

# CASE STUDY: VISITOR CENTRE IN NORTHUMBERLAND GOES GREEN



**Audit Year:** 2010

**GTBS Award:** SILVER

**Business Name:** Woodhorn Museum, Archive & Country Park

**Business Type:** Visitor Attraction

**Location:** Northumberland, ENGLAND

**Website:** [www.experiencewoodhorn.com](http://www.experiencewoodhorn.com)

This innovative visitor attraction has been developed on the site of the Woodhorn Colliery which ceased producing coal in 1981. Alongside the original colliery buildings and pithead wheel, preserved as an historic example, is the 'state of the art' Cutter Building which houses exhibitions and 800 years of county history in the Northumberland Archives. With the adjoining country park, the aim of the site is to conserve and interpret an important part of the areas cultural history for the educational benefit of the local community and visitors from further afield.

## Environmental Education

A country park, consisting of a large lake and fringing reed beds and scrub, has been created from what was the colliery's spoil heap. It attracts large numbers of waders and sea birds from the nearby coast and a group of red squirrels have taken up residence. There are some information boards interpreting natural history aspects of the country park but its development as an educational resource is still in the process of development.

## Social & Community Benefits

Both the museum and the country park are being increasingly used by local schools and groups. Volunteers are encouraged to help in its maintenance hoping this provided a sense of ownership in a disadvantaged area which suffers from vandalism. There is a cycle track around the lake which locals are encouraged to use with the provision of free bikes. The museum as a whole provides a range of educational and recreational programmes, e.g Miners' Picnic, Make do and Mend workshops.

It also supports local art and craft initiatives (Wild side of Northumberland, Pitman Painters Groups).

## Sustainable Design

The museum has an innovative approach to energy management supplementing an efficient heating system with solar panels and using gabion walls (stone filled metal cages) to enhance insulation.

A rainwater harvesting system flushes seventeen public toilets. The cafe supports some local food producers – ice cream maker, baker and bottled water company. The development and operation of the site has provided some much needed employment to local people in an area. The museum is part of the Green Museum Group and acts as an archive of the bygone mining industry.

## Web Links

North East Regional Museum Hub: [www.twmuseum.com](http://www.twmuseum.com)  
Greener Museums: [www.greenermuseums.org](http://www.greenermuseums.org)