

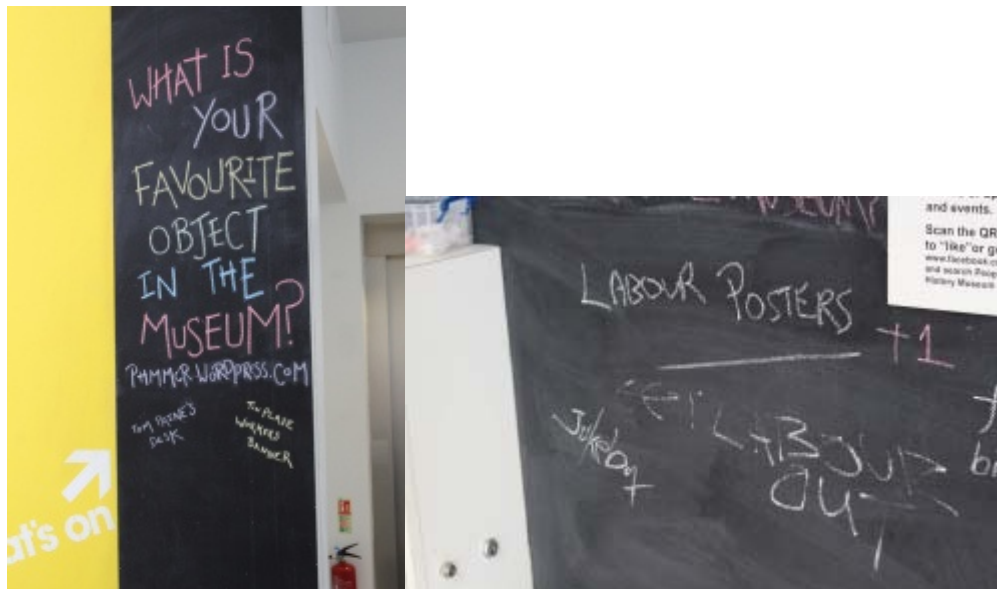
## Play Your Part A Case Study from the People's History Museum

The People's History Museum (PHM) is the national museum of democracy, we are the only museum telling the story of the development of democracy in Britain. The central aim of the museum is to engage, inspire and inform all audiences by showing that 'there have always been ideas worth fighting for'.

Our museum has a national and local remit with a unique story which complements the collections and services of all other Greater Manchester museums, providing a collaborative and coherent history of the region. We offer specialist services and hold fantastic collections that are unique in the UK, playing a vital role in raising the region's profile and attracting large numbers of national and international tourists to Greater Manchester. There are three main areas of the museum's work: Engagement, Collections Access and Development.

The Play Your Part project at PHM supports two of the Arts Council's five strategic goals and priorities; Goal 1 – Excellence is thriving and celebrated in museums and libraries; and Goal 2 – More people experience and are inspired by museums and libraries. It works across two of our main areas – engagement and collections access. We want as many people as possible to connect with our collection and stories, whether they are physically in the building, attending one of our outreach events or logged onto one of our online presences.

This project forms an integral part of a bigger reinvention of our museum and we're not yet sure where the process will ultimately take us. It will create a step-change for the museum and take us well on the way to fulfilling our potential as the national museum of democracy in the UK and the home of ideas of worth fighting for.



We appointed two key posts in mid 2013 to work with us, looking at how we do our everyday business of engaging with visitors and using the collection, and researching new and varied ways of developing our offer. We are keen to work with

a wide number of 'new-to-us' groups, to hear their stories and learn from them experiences, and provide them with opportunities to showcase their struggles.

Recently we worked with a number of LGBT groups within the city of Manchester to develop a pop-up exhibition that ran in our museum foyer for most of August and early September. As one of the few museums in the country collecting LGBT materials, it is important to us that we contextualise our collections where we can and to encourage contributions from all our visitors. We plan to work with a wide range of group and provide opportunities for our visitors to tell us what they might like to see and find out more about. Through processes such as these we are challenging ourselves to think differently about what we do, to be more relevant, to resonate with everyday lives and inspire people to play their part.

We've been asking our visitors what they like about our collection; what is their favourite object? We ran a poll asking visitors to make suggestions and then vote on the shortlisted objects. We started a museum blog (<http://phmmcr.wordpress.com/>) and actually started to use our Flickr and YouTube channels.

We've also been trialling ways to engage with our audiences whilst they are in the building. We put out post it notes on the galleries, asking the public to write on them and leave them next to objects that inspire them or remind them of certain memories. So far, they have been stuck to cases, framed images and object labels and thankfully not our beautiful banner collection!

We still have a way to go with this project. We've seen wonderful things, brought new and cutting edge research back to the museum and learnt lots about the power of museums to change lives. We believe strongly that our collection, coupled with our staff, provide access in the widest possible sense to everyone that comes into contact with us.