

Discover Pass

November 2008 update

Headlines

- **3,585** passes were sold and an estimated 400 were distributed free at University Open days. After taking into account passes that were not distributed by DFDS it is estimated that around **3,875** passes were in circulation.
- These 3,875 passes generated **1,586** uses leading to an estimated minimum **2,640** visitors within attractions.
- Centre for Life recorded by far the biggest usage with over **650** uses. Followed by Wet and Wild with **318** Blue Reef Aquarium with **267**.
- Attractions which offered discount on entry fees attracted the greatest usage.
- Pass usage appears to have responded well to promotion, however this is very mixed across attractions.

Promotion

The pass was launched with a press launch at the Blue Reef Aquarium in British Tourism Week in March, and followed up with a local press advertising campaign and month long Metro station platform campaign. A 4 week radio campaign on Metro Radio featuring award winning comedian Rob Brydon was ran throughout June to raise awareness of the pass in time for the Summer Holidays. The Pass was also promoted at a host of key events throughout the summer and was also heavily promoted during University Open Days at Northumberland and Northumbria Universities. It has also been continually supported by a dedicated web page at www.visitnewcastlegateshead.co.uk/discover.

Sales - March 2008 to October 2008

In terms of pass sales, the passes sold a total of 2350 through the Tourist Information Centres, 17 accommodation providers purchased around 1,135 of the passes to offer to visitors staying with them. DFDS purchased 100 passes for passengers travelling from the Amsterdam to Newcastle and were to be included as a giveaway within packs for a special mini cruise. However the mini cruise only reported 2 bookings so many of the passes went un-used. To target the potential Visiting Friends and Relatives market linked to the Universities we attended open days Northumbria and Newcastle, distributing the pass to around 400 potential students and their families.

In total it is estimated that around **3,875** passes are in circulation.

Usage – March 2008 to September 2008

The pass was used **1,586** times and it is estimated that this has generated **2,640** visitors through the doors of attractions.

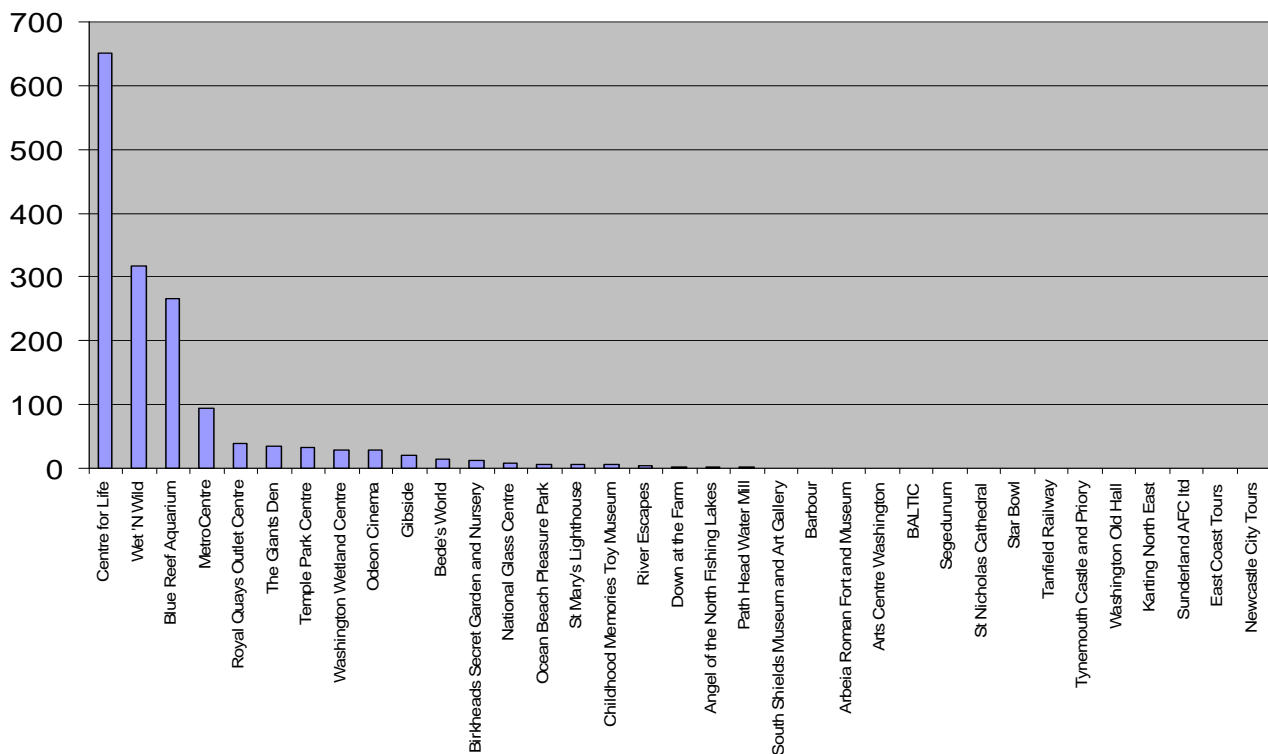
In terms of which attractions have generated the uses, the numbers are not particularly well spread as the pass usage was dominated by a handful of key attractions. In particular the Centre for Life accounted for a huge 651 uses of the pass, that's 41% of the total uses. The next largest was Wet & Wild with 318 and the Blue Reef Aquarium with 267, combined these three attractions account for 77% of the uses of the pass.

These results and the dominance of the pass in total numbers terms should be taken in context with the size of the attraction and the nature of the offer that they were able to provide. For example the Centre for Life is Newcastle's largest paying attraction and between April and September it received over 105,000 visitors. Information from One NorthEast's attractions research suggests that this figure is up 2% on the same period in the previous year (when the discover pass was not operating) that's an increase of 2,060 visitors while the

pass was in operation and it is estimated that the pass generated at least 1,302 visitors within this period. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the pass has played some part in contributing to the Centre for Life's growth.

The Baltic on the other hand, a free attraction that received 181,993 visitors in the same period received very little uses in comparison. There may be many reasons for this but among them appears to be a problem that runs throughout the results, that many attractions that have free entry struggled in terms of people using the pass. **89%** of all pass uses were used on gaining either a discount or free entry to a paying attraction with 10% used on an offer that involved a discount on the core product of the attraction other than the entry fee and less than 1% where the attraction was offering discount within the gift shop. Clearly these results will be heavily weighted by the number of people who attended the Centre for Life but if you remove the Centre for Life from the results there is still a clear indication that customers are using the pass at attractions that offer discount on admission fees.

Number of pass uses per attraction



As illustrated above one of the biggest problems encountered with the pass is the large proportion of participating attractions that received very little or zero uses. 15 Attractions received no uses of the pass and a further 4 received less than 5. Attractions that reported no use of the card at all included: East Coast Tours, Sunderland AFC, Karting North East; Segedunum, Arbeia Roman Fort and Museum and the Washington Arts Centre. Other attractions including Path Head Water Mill, Down at the Farm and South Shields Museum and Gallery reported less than five uses of the pass.

As illustrated above certain types of offer have proved more attractive to customers than others. However Segedunum, Sunderland AFC and Karting North East were all offering relatively strong discounts on the primary reason to visit the attraction. This suggests that here may be other issues around communication and marketing that could be looked at in the next phase.

When the pass was used

Gaining an accurate picture of the precise dates of usage has proven to be slightly problematic given the consistency of recording and returning the results amongst attractions. The best level of information that we can use for the majority of attractions was on a monthly basis. Despite this there are still some clear patterns around when people generally used the pass.

	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sep	October
All attractions	45	150	182	181	246	437	130	205
Attractions excluding Centre for life	45	122	170	110	92	244	76	66

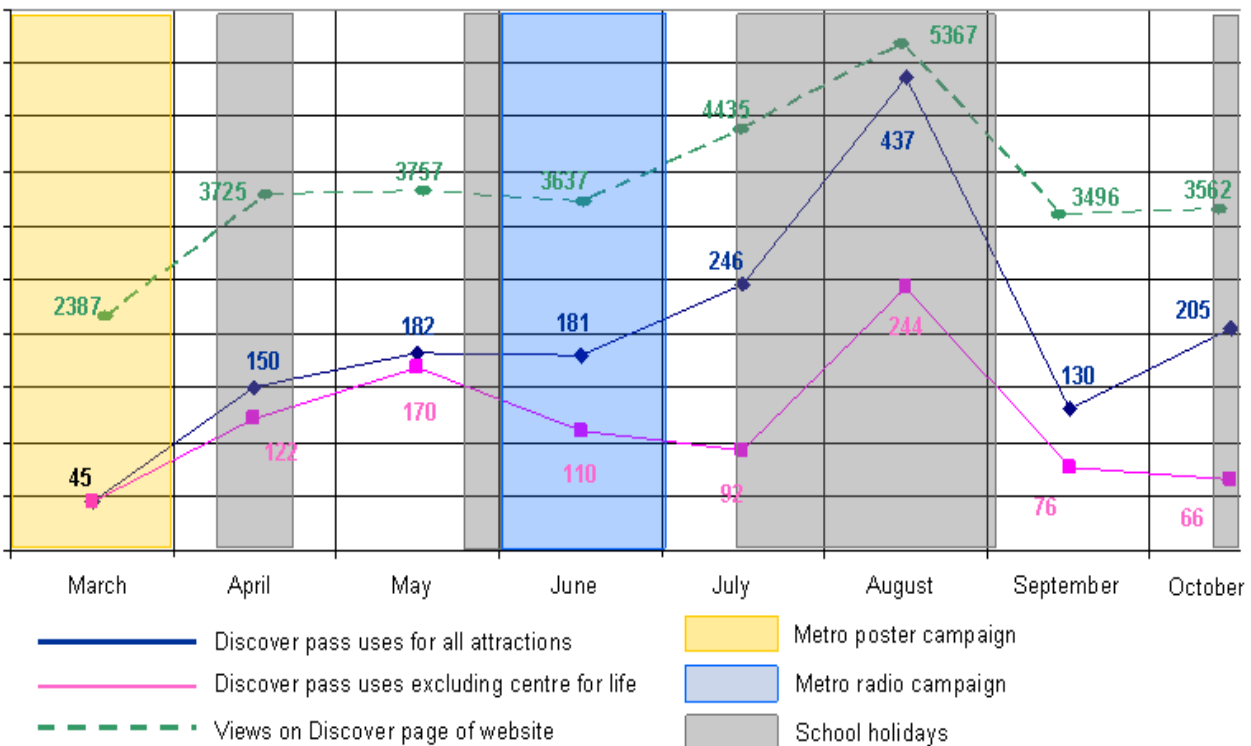
The table above shows the number of pass uses per month from the passes launch. As expected July and August had by far the most activity with 246 uses in July and 437 uses in August, there are also smaller peaks in May and October which could feasibly be linked to the school half term holidays.

The passes web page did receive some very encouraging results, in total between March and October there was a total of 30,375 clicks on the discover page. This has positive implications for possibly selling the pass on-line in the future, particularly as illustrated below as usage patterns of the card correlate strongly with activity on the website.

	March	April	May	June	July	August	Sep	October
Visits on Discover web page	2387	3725	3757	3637	4435	5367	3496	3562

The pattern of the traffic on the Discover web page mirrors quite strongly the pattern of use between March and October. The table below maps Discover pass usage against traffic on the web page, promotion of the pass and external events which may influence use such as school holidays.

Calendar of Discover Pass activity



The table is a purely a guide to highlight patterns of pass usage and its influences, however it does demonstrate some very clear patterns on the influences of the usage of the pass. The first big pattern to point out is the manner in which pages viewed on the passes web page have mirrored the pattern of usage over the 7 month period. This does suggest that visitors using the pass are using and being influenced by the web page.

In terms the promotions there are sharp rises of overall uses of the pass in the months following both the launch and Metro poster campaign in March and the Metro Radio campaign in June. School holidays also demonstrate the effect that would be expected with August showing the peak of pass usage.

Issues to look at for taking the development of the pass forward

- **Attractions that had little or zero uses of the card**

While some attractions reported a positive response in terms of card usage, a number of attractions had very few and in some cases no use from the card at all. There are many reasons for this ranging from the nature and visibility of the offer, the suitability of promotion for the attractions audience to communication issues, changes in personnel and commitment to the card by attractions. The answer to why an attraction will no doubt be a unique combination of these issues to each attraction.

- **Recording the usage**

There was a series of minor issue around communication and recording the usage of the pass at the attractions. The majority of attractions had no problem with completing the monitoring form however some attractions had never heard of the pass and some had not been recording usage and were only able to provide estimates, 'off the top of their heads'. These numbers are probably incidental in the grand scheme of the pass and occurred among some of the attractions that received the lowest usage. However it does make it a little bit difficult to analyse the true extent of pass usage.

- **Tracking unique card reference numbers**

In an ideal world attractions would have recorded what unique card reference numbers were used so that we could track where cards were bought and then subsequently used to see if we could try and build up a profile of where cards were being purchased and where they were being used. This would go some way towards gaining an understanding of how well the card had worked in encouraging people to move around Tyne & Wear. However very few attractions recorded the card number with some suggesting the process was too time consuming.