand message and key messages internally and externally</p>	<p>Stories resonate The visitor makes meaning, creates a connection, is motivated, sparks an emotional reaction.</p> <p>Stories are sharable Visitors use stories to connect with others on and off site.</p>

5 Assets analysis

Identify assets to communicate your interpretative themes, sub themes and stories. Consider tangible collections, archive material, imagery, illustration, photographs, the site or building itself and any intangible assets such as oral histories, song, music, skills, crafts and performance.

Narrow down the selection process by creating a criteria for selection:

- Is the object/asset **relevant** to your interpretation and to key audiences?
- What is **significant** or **unique** about the object/asset?
- What **stories** and **meanings** can be revealed through interpretation?
- Can you **provoke** a response through interpretation?

Also consider:

- Can a **combination** of display material create interesting interpretation?
- Would it benefit from supporting **contextual material** to aid understanding and accessibility?
- Are there collections outside of your museum but within **NMRN collections** or potential **loans** items that can support interpretation?
- What **spaces** have been designated for your interpretation? Consider size, environment and access.
- What are the sizes, weight and conservation **requirements** for objects?



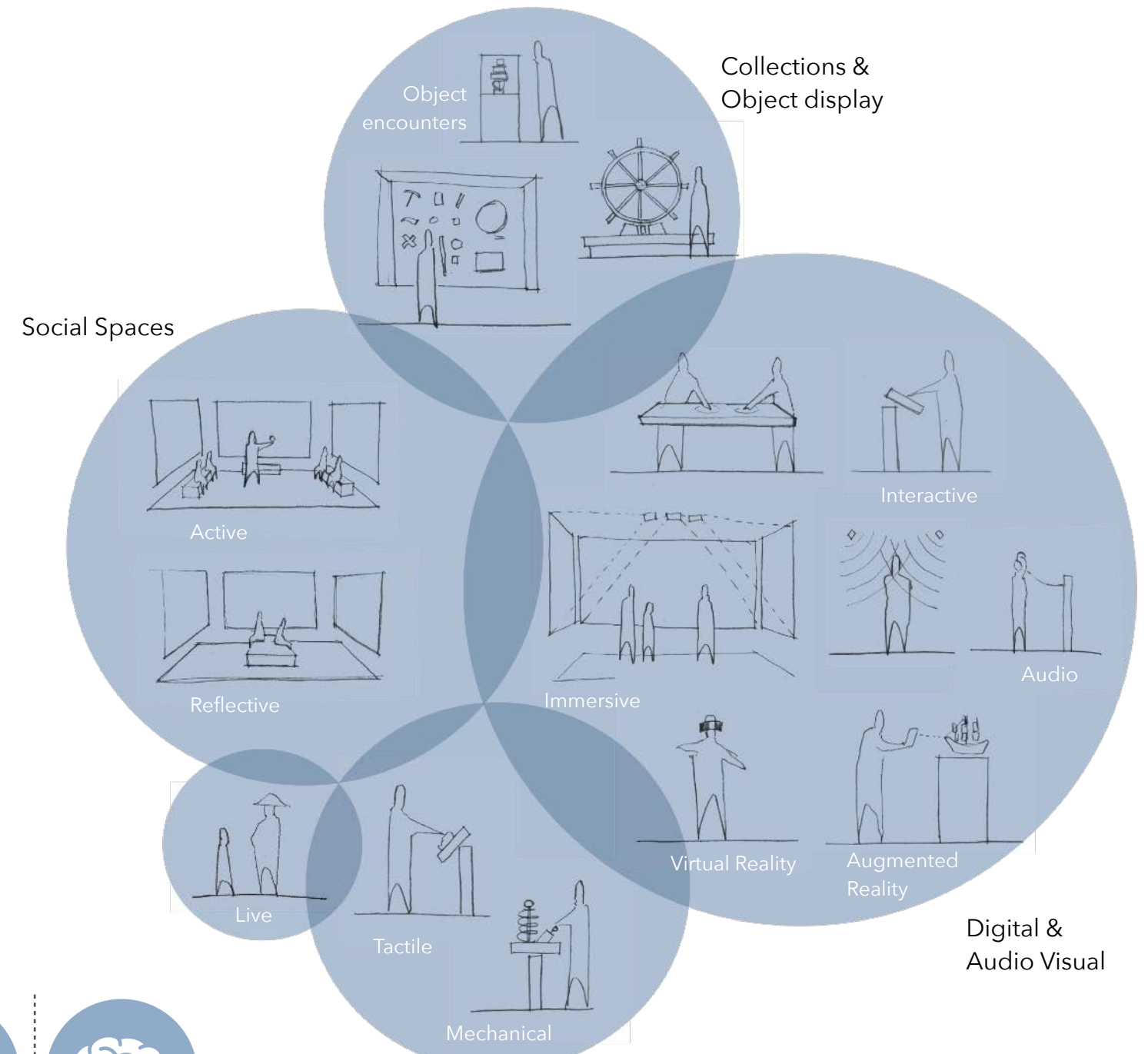
How many ways can we **interpret** this object?








NMRN workshops considered the different ways a single object can be interpreted. Many aspects were considered, from the people who had made and used them, technology past and present, significance, materials and manufacture and tactile handling methods to aid understanding.

5 Engagement and media

Part of the interpretation process is to identify and select interpretative media to best communicate your themes and stories to audiences.

- Take a **multi-sensory** approach to the visitor experience - use objects, imagery, sound, lighting, projections and spoken word to weave a multifaceted tapestry of experiential media.
- Think about target **audiences** and how you are engaging them.
- Integrate technology for more **immersive**, interactive experiences and deeper engagement.
- Consider different **learning styles** and provide a variety of media options that are layered to engage a wide ranging audience.



						
Aural	Physical	Verbal	Visual	Social	Solitary	Logical
Auditory - Musical	Kinesthetic	Linguistic	Spatial	Interpersonal	Intrapersonal	Mathematical
Sound Music	Touch Action Movement Role play Physical objects	Words Speech	Pictures Images Illustration Diagrams	Role play Social interactions Guided experiences	Personal interactions Self-led experiences	Explore ideas Connections Technical details

5 Engagement and media

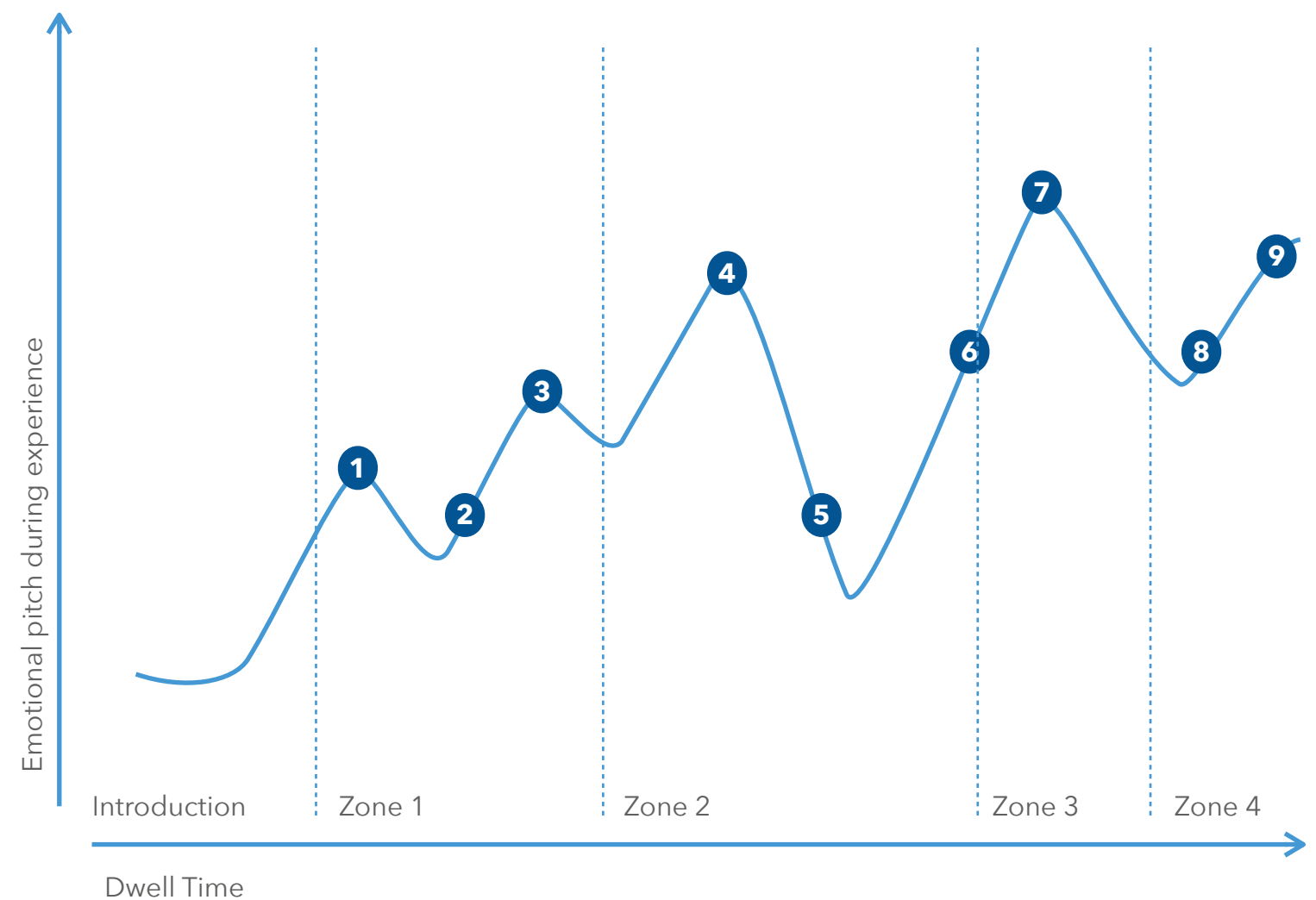
From the very beginning of the journey, all visitor touch-points should be carefully considered to maximise engagement and create an intuitive, emotive and memorable experience.

- In the development of interpretation and **visitor experiences**, think of visitors as the lead character in a film, what do they do, think, feel.
- Consider their **sensory, emotional** and **behavioural** journey, the desired outcomes.
- Consider the emotional **impact of interpretation** - ensure that the emotional pitch is varied.

The diagram opposite illustrates a possible emotional journey for a visitor as they move through an interpretative experience. As an example, the numbers could indicate:

- 1. Anticipation**
- 2. Connection**
- 3. Sense of wonder**
- 4. Immerse and excite**
- 5. Spark curiosity**
- 6. Surprise**
- 7. Create intrigue**
- 8. Shock and amuse**
- 9. Appreciation and reflection**

Remember to allow for moments of rest and reflection in between heightened experiences to ensure interpretation is effective and not overwhelming to visitors.



Above: Generic emotional journey map

5 Interpretative matrix

Use an interpretation matrix to plot and assess the key components of your interpretation as it evolves. Log key messages, audience appeal, stories, objects and assets and suggested interpretative media against your sub themes. It will provide a snapshot ensuring a balanced and considered approach.

	Key messages	Target audiences/ outcomes	Stories	Objects and assets	Interpretive Media	Notes/ Comments
Sub Theme 1						
Sub Theme 2						
Sub Theme 3						
Sub Theme 4						
Sub Theme 5						

5 Evaluation

Evaluate interpretation throughout the development process and once it is delivered. Use your findings to set future vision and goals for interpretation.

When developing interpretation check the following:

- Is it appealing and relevant to audiences?
- Does it connect to the overarching message?
- Can NMRN collections and assets can support the theme?
- Can multiple sub themes can be related to this theme to create a strong hierarchy?
- Does it have uniqueness and presents new opportunities for NMRN
- Can it tell part of the Master Narrative previously untold?
- Does it reveal hidden histories?
- Is it in response to audience interest/request?
- Does the organisation require internal/external expertise to develop?
- What are the budget parameters?
- How are you feeding in evaluation, incorporating lessons learned?

When interpretation is delivered:

- Did your interpretation clearly communicate messages to target audiences?
- Did it attract more visitors?
- Did it attracts new/wider diversity in audience groups?
- Was access to stories and collections improved and increased?
- Did interpretation meet the original goals?
- Did interpretation meet the visitor outcomes?
- Did interpretation generate press coverage and social media activity?
- Was development and delivery of interpretation improved?
- What lessons and skills were transferred to others within the team?
- Has it increased positively the reputation of NMRN?



Part 5.2

Take Action Next Steps



5 Interpretative design principles

Interpretative design principles can be set with the intention of presenting holistic and complimentary interpretation across the organisation, on NMRN sites and within galleries and spaces.

- Adopt a consistent approach to the way all sites are interpreted as part of the NMRN brand positioning
 - Connect the visitor experience across NMRN sites holistically, present sites in terms of the historical and present day surroundings and wider landscape
 - Create a clear sense of arrival and welcome. Consider well placed and easy navigable site-wide signage and wayfinding, adopting a 'less is more' approach to physical signs and structures
 - Zone the experience, NMRN's venues are large - with variety of experiences. Allow visitors to make choices and decisions about their visit, and develop an itinerary that work for them based on preferences and interest
 - Design well choreographed experiences giving visitors maximum engagement and enjoyment whilst maintaining flow through good pacing and comfortable dwell times
 - Think about the spaces between exhibitions and the outdoor spaces more carefully. Create thresholds and stopping points to act as 'decompression chambers' in between galleries or historic ships to allow for interpretation to be assimilated by visitors, and for intermittent periods of rest
- Design all interpretative elements to be sympathetic to the architectural envelope of each building
 - Use a blend of visual, dynamic and sensory techniques as an instant universal language. Consider theatrical techniques dramatic structures, sets, lighting, music, sound effects and dialogue
 - Develop a clear visual language to allow visitors to easily navigate the gallery spaces. Make the experience accessible and intuitive
 - Use large contextual imagery and archive material to add drama and impact alongside key statements or quotes to add a personal emphasis. This is particularly important when dealing with objects of scale, such as aircraft and ships, to add the human dimension
 - Set a clearly defined graphic hierarchy that is accessible and inclusive. Promote clear communication for an agreed reading age (e.g. 11 years old)
 - Create spaces in galleries for discussion and debate, education groups and public programming
 - Consider future proofing and flexibility, build in the ability to change and adapt over time, audiences will return if there is something new to see
 - Provide multi-language interpretation for local communities/international visitors through mobile hand-held media, audio downloads and leaflets
 - Adopt universal design principles to ensure accessible experiences for all

Work with innovators - writers, artists, animators, film-makers and designers to realise new interpretation for the NMRN.

5 Suggestions for improvements

The following are suggestions made following visits to NMRN sites and can greatly improve interpretation and visitor experiences.

All sites

- Clear communication at Front Desk/Box Office of the Order of Day across the site (what is happening, what time and where?) either by printed material, digital screen or verbally when possible
- Bold, striking interpretation as visitor arrives explaining the constituent parts of the Royal Navy and that this is part of the NMRN family

NMRN Portsmouth

- Telling the story of the RN pre-18th century, even if collections don't support the narrative, could AV be used to fill in the gaps?
- Improvement of visitor route from Welcome Building, and of open spaces between ships and galleries, with for example exterior interpretation, planting, pop-up displays

FAAM

- Display significant objects from other sites at NMRN museums for temporary display
- Create connections to other NMRN sites within FAAM galleries e.g. in reconstructed part of U-Boat in the Battle of Atlantic exhibition referencing RNSM. It is done with a small Royal Marines exhibition right at the end of the visitor journey but you could miss it
- Highlights tour so visitors know what to focus on if they have limited time
- More personal stories attached to planes, and not just pilots but engineers, technicians etc

- More 'off duty' stories - what did crew do in their time off, food & drink, entertainment, families
- Increase diverse stories, they are currently not visible
- More about loss, injury both physical and mental - this is barely covered other than in the memorial area

NMRN Hartlepool

- HMS Trincomalee can tell so many stories and be an even better visitor experience - shipbuilding & repair in the NE and in India, imperial connections, global trade, exploration, training ship. It's a local, national and international story
- Use of first-person interpretation which is so popular on HMS Warrior
- HMS Warrior was repaired here - a good way to link NMRNH and NMRNP
- Conservation story for Trincomalee, RML 497 and Wingfield Castle can be interpreted in the future

RNSM

- Signage to help visitors that arrive by car
- New interpretation to refresh galleries
- Signpost Holland I and reinforce its significance

Explosion

- Update displays
- Consider refining objects displays and present less technical interpretation
- Improve outdoor spaces including outdoor café space and site interpretation
- Negotiate timings of Harbour Tours, so that visitors are not 'stranded' and can comfortably enjoy the other local NMRN sites in the same day

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