

Crofton Beam Engines

Website Development - "Developing our Digital Connection"



Grant awarded: £1000
Arts Council Goal: Users and Their Experiences
Year Awarded: 2018-2019

Key aims of the project:

- To overhaul Crofton Beam Engine's online presence by providing a new, modern website that is fit for purpose, replacing one that was over 12 years old and developed on ageing architecture.
- Create a step change in their digital profile and ability to communicate effectively with their audiences online.
- Help the museum to become a sustainable and successful independent museum, supporting the aim set out in our Forward Plan to develop a 'non-steaming days' audience, which will help the museum become more resilient.



"The new site is much better – looks professional and gives all the information you might need. Much more likely to encourage people to visit if they are just looking for things to do in the area than the old site."

Beth – UK visitor, visited Crofton before.

About the Project

The project took place over six months and was overseen by a small project team and guided by a clearly staged, time-sensitive project plan.

The project began by developing numerous online visitor personas to help us understand their multiple online audiences. Then the team produced a creative brief to inform web designers wanting to express interest in the project.

They then organised a detailed competitive selection exercise to appoint and engage the web designer. After appointment, the team worked closely with the chosen web design firm to develop the design, content, functionality of the new site in prototype ahead of full testing. After a period of testing, proofreading, tweaking and the remediation of snags and bugs, the site was launched at the end of March 2019 in time for the start of our 2019 season.

What went well and were there any challenges? Any top tips?

- The advertisement, recruitment and selection exercise for the web design firm took a long time and used a lot of staff and volunteer time but it was essential to find the right firm.
- For small museums like Crofton, with fairly simple website needs and a small budget, aiming to engage smaller local firms was the right approach – larger firms are only interested in larger projects.
- When selecting a web design firm, be careful of being sold expensive “add-ons” such as web hosting, support, maintenance and other contracts.
- The team found picking a local firm with a physical office base invaluable – when developing the site you want to be able to trouble shoot face-to-face; that’s harder over the phone, using skype etc.
- Seek and take the advice of a digital expert if you don’t have one in house – the team came to South West Museum Development as a resource of expertise. Don’t pretend you know when you don’t!
- Don’t be afraid to use reliable, free, third-party software to deliver online solutions: Crofton uses Mailchimp (newsletters/blogs) and Eventbrite (digital ticketing).
- Compatibility across devices - make sure the designer designs for mobile devices as 90% of web content is now accessed on mobile devices with only 10% on PCs.
- Don’t underestimate the time taken for proof reading, testing and training! Make sure several people are trained to use the CMS and that there is a reference manual.

How has the museum improved as a result of the project?

The new website creates a step change in the quality and standard of digital engagement with audiences at Crofton Beam Engines by replacing a website that was no longer fit for purpose. The team hope the longer term impact will be transformational.

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