**DEMONSTRATING MARKETING EXCELLENCE**

**Museums Winner**

Marketing Excellence Award entry by: Ms Hazel Hawarden, Museums Development Officer

Organisation Name: The Chardon Trust

Organisation Address: Llandudno Museum, 17-19 Gloddaeth Street

Town: Llandudno

Postcode: LL30 2DD

Contact Number: 01492 876517

Email: hazelatllandudnomuseum@outlook.com

Twitter Account: @Llandudnomuseum

Organisation Profile/ Overview:

Llandudno Museum is an independent museum, owned and operated by the Chardon Trust, a Registered Charity (No. 217013). Our museum was established in 1926 with the bequest of Francis Chardon, an artist and collector who donated his fascinating collection of fine and decorative art from Europe and Asia to the people of Llandudno. The museum collections have since developed to tell the story of Llandudno from earliest prehistory to the present day. The Trust’s mission is to develop and share our collections for the benefit of our visitors through our exhibition and learning programmes and volunteer opportunities.

Category Entered: Museums

Project Title: Bringing Blodwen Home

Context:

The Trustees of Llandudno Museum have embarked upon an ambitious project to redevelop the museum, including the creation of a series of new galleries to tell the distinctive story of Llandudno and the Creuddyn Peninsula. In 1891, the skeleton of a Neolithic woman was discovered on The Little Orme, a major feature in the landscape of Llandudno bay. As Llandudno did not have a museum at that time, the skeleton was given to the Bacup Natural History Society, where it has remained ever since. After a period of extensive negotiation, the Society has agreed to donate the skeleton to Llandudno Museum, so that it can return to the area where it was discovered.

To celebrate the return, the museum wishes to create a new exhibition to tell the life story of "Blodwen", as the skeleton has been nicknamed, based upon scientific analysis of the remains, and set within the context of the Neolithic in the Llandudno area some 5,500 years ago, when the first farming communities were established.

As a small independent museum, the Trust has limited funds to create an exhibition of a quality to do justice to Blodwen and her important story: the total cost of the exhibition, including purchase of a display case to museum standard was estimated at £8,000.

The timescale for the project is also relatively tight - the skeleton is due to be returned in February 2015, and the Trustees were keen to ensure that the appropriate standards of display and interpretation were in place in good time.

Blodwen presented a particularly emotive issue, and had generated a great deal of media interest in the last few years. The Trustees were aware of just how great the level of community support for Blodwen's return, and so saw this is a unique opportunity to 'test the waters' with Crowdfunding - a popular mechanism for funding and PR which is only just becoming known to museums, and in this sense innovative.

Aims and Objectives:

Building upon the success of our Ice Age exhibition in 2014, the Trust wished to raise public awareness of our proposed Neolithic exhibition, with a view to generating an increased number of visitors to the museum, from both local residents and tourists to what is Wales' premier seaside resort.

The Trust also wished to engage the community in helping to raise funding for the exhibition and a target was set for the crowdfunding appeal to raise £3,000 towards the cost of the exhibition within 5 weeks.

The project had two principle objectives;

1. To raise the profile of the museum using Crowdfunding as a marketing tool. We used Facebook and Twitter as a means of launching in monitoring the progress of the appeal, using boosted posts to assess the level of engagement with the story. The museum intended to generate more 'likes' for the museum page and to generate increased footfall to the museum through the appeal.

2. To generate a minimum of £3000 in public funding to provide the costs needed to match funding applications for the estimated £8,000 needed for the project to go ahead. The appeal was a 'all or nothing' process, whereby all pledges would be returned to their donors if the project did not reach its target within 6 weeks.

Strategy and Planning:

This was the first time that the museum has undertaken a fundraising exercise through a Crowdfunding appeal.

We followed the marketing steps provided by Crowdfunder.co.uk, which included the creation of a network of target donors. This included new groups such as the North Wales Business Forum who were approached individually with advocacy information. This enabled the museum to reach as many potential donors as possible, but also to widen its network of potential future donors and partners. We conducted research with the assistance of the Museums Service at Conwy County Borough Council, which enabled us to make contact with a wide network of heritage-related groups across the county. We also linked into national support networks including the Wales-wide Museums Marketing team in Wrexham and the Federation of Museums and Art Galleries in Wales.

The museum launched a facebook and twitter appeal with the hashtag #bringing-blodwen-home, which was the first time the museum has carried out a social media-led campaign and was one of the main tools used to raise awareness of the appeal. The Bringing-Blodwen-Home hastag had 109 unique tweets.

Tactics and Implementation:

The setting up of the appeal on the crowdfunding site was free

http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/bringing-blodwen-home

The museum spent a total of £50 to boost posts on facebook, and aside from this the campaign was cost free.

Results/Measurements/Outcomes

The crowdfunding appeal met its target and raised £3020 from 38 backers over 42 days.

The Facebook boosted appeal reached 5,392 people including 56 likes, comments and shares.

In terms of raising public awareness of the proposed exhibition, the appeal generated a number of features in the local media, was Tweeted by The Deputy Minister for Culture, and reached X people on Twitter.

Some platforms will only accept donations if the campaign then provides a ‘reward’ to the donor as an incentive. This made sense to us, and so we linked the campaign to a number of rewards such as a mention on promotional materials, a year’s free pass to the museum, or an invitation to the launch event. However, one of many problems we experienced was how to ensure that every donor was offered a reward that was practical for a small and under-resourced museum like ours. In hindsight, we would give much more thought to what rewards actual entail, and how manageable it might be to have (for example) 20 extra invitees to a launch in our small museum’s gallery.

A key recommendation for the appeal was to keep it ‘short and sweet’. A campaign that runs and runs loses momentum, and it is difficult to sustain the energy needed to tweet, re-tweet and publicise throughout. We opted for a 6-week period which in hindsight feels ‘about right’, but it was definitely a balancing act between the target total, the campaign timescale and the level of public interest. We would advise anyone else going down this route to do homework on this crucial triangle of timescale, target and public interest – what have other appeals tried? What worked, what didn’t? We would also recommend that you take the advice of the Crowdfunding platform you are working with. Use their marketing checklists and recommendations, and definitely spend time approaching potential large donors to help bump up the target. Also, appearance is everything. We were fortunate to have an existing short video that could be uploaded onto the campaign page, which helped to connect people to the story and incentivise donors.

So was it worth it? Yes absolutely, Deputy Culture Minister Ken Skates tweeted his support to our campaign, and we were a prominent voice on Facebook, twitter and local media for that 6 week period. It’s difficult to say for sure whether a commensurate increase in followers on Twitter and Facebook can be ascribed to the Blodwen campaign, but we would not be surprised. As a final note, beware the complexities of donating online. Many people or orgabnisations use PayPal regularly, or are happy to set up direct debit payments, but many are not. There’s no problem in accepting cash or cheque donations from those uncomfortable using online payment, but bear in mind that this doesn’t contribute to your target total.

Date of Project: Our Crowdfunding project commenced October 2014 and finished November 2014.

Summary:

Llandudno Museum successfully engaged the local community in a Crowdfunding appeal and raised £3000 towards the cost of a new exhibition to celebrate the return of "Blodwen", the skeleton of a Neolithic woman discovered on The Little Orme in 1891. Ever since her discovery, the skeleton has been in the ownership of the Bacup Natural History Society and after extensive negotiation, the Society has kindly agreed to donate "Blodwen" to Llandudno Museum on a permanent basis so that she can return and be seen in the area where she was originally found.

This is the first time the Museum has used a Crowdfunding platform to raise funding and the publicity generated by appeal has also helped to raise public awareness of the plans for the new exhibition, which will open at Llandudno Museum in spring 2015.