



# The Common Room Creative Commission Brief Appendix

## Interpretation Themes:

### **Big idea: Powered by Place**

#### **Sub themes:**

- The Great Northern Coalfield literally fuelled the rapid expansion of the Industrial Revolution.
- The building, the Institute and its archives exemplify the leading role that mineral wealth and engineering in the North East played in national and global development.
- The Common Room continues to make a difference, as a hub for ideas and driving the next technical revolution

#### **Topics**

- Geology of the NE & Great Northern Coalfield (geological context)
- Britain's Industrial Revolution (historic context)
- The building and the archive together provide the first-hand evidence of the importance of the North East – architecture, features and functions of the rooms, the archive repository
- The digital and technical revolution – how the Common Room nurtures regional innovation and collaboration
- Industrial expansion - Steam locomotion and the application of steam power – the waggonways and ultimately the railways

### **Big idea: Founded on Altruism and Economics, Research and Learning**

#### **Sub themes:**

- The Institute's earliest members, such as Nicholas Wood, were committed to education and social improvement, research, learning and innovation
- The Common Room's mission today is inspired by the altruism of the Institute's

The Common Room of the Great North Ltd, Neville Hall, Westgate Rd, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1SE

T 0191 2322201 E [liz.mayes@northeastcommonroom.org.uk](mailto:liz.mayes@northeastcommonroom.org.uk)

Charity no: 1175946 Company no: 10609517 VAT Registration number: 264569274



### 'founding figures'

- The Institute's founders recognised the considerable economic benefits for individuals and the industry of a well-educated workforce operating in a safe and well-run environment
- Topics
- Important founding figures and their biographies (social history)
- The role of altruism and philanthropy in the 18th and 19th centuries (social history)
- The need for and dangers of coal extraction and deep mining; the need for safe working conditions (social history)
- Mine accidents and records (social history)
- Inventions that saved lives and boosted business e.g. the miner's safety lamp (engineering and innovation)

## **Big idea: A Repository of Unrivalled Skills and Knowledge**

### **Sub themes**

- Britain's industrial and economic growth was greatly accelerated by the geological knowledge and engineering innovation nurtured in Newcastle and the North East.
- This legacy is being fostered here, creating new skills to benefit the North East

### **Topics**

- Engineers and innovation – network and connections of innovators, inventors, creative thinkers and advances
- Newcomen and other Engines, pumping, winding, locomotive power, ventilation, safety, lighting, transportation – evidence from the archive
- It happened here: presentations of new ideas, inventions and advancements in geological science
- The building heritage and archive contents – exploring historic spaces, events and change through the building use and documentary evidence

## **Big idea: Global Impact of Pioneering Innovation**

### **Sub themes:**

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- The engineering knowledge and innovation of the North East, brought together in this building, had revolutionary global impact and immense wealth creation in the 19th century, comparable to 'Silicon Valley' in the 21st century.
- The Common Room is following in the footsteps of the Romans and the Victorians, educating and inspiring the engineers who change our world
- The Common Room's mission is to inspire and engage the next generation of innovators and engineers

### **Topics**

- A brief history of engineering (Romans to the present day) – what have engineers ever done for us?
- Where in the World did they go?
- Where in the World are they going now?
- Cutting edge thinking in the 21st century – regional pioneers

### **Big idea: Continuity of Purpose**

#### **Sub-themes**

- The Common Room is dedicated to furthering scientific and technical skills.
- It is founded on the North East's expertise in engineering, geology, deep mining, safety, and transportation.
- The Common Room cherishes an unbroken tradition of sharing knowledge and driving innovation, which continues in the 21st century.

### **Topics**

- Why STEM and STEAM are important to us
- Joining the Common Room
- Programme of talks, events and online resources
- How the Common Room is addressing the UN Sustainable Development Goals

### **Big idea: Powered by People**

#### **Sub-themes**

- The people of the North East changed the world during the industrial revolution

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and, inspired by that legacy, are continuing to learn and innovate to forge the future

- The Common Room as a community broker between the industries of the past and the businesses of the future; questioning, challenging, making a difference.
- Membership stories – past and present – are celebrated at the Common Room: within the building, in its archives and through its ongoing activities

### **Topics**

- The movers and shakers associated with the Common Room, past, present and future
- The people and industries who are engaged with the Common Room today
- Behind the scenes: the staff and volunteers who make things happen
- Special skills: the people and skills behind restoring and maintaining this historic building and its remarkable archive
- Following in their footsteps: the next generation of young engineers and innovators

### **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:**

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>