

**ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH TRANSPORT AND ENGINEERING MUSEUMS
AUTUMN SEMINAR 3 NOVEMBER 2016**

THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The seminar was largely concerned with the long term future of larger industrial installations and machines. How long would those already in preservation be able to survive? Would many of these currently in use ever be preserved at all at the end of their working lives?

Perceived threats to survival included

- increasing costs of acquiring, storing, curating and displaying large items
- continuing severe funding cuts
- a current perception that art and culture were more important than science and technology
- increasing difficulty for people in today's world in identifying with the larger machines of the past
- steady erosion of people with knowledge of historic machines and technology.

Suggested ways of coping with these challenges included

- draw out and record the stories that visitors may have
- maintain and use exhibits in working order where possible
- present historic machines and machinery in ways that hold the attention of present day audiences
- ascertain and do those things that the wider audience says it wants – by all means encourage visits by experts and enthusiasts, but there is also value in investing in objects that interest families and the general public
- where possible add a bit of art and glamour to your offer
- present objects in a way that shows how they affected and influenced the people who used or encountered them during their operational lives, ie be more people oriented
- work in partnership with other museums, loans between museums
- collections reviews.

Nothing much new in this, but it does tend to underline the view that museums with large and industrial objects can enhance their own sustainability by presenting their collections as working museums, eg bus rides.

STANDARDS IN CARE OF LARGER AND WORKING OBJECTS

The scoping study previously reported has been completed, and ABTEM has funding to produce updated Guidelines. The plan is

November 2016 – recruit a consultant

May 2017 – draft available for comment

October 2017 – new Guidelines launched.

Thereafter it is intended to do an annual update.

SCIENCE MUSEUM, WROUGHTON

The Science Museum is upgrading its premises at Wroughton, where “cost effective” new buildings will be replacing old hangars. It is likely that the process will involve some disposals. Collections are also being digitised on a large scale.