

Newton Abbot Museum Report 2026

1. Visitor Numbers

The Museum has experienced a strong summer period, with increased visitor numbers across the Museum, special exhibition and events programme.

	August 2026	August 2025	Increase
Museum visitors	1,651	1,298	+353
Special exhibition visitors	1,247	997	+250
event visitors	253	138	+115

2. Shop Income and Fundraising

Between January and September 2026, Museum shop and associated income was:

- **Gross sales:** £4,517.61
- **Net sales:** £4,367.88

This represents an increase in net sales of **£1,837.79 (72.64%)** compared with the same period in 2025, when net sales were £2,530.09.

A significant proportion of the increase has been generated through events and donations.

Sponsor an Object

The Museum has launched **Sponsor an Object**, a new fundraising initiative supporting the WiS project, care of the Museum's collections, displays and activities.

The scheme gives members of the public the opportunity to sponsor an object from the Museum's collection for 12 months.

Annual sponsorship packages are:

- Object Sponsor – £50
- Collection Guardian – £100
- Collection Champion – £150
- Heritage Patron – £250

Three objects have currently been sponsored.



3. Volunteers

The Museum currently has **70 active volunteers and work placement volunteers**, supporting a wide range of activities including front of house, collections work, research, education and conservation.

Between January 2026-October our volunteer team donated an amazing **4384 hours** of their time.

The Museum has continued to develop its volunteer programme, including a series of volunteer events and activities. These have included visits to other museums and events at Newton Abbot Museum, such as a Morris dancing talk and demonstration.

Summer and winter social events have also continued as an opportunity to recognise and thank volunteers for their contribution. Volunteers reaching one year of service receive a certificate, while those reaching five, ten or fifteen years of service receive a service badge.



4. Staffing

There are a number of staffing changes taking place during the autumn and winter period.

The current Curator, Joanna Eccles, is approaching the end of her fixed-term contract and has reduced her hours to four days per week for her final month. Katie is backfilling the Curator role for one day per week. Dr Charlotte Dixon will return from maternity leave in November.

Katie will continue to support the Museum as Curator for one day per week until the end of the WiS project. Veronika is backfilling the Curatorial Assistant role and will also take on the Museum Assistant responsibilities previously undertaken by Lucy.

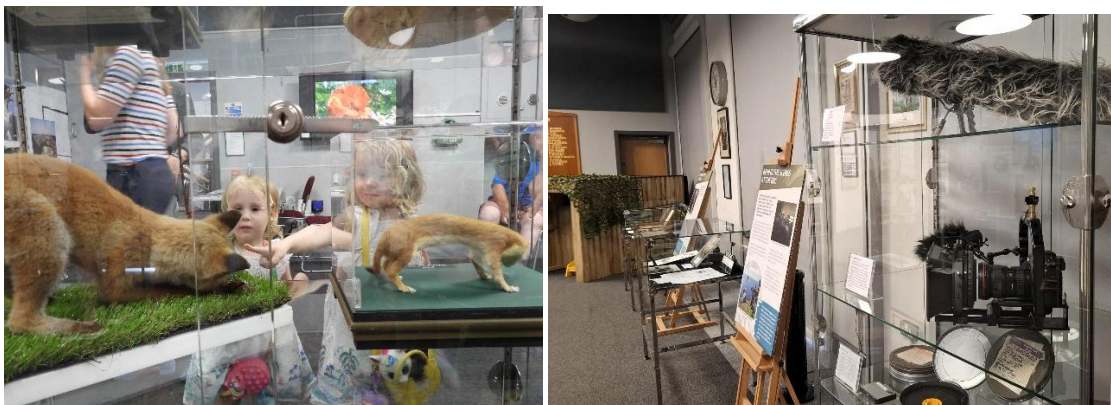
Lucy has been appointed to the Collections Manager role for three days per week.

Barry, the Collections Assistant will leave the Museum on 28 October 2026.

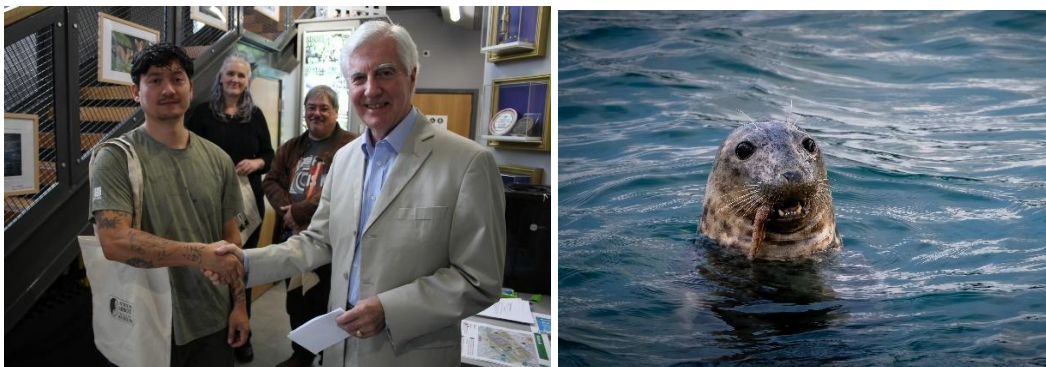
5. Exhibitions and Displays

The Golden Age of Wildlife Filmmaking

The summer exhibition, **The Golden Age of Wildlife Filmmaking exhibition**, celebrated the work and career of wildlife documentarian Andrew Cooper, alongside historic memorabilia relating to natural history broadcasting.



As part of the exhibition programme, the Museum also ran a wildlife photography competition. On 12 September, Andrew Cooper announced the winners across three age categories. The winning photographs were displayed at the Museum for a month and on the Museum website, alongside highly commended entries.



6. Events and Engagement

The Museum has delivered a varied programme of events throughout the summer.

The adult programme included a range of talks, including lunchtime talks with Andrew Cooper and Andrew Bowkett on wildlife conservation work, an evening sound recording workshop with Lucinda from Skylark FM, and an evening lecture by Andrew Cooper.

The family programme included Make & Create, Creative Thursdays and Frazoo animal-handling sessions, providing a varied programme of activities during the summer holidays.

Music at the Museum events have continued to be a highlight of the Museum's events programme. All of this year's performances have sold out, including The Budapest Café Orchestra, Harbottle & Jonas and Flats and Sharps.

The Museum has also attended both Meet Your Councillors events, providing an opportunity to engage with local residents and promote the Museum's activities and services.

Heritage Open Days

The Museum participated in the Heritage Open Days festival again this year. Although the 2026 theme was Everyday Histories, the Museum chose to focus on entertainment in Newton Abbot.

The Museum partnered with the Alexandra Theatre to offer tours of the theatre, these were very popular and all oversubscribed. Displays and activities at the Museum focused on entertainment in Newton Abbot, including a selection of objects relating to local entertainment, a dedicated trail and refreshed displays.

St Leonard's Tower was also opened as part of the festival featuring Rosemary Griggs as a costumed interpreter, who discussed entertainment in Tudor Newton Abbot.



Upcoming events include the Museum's regular programme of **Make & Create**, **Toddler Tuesday**, **Twilight Sketching** and Friends events.

During the October half-term, the Museum will also host **Frazazoo: Curious Creatures** on 30 October, 10am–12.45pm, and **Haunted Objects with Devon Escape** on 30 and 31 October.

7. Group Travel and Partnerships

The Museum has developed a new group travel leaflet with Heather Holve our Marketing Consultant, which will be promoted through Visit South Devon at a group travel fair in Milton Keynes.

The aim is to promote Newton Abbot Museum as a destination for organised groups and encourage group visits to the Museum. This work also supports wider plans to promote Newton Abbot as a visitor destination, including the reopening of the market.

Friends Scheme

The Friends of Newton Abbot Museum scheme has been reviewed to ensure that it provides a sustainable source of income for the Museum.

Following a review of the costs associated with the scheme, including significant postage costs, annual membership has increased to **£20** and membership communications have moved to a digital format unless members request otherwise.

Teignbridge Archaeology Partnership

The Museum has established a partnership with the Teignbridge Archaeological Society. A joint membership offer is available for **£30**.

The Museum is also trialling hosting the Society's talks at Newton Abbot Museum. This will introduce a new audience to the Museum and provide opportunities to livestream talks through social media.

9. St Leonard's Tower

St Leonard's Tower reopened for the 2026 season with the support of a team of volunteers. In response to public demand, the Museum increased the number of Saturday openings this year, alongside the regular Wednesday opening.

The Tower attracted **1,733 visitors in 2026**, compared with **1,192 in 2025**, an increase of **541 visitors (45.4%)**.

10. Welcome into the Store (WiS) Project

Work on the new Heritage Store is progressing well. The final footings have been completed and signed off by Building Control, concrete has been poured and blockwork has commenced.

Mechanical and electrical tender drawings and design details have been completed and are currently awaiting feedback.

A significant proportion of the collection has now been wrapped and moved off site in preparation for the new store.



There have been some brief delays to the project due to a number of unexpected issues. These included:

- South West Water initially identifying a potential issue relating to a public sewer. Further investigation by PMR confirmed that this was a blocked drain and did not affect the development.
- The need for a street light in the car park to be disconnected by a Teignbridge District Council contractor.
- Building Control queries regarding the proximity of the access ramp to the existing well. The civil engineer subsequently confirmed that loading would not cause any issues.
- The discovery of an unexpected concrete slab, which required work to pause while archaeologists attended the site.

These issues have now been resolved and work is progressing.

The heras fencing interpretation is at the printers.

The Museum continues to work towards completion of the new store and subsequent fit-out of the facility.