

## CASE STUDY 5

# PITT RIVERS MUSEUM AND OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

### Why take part?

The museums had run a Takeover Day in 2011, with younger pupils and with a consultative focus. This year the staff wanted to take this a step further and give more decision-making responsibility to some young people. On discovering that the date coincided with an Oxford-wide evening festival, in which the university museums usually take part, they decided to combine both initiatives.

### Who took part?

Eight sixth formers from a local school that the museum had worked with previously. The museum put out a call for participants via a teacher; the students then self-selected so not all were friends or studying the same subjects. One had been part of Takeover Day the year before.

### What did they do?

The students were given responsibility for running an element of the evening's programme, designing and delivering activities for visitors.

### How did they spend their time on the day?

Four planning meetings were held between the students and museum staff in the lead up to the event. The students worked to their strengths, breaking into smaller teams and doing much of the research and preparation in their own time.

The activities they devised tied into the overall Polar theme of the festival. These included:

- a slideshow of Inuit objects from PRM and pictures of Polar regions
- making a collaborative floor map based on an Inuit map
- handling table of objects and animal specimens
- making stop-motion animations of snow scenes and a display on global warming
- demonstrating non-newtonian fluids with cornflour and a speaker

On the night the students were also handed over control of the Museums' Facebook and Twitter accounts.

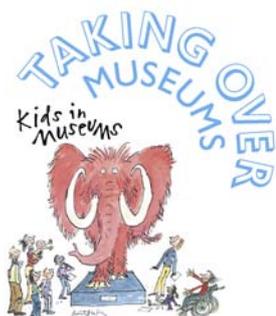
### What happened next?

The event was well-attended and the museums were impressed with the students' commitment and enthusiasm for delivering their activities. There were slightly more teenagers attending than normal as a result of the students' involvement. One student applied to become a museum volunteer and another came back to do work experience. The initiative was also viewed positively by the school; although it was out of school hours eight teachers came along with their families to visit the event. Despite initial reservations about holding a Takeover Day event on a day which was already so busy for the museum, staff found it was actually a great way to truly let young people take charge within a supportive environment. Doing something unexpected and not being sure of the outcomes became a really beneficial experience for staff as well as the young people and visitors. The space used to deliver the events was also newly opened and the team learnt a lot from the young people about how to best use it for future events.

*'I've always loved this museum. The idea of just going, here's a space, do some stuff. That's really cool.'* Teacher

*'I thought it would be kind of lip service where you pretend that kids had decision making powers but it wasn't and the kids took it between their teeth. It was a difficult mix – you have to provide a framework and leadership but you don't want to stifle ideas. They were quite clued up and realistic about what they could do. We have to fit it in with our workload, but so do they.'*

PRM staff member



**Takeover Day Kids in Museums 2012 [www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk](http://www.kidsinmuseums.org.uk)**