

# Culture Leicestershire

Annual Review 2023-24









This year's annual report showcases how Leicestershire County Council, through the services of Culture Leicestershire, has had positive impact on the lives of tens of thousands of Leicestershire residents and visitors to the county. The inspiring work of our talented teams in Libraries, Heritage, Collections, Learning and Cultural Participation makes a difference to people of all ages and backgrounds, helping to improve lives and wellbeing.

Research has convincingly demonstrated positive health and wellbeing impacts, regardless of where people live. Taking part in cultural activity of all kinds makes people happier, less lonely, less likely to die early and more likely to report good health. Older adults, in particular those who engage in culture, have reduced chances of suffering depression and anxiety, experiencing chronic pain, becoming frail, or developing dementia or cognitive impairment. Children also benefit; those young people who read for pleasure at an early age are less likely to use cigarettes and alcohol as teenagers, have better educational outcomes and better interpersonal skills.

I hope reading this report will inspire others to find out more about our amazing provision and visit one of our libraries, museums or the Record Office, join one of our amazing events or activities, or participate as a volunteer.



Mrs Christine Radford CC  
Lead Member,  
Adults and Communities



Jon Wilson  
Director,  
Adults and Communities

# Our Services

Our Libraries, Collections and Learning, Heritage and Cultural Participation services come together as **Culture Leicestershire**.

Together we deliver a diverse, inclusive, accessible and engaging cultural offer focussing on health and wellbeing, building great communities, improving opportunities and helping to build a strong local economy.

We are a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), supporting the delivery of the County Council's strategic outcomes and Arts Council England's Let's Create strategy.

Our service is part of the Adults and Communities Department and, along with GoLearn! Leicestershire Adult Learning Service, form the County Council's Communities and Wellbeing Service.

Our shared vision is to **create space to spark imagination, celebrate communities and enhance wellbeing.**







**The Library Service** operates 16 council-run libraries, 3 mobile libraries and the library at HMP Gartree. We also support a network of 35 community-managed libraries across the county. All libraries offer their local communities traditional library lending, PC access, information provision, events and activities, children's services and access to digital resources.

Our buildings are used by a wide variety of community groups and organisations and are well placed to promote, support and deliver the activities of the wider Communities and Wellbeing Services and help the council to realise its strategic outcomes.



**The Collections and Learning Service** develops, cares for, preserves, interprets and makes accessible the wealth of archive collections that form the basis of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland and the important museum collections that reflect the natural history of Leicestershire and the lives of people who have made the county their home.

**Creative Learning Services (CLS)** provides library, museum and art collections, alongside workshops, resources and professional advice and guidance, for local schools, academies and home educators. Designed to foster a love of independent learning in pupils, CLS enables us to engage young people with the breadth of our cultural offer.



**The Heritage and Museums** team manages and welcomes visitors to our five heritage sites: Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre, the 1620s House and Garden, Melton Carnegie Museum, Harborough Museum and Charnwood Museum.

We deliver a programme of high-quality events and activities as well as playing our part in local community initiatives. We reflect local community heritage and showcase our nationally and internationally significant assets which are important tourist attractions for the county.

We have award-winning family and school learning programmes, and our permanent displays and temporary exhibitions showcase the rich history of the county and the treasures of our collections, enabling us to work with communities to share untold stories that are relevant and important to local people.





**The Cultural Participation team** co-creates cultural activity and resources by supporting local people to shape how culture is interpreted, experienced and enjoyed. We empower communities to influence our heritage and library services in order to realise their own aims and aspirations. Our focus is on enhancing the wellbeing of individuals and communities through culture, supporting cohesion, equity of opportunity and happiness.

We deliver themed, time-limited, cultural projects with a focus on those who do not currently access or feel represented by our services. Our work offers routes for participants to progress beyond the projects themselves, including developing their own independent groups or utilising other opportunities in libraries, museums, Leicestershire Adult Learning Service and partner organisations. We seek to build cultural capital in Leicestershire, generate new connections and champion Creative Practitioners.

# Supporting the Council's Strategic Outcomes

## Great Communities



**The Community Connectors Network** helps to shape our services to better meet the needs of local people. This year 17 Community Connectors have volunteered to represent their communities. They support us to overcome the challenges of underrepresentation and provide insight into the interests, needs and aspirations of Leicestershire's diverse communities; support us to innovate and take risks; and enable us to hear and understand alternative views and break down barriers for people who are marginalised and often excluded from participating in cultural activity.

The network has been involved in: development of the Cultural Strategy; co-creation of over 15 new heritage projects; informing the 'Culture to You' pilot; consultation on the council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy; NPO board members; presenting to the County Council Corporate Equalities Board and the Communities Board; the service-wide Volunteering Sharing Day and the development of our Data Strategy Brief.



*“ I feel listened to and valued. Whether it’s advising on culturally sensitive labels in museum exhibitions about heritage or challenging senior management about plans, our opinions and views have impact and our involvement changes lives. ”*

**Anila Sisoda, Community Connector Volunteer**

**The World Cultures collection** forms part of the historic museum education school loans service which dates back to the 1930s and is now curated and cared for by the Museum Collections team.



We’ve been working on a review of the objects supported by a small team of volunteers who assisted with a variety of tasks including photography, conservation cleaning, relabelling and packing. This project means that we, and future researchers, will know what we have and where it can be found. It also helps us to identify which communities and original nations we should consult with to better understand how we should care for these objects in the future.

*“ We enjoy volunteering at the Collections Centre as we have the opportunity to make improvements and preserve the collection for the future. We are able to check for infestations, do photography, catalogue and re-pack – we enjoy having the opportunity to handle rare and historic items and learn more about their origins. ”*

**Jill and Sue,  
Collections Conservation Volunteers**

We have a varied **Heritage Exhibition Programme** across our 5 sites. Alongside exhibitions we create ourselves and those that feature the work of local artists, photographers and craft makers, this year we successfully co-curated 7 new exhibitions with local people where communities themselves led the focus and content. Highlights from the programme include:



**A Tale of Two Re-interments** -

co-curated by members of the Hijaz Trust, it reveals the similarities between Richard III and His Eminence Murshid

Muhammad Abdul Wahab Siddiqi (RA); two high-profile men who died young and were re-interred in sacred places in the local area.



**Melton Maps** -

showcased how historic maps charted the changes to Melton Mowbray and how important maps were for recording land boundaries, property

ownership and rights of way, and not just for pointing you in the right direction!



**Charnwood at Work**

- a family-friendly exhibition revisited the Ladybird Books series 'People at Work' and considered how occupations and attitudes have

changed since the publication of the first title sixty years ago.



We support a network of 35 **Community Managed Libraries (CMLs)** and the majority are entirely volunteer run. Collectively they provide nearly 600 hours of access to library venues per week. In 2023 our CMLs issued 305,551 books and saw 8,000 new library members. In addition to access to a wide range of books, CMLs are rooted in their local communities and offer a range of provision that best meets local need, from supporting reading groups to story and rhyme time sessions for children and families, and from cafés to yoga.



# Improved Opportunities



**Bookstart** is delivered in partnership with the BookTrust. Between December 2022 and September 2023, nearly 2250 Bookstart packs were distributed to preschool children in Leicestershire facilitated by Loughborough, Wigston, Hinckley and Coalville Libraries, as part of a new targeted approach. The library service co-ordinates deliveries of the Bookstart baby packs to health centres across the county which are gifted to every baby born in Leicestershire at their six-week health check.

**Creative Learning Services (CLS)** provides learning opportunities for young people across all key stages giving them access to inspiring collections and supporting all learning needs and abilities. Our library loans the highest quality and most up-to-date books to schools – supporting literacy and the curriculum and encouraging reading for pleasure. We make sure that each child is represented in the books they read. Reading for pleasure is proven to help mitigate socioeconomic inequalities such as low family income and educational background. Book challenges and awards for pupils aged 6 to 14 encourage young people to broaden their reading and form their own ideas and opinions.

“ Many teachers were surprised how well their classes engaged and there were comments about how powerful it was to hear someone talking passionately about books. ”





Creative Learning Services gives young people access to original works of art and museum collections in their own classrooms. Museum and art learning professionals use their expertise with these inspiring collections to create curriculum-based workshops which engage every pupil and ensure that each child can participate in the learning opportunities, achieving quality outcomes.

*“ Adults in the session were pleasantly surprised that children who wouldn't usually engage with new adults had their hands up to answer questions. These are children with high needs. That shows how comfortable they were in the session and how engaged they were. The whole class accessed the learning and had a great time. I will be asking for this session again next year. ”*

Staff in schools are supported to develop their knowledge and skills through CPD and network meetings to allow young people to continue to benefit from the resources loaned to schools.



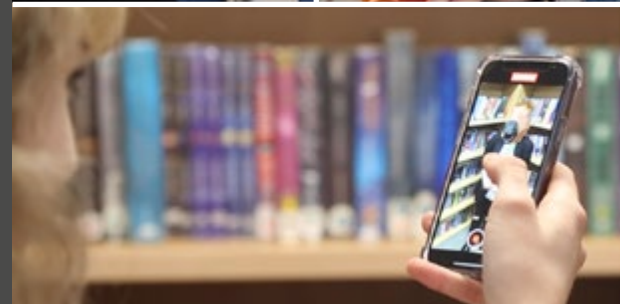


The 2022-2025 mission for the library service is to provide **Family-Friendly Spaces** to encourage all children to fulfil their potential. To achieve this ambition a programme to improve spaces in libraries utilising Section

106 developer contributions was created. In 2023, this focused on Ashby Library where the children's library was moved to make it more accessible, and new shelving, seating and display furniture created a nature-inspired space which highlights the library's location within the National Forest. The result was a beautiful and welcoming new area for children and their families and friends to use and enjoy. Following the opening of the new children's space junior book loans increased, spiking at a 27% increase on the previous year's loans. Three hundred and forty children participated in the Summer Reading Challenge at Ashby Library, a 17% increase on the previous year.

Developing cultural opportunities for children, young people and families using our network of libraries has been a key priority this year. Our **Creative Expression in Libraries (CEIL)** programme offered participants at Birstall, Oadby, Shepshed and Melton libraries a rich experience of working in partnership with highly-skilled creative practitioners. At Birstall, pupils from Hallam Fields Primary School co-created a comic book project that inspired new ways to explore storytelling. In Shepshed, teenagers from Iveshead School created a BookTok video that encourages other young people to take their own reading journeys, while other young adults engaged in street art workshops culminating in two permanently displayed artworks. At Melton, young people with special educational needs worked intensively with a professional photographer developing their creative skills to showcase the unique character of the town. While in Oadby, families with under fives were the focus of eight interactive workshops to promote increased usage of the library space by this important audience group.

In many cases the impact of the work has been profound with one young man returning to college to pursue a qualification in photography specifically because of his involvement in the project at Melton. As his parent reported, "It has given him a purpose for moving on." More generally, over 85% of those involved in projects reported their intention to engage further with future cultural activities in libraries and noted feeling more connected with their local library.



# Strong Economy



Our **Engaging Collections Programme** uses our museum collections to inspire creativity, encourage research and develop skills needed within the creative economy. By encouraging students, lecturers and researchers to use this rich resource, our collections inspire the designers of the future and inform those studying the past. Tailor-made sessions are created for each visitor or group. Students, designers and artists can study items closely, and draw and photograph them to inform their work. The experience provides a unique insight into the natural world, art and design and manufacturing.

Students from regional universities including De Montfort University Leicester, University of Lincoln, Nottingham Trent University and the School of Art and Design at Loughborough University regularly use the fashion collections as part of their project work. Students and researchers from further afield, including internationally, also travel to study our collections, with the Symington Collection of fashionable corsetry, foundation wear and swimwear dating from 1850s, being the purpose of many of these visits.

Our museum and heritage sites are important to the local tourism economy and are recognised through the VisitEngland **Visitor Attractions Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS)**. Sites are judged on the pre-arrival information, the arrival, quality of the attraction, the staff, cleanliness, catering and retail offer. All our sites improved their scores in 2023.

Melton Carnegie Museum, Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre and the 1620s House and Garden have all now reached the gold standard and are nominated for VisitEngland's prestigious Gold accolade which demonstrates an exceptional visitor experience.

Bosworth's assessment also qualifies for nomination in the Best Told Story accolade, while the 1620s House and Garden qualifies for nomination in both the Welcome and Hidden Gem accolades. (Melton Carnegie Museum was awarded Hidden Gem status in 2022-23.)

Charnwood Museum was commended on the very high standards of cleanliness throughout the museum and Harborough Museum was praised for its very knowledgeable, welcoming and helpful staff.





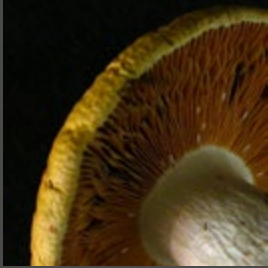


Our new Arts Council National Portfolio (NPO) funding enabled us to **create 20 opportunities for freelance creative practitioners** who use their skills as artists, musicians, actors, writers, performers, makers and producers to develop co-created projects with our audiences. The new working group have developed specific values for working with CP's which are: inclusivity, creativity, passion, integrity, collaboration and support. These will underpin plans around improved application processes, training and development opportunities and fair pay, all contributing to a positive cultural ecology for Leicestershire.





# Clean and Green



The **Museum Natural Life collections** are a historical and genetic record of the natural history of Leicestershire preserved for future generations. They are used by volunteers and researchers as a resource in the identification of plant and animal species, and the study of these historic collections can show how the flora and fauna of the county has changed over time, giving an insight into local environmental changes. They can also be used to increase public awareness and knowledge of the natural world, and our teaching collections are used in school sessions based around environmental change and its impact on nature.







At the **1620s House and Garden** we are reducing our carbon footprint and encouraging visitors to learn about the environment and nature. We offer environmental challenges, trails and guided tours of the garden where visitors can learn about climate change and get tips on growing their own plants.

We use locally-sourced products in our café and within our retail offer, and use traditional vegetables grown in the garden within the café and compost our garden and kitchen waste.

Our volunteers have created a Bug Hotel made from recycled materials, a wildlife pond and formal and informal log piles. They also care for our orchard, which has seen new hazel saplings successfully grown from hazelnuts. We have bird boxes and encourage wild flowers and wildlife which means that there have been some great sightings – including Great Crested Newts.

We launched a new **Cultural Youth Forum (CYF)** to support our work with young people, enhance the development of our services and nurture the museum and library professionals of the future. This activity promotes youth participation and encourages youth voices in line with the council's ambition for a countywide Youth Charter. The CYF chose to focus on climate change and environmental responsibility and explored the relationships between natural and cultural heritage, the climate and historic environments and sustainability.



Over 60 young people engaged with over 20 workshops in our market town museums, these included interactive sessions delivered by a council Environmental Officer alongside art activities delivered by Creative Practitioners. Insight gathered from over 200 young people will help shape and inform future plans for the council's Net Zero Strategy.

**“** *This work will support young people from our county to help understand, shape and drive the council's net zero ambition through taking action to cut carbon emissions, reduce their consumption of resources and protect nature. It's clear those involved are passionate about single-use plastic, reducing fast fashion and reducing energy consumption and they have shared some creative ideas – for example, increasing the vegetarian options in schools, reducing time in the shower and fully turning off devices rather than leaving them on standby. Their activities across our museums and libraries has been seen by 1000's of visitors which can only help raise awareness in ways that work for other young people.* **”**

**Jenny Allen, Team Manager, Carbon Reduction**



**Culture Nature at Coalville Library** received funding from Natural England and Libraries Connected with the aim of developing a plan for a community 'green space' at the front of the library, to make the space more inviting and to use it as a catalyst for nature-based cultural activities within the library.

Library staff were trained on the Nature Connectedness model, including the importance of connecting with nature through the senses and how this can have a positive impact on mental health and making connections with others. A new 'Nature Youth Group' with students from Maplewell Hall Post-16, was set up with assistance from local stakeholders, Coalville C.A.N. They took part in a 10-week course which included hands-on learning, crafting to make library displays, bird feeders, bug hotels, mosaics, interactive activities for library visitors and ultimately their own garden design.



# Safe and Well



The Participation team undertook a community survey with residents living within a one-mile radius of the 1620s House and Garden. Three hundred and sixty five people responded and their feedback helped us gain a better understanding of what local people would like to see as part of our cultural offer at the site. This led to the **'The Friends Welcome'**, an initiative that involved the Friends group, site staff and volunteers. It provides weekly activities, games and crafting and making sessions alongside chatting and socialising and soup, tea and coffee – all free of charge. A wellbeing expert provides advice, guidance and information, including

signposting to appropriate services and gives support to volunteers around training, resources and materials and troubleshooting. Parish Council funding has now been secured to continue the project and the number of participants continues to grow.

*“ It has given me purpose. I am less isolated and it has given me confidence to engage further with people outside of the group. ”*



*“ I feel proud to be part of the team that makes this happen. Knowing I can make a difference to people who live in my neighbourhood I know are struggling makes me happy. ”*

## Friends Welcome Volunteer



Charnwood Museum fulfilled their ambition of developing a bespoke offer for children and families with additional and special educational needs. The Participation team secured a Covid Recovery Grant through Museum Development East Midlands to fund the work, which saw Creative Learning Services work with the museum to develop **'Chilled Charnwood'** – a monthly quiet opening, providing a safe and relaxed space for families to enjoy and learn from the displays and participate in activities. Staff were trained to ensure these sessions could be sustained and access to museum collections for handling and additional sensory resources was provided. These 'relaxed' sessions include reduced sound levels, raised light levels, ear defenders, fidget backpacks, a new quiet Chill Out Zone and bespoke object handling or other activity sessions. Together, we developed a social story in partnership with the GoLearn! Loughborough Adult Learners Heritage Group and a sensory map of the museum to help families to feel confident when visiting.

Our **Home Library Service** is a volunteer-run service delivering books to adults in their own homes who are otherwise unable to go to their local library. Although primarily focused on older residents it is available to any adult who is temporarily or permanently housebound. Potential clients are matched with a regular volunteer who can provide a selection of library materials based on the customer's needs and interests. Currently there are 46 volunteers and with the recent appointment of a full-time Home Library Service Officer this year the service is now growing steadily and sustainably. The service has a strong befriending element; volunteers and clients can chat and form a supportive relationship based on a shared enjoyment of reading. This is much valued and provides a welcome respite from isolation.

*“ The service has been a great help to me... people like my volunteer make a big difference to people like me. ”*



Libraries are 'spokes' of the **Family Hub** programme and signpost and guide people to the Family Hubs Service. The Family Hubs have worked with the library service to deliver 'Making Every Contact Count' training to staff and provide resources in libraries that can be used by families to improve their wellbeing and opportunities. Families find our libraries safe spaces, free from some of the stigma associated with more formal social service settings.





# Achievements

## National Portfolio Organisation (NPO)

April 2023 was the start of our journey as a new Arts Council England (ACE) NPO. This followed a lengthy and highly competitive application process and Leicestershire is proud to be the only NPO in the country to be a combined Library and Heritage Service.

Being recognised by ACE as an organisation with the ambition and ability to help deliver their Let's Create Strategy and warrant direct investment is a huge achievement. As a result, we are benefitting from a wide range of ACE support, including an additional £261,000 each year until 2026. This is enabling us to extend and enhance the excellent work we already deliver and to develop and invest in our most important resource – our staff and volunteers.

We've achieved a huge amount in the first year, much of that is encompassed in this report. We have had to dig deep and challenge ourselves and our ways of working, but overwhelmingly we have seen that with the right support, partners and resources we are reaching new audiences and co-creating meaningful and exciting cultural opportunities.



“ Leicestershire County Council – Culture Leicestershire – have made strong progress in delivering against their activity plan in 2023/24 and high numbers of people have been reached. They have completed a good number of projects working with a wide range of people... Delivery against planned activities has been excellent. ”

Arts Council England, review of our first year as a National Portfolio Organisation



**The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland** has retained its Accredited Archive Service status awarded by The National Archives (TNA). Every five years TNA assess the standards by which a Record Office collects, preserves and makes accessible the records and archives that reflect the lives of their local communities, including those which constitute the Public Record. Scrutiny of our policies, procedures and plans and an inspection visit showed how we care for the collections and how we support people to access them.



Bosworth Battlefield was recognised by **the Heritage Education Trust's Sandford Award 2023** which supports the heritage sector in achieving high-quality, inclusive and accessible learning and promotes continuous provision.

*“ The diverse site of Bosworth Battlefield and Heritage Centre will engage visitors in numerous ways... (it) has an innovative exhibition centre and (offers) the opportunity to empathise and reflect on the past... the creative ways in which this significant point in our history has been interpreted is admirable... The dedicated Centre's team... (deliver) a knowledgeable, memorable, well managed visit of exceptional quality. ”*

### East Midlands Heritage Awards 2023

- **New Directions in Heritage** – Foxton Canal Museum – Home is Where We Are!
- **Supporting Heritage** – Medfest Community Panel
- **Best Project under £1000** – 1620s Garden Volunteers
- **Heritage Hero** – Anand Mangal. Community Connector
- **Archives & Research Entries** – Loughborough Library Local Studies Volunteer Group 'Market 800'

### Hinckley and Bosworth Make a Difference

**Awards** - Heritage Culture and Tourism Offer - in recognition of the Hijaz Trust for A Tale of Two Re-interments and the Med Fest Community Panel.





# Highlights

## Harborough Museum **Hallaton Treasure gallery**



Harborough Museum revealed new displays making the silver gilt first-century Roman cavalry helmet the centrepiece of the **Hallaton Treasure gallery**. This project was the culmination of over 20 years of conservation at the British Museum and restoration and research into this unique silver gilt Roman cavalry helmet, first discovered by the Hallaton Fieldwork Group and University of Leicester Archaeological Services in 2001.

Our museum curatorial team worked with conservators, an archaeological illustrator and volunteers to produce detailed drawings of how this extraordinary object might have originally looked. This meant we could commission two replicas of the helmet which were generously funded by local organisations, including Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, Market Harborough Historical Society, Market Harborough and the Bowdens Charity, Leicestershire Fieldworkers and the Friends of Leicester and Leicestershire Museums.

The first replica (top left) was made by Leicestershire-based silversmith, senior lecturer, and practice-based researcher at De Montfort University, Rajesh Gogna. Rajesh translated the drawings of the iconography into a 3D model which was then 3D printed.

The second replica (bottom left) was made by archaeologist and replica maker Francesco Galluccio. Francesco used traditional methods and tools which would have been familiar to the Roman master craftsman who produced the original helmet.



## Leicestershire Libraries 2023 Summer Reading Challenge



The theme for the **2023 Summer Reading Challenge** was **'Ready, Set, Read'**, a major national campaign co-ordinated by The Reading Agency. The Challenge is to inspire children aged between 4 and 12 to read for pleasure and combines free access to books with fun social activities, alongside a creative online element. It is the UK's biggest free reading promotion for primary-aged children and research has proved that taking part in the challenge helps to overcome the well-documented reading 'dip' that children experience while on their summer holidays. Throughout the summer, staff and volunteers supported local children to discover new authors and explore a wide range of different books. Nearly two thousand more children took part in the challenge than last year, reading an incredible 252,035 books and reading or listening to 2,644 e-books!



## Heritage events and activities



All five Heritage sites delivered a diverse and popular **events and activities** programme. This included living history camps, guided walks, trails, talks, family activities, fairs and workshops for all ages. The Medieval Medley marks the anniversary of the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 and this year we introduced costumed Guided Walks, while our children's 'Knight School' sessions sold out.

In partnership with 'Plant Hunters Fairs', 1620s House and Garden welcomed the best independent plant nurseries from the across the country to the popular Spring Plant Fair. This event continues to grow and is supported by our dedicated volunteers and the Friends of the House and Garden.





## Harborough Museum We are Harborough

The Participation team worked with over 500 people from the Harborough district who shared their memories, experiences, meaningful objects and stories in an exhibition called **We Are Harborough**. Ukrainians and their host families, our Gypsy and Traveller communities, young people, adult learners, children and their families and heritage volunteers collaborated and worked together to showcase what Harborough means to them.

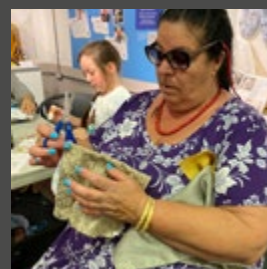


“ When the bombs started dropping, we had to leave our homes in a hurry, often with only half an hour to get out of our house, taking with us the bare essentials to get to the bomb shelters in underground stations. Some of us stayed in the shelters for days. When a period of relative quiet came, if it was safe, we would go back to our homes to get more supplies. Some of us never had the opportunity to return to our homes before we had to flee our country. This exhibition showcases the most precious or meaningful objects we brought with us to England. This has helped us to tell our story and made us feel more at home here. ”

“ We are doing this exhibition to share that we're the same as you, we just have a different lifestyle. ”

Market Harborough has been home to Gypsies and Travellers for hundreds of years. But many people know little about them and they often suffer from prejudice and discrimination. Women from these communities worked to develop a beautiful exhibition sharing stories of their lives, how they live today and how their predecessors lived on the road. From memories of making pegs to sell with their mothers, to travelling to fairs in traditional wagons. Younger participants also produced beautiful scrapbooks full of photos, stories and information about their culture and way of life. The result was a unique and special insight into their often misunderstood community.

“ People seem to fear us, but nothing to fear, we suffer from generalisations. ”



“ Our lifestyle might be different, but we are equal. ”



Arts Council England are the national development agency for creativity and culture. Our service has been able to diversify our workforce model by **working with Creative Practitioners**. We made a commitment to harness and grow the skills of freelance creative practitioners by offering commissioned projects as part of

our cultural programme. This approach has enabled us to welcome over 20 new people to the team ranging from artists working with recycled paper, illustrators, puppeteers, street performers, spoken word artists, film makers and actors. They have brought us diversity, new ideas, new skills and new opportunities for working with new audiences in different ways.

*“ I’m really pleased people have respected and trusted my expertise, my skills and my vision and allowed me to run with this project and of course I’m paid fairly in the profession I love. Hopefully this is just the start, and I will be employed again to run more projects. ”*

**Creative Practitioner, Melton Youth Forum**



*“ I really felt privileged to run this art project with Baca, a charity I am passionate about, and their service users – unaccompanied asylum seekers. It was a wonderful opportunity and I believe made a difference to their lives and gave them a voice as well as being fantastic for me to work on. It was amazing to have the freedom to lead this. The team are so encouraging and supportive, thank you! ”*

**Creative Practitioner, Baca Charity**



# Looking Forward

Our ambition for the year ahead is to build on the achievements of 2023 and start to realise our vision as Culture Leicestershire to **create space to spark imagination, celebrate communities and enhance wellbeing.**

Our Service Plan 2024-26 sets out what we will achieve and how we will embed the investment principles, meet the strategic outcomes and maintain professional standards. The focus of our work will continue to be the delivery of high-quality library and heritage, collections and learning and cultural participation services for Leicestershire residents and the visitors to our county who are vital to its tourist economy. Underpinning this is our commitment to ensure that everyone who wishes to engage with the cultural opportunities we offer can do so and we will be proactive in identifying barriers to engagement, ensuring we seek out the views of those we serve and audiences to help shape our future provision. As a service we are committed to better understanding our environmental responsibility and becoming more sustainable.

## Strategy Development and Governance

Significant investment of time and resources has been directed into developing a new governance process ranging from focused project groups to the NPO Board. Seventy-two staff, 34 participants and volunteers and 19 external partners are involved and engaged in this work.

**A new LCC Cultural Strategy** aims to reflect our approach to community engagement and co-creativity in all that we do; supporting the regeneration of neighbourhoods, stimulating local economies, attracting and inspiring visitors, and bringing people together through culture.

To explore our policy needs under a Cultural Strategy for Leicestershire County Council, we partnered with Nottingham University and were successful in securing a Research England grant.

Over 100 people have taken part in:

- Visioning a Creative and Cultural County (VCCC) consultation days
- VCCC Online Sharing Day with other local authorities
- VCCC Summer Project Day at Leicester University.

These activities resulted in a Cultural Mapping Exercise and a Cultural Strategy Blueprint.

Work on a new **Audience Data Strategy** has begun, with an aim of better understanding our audiences and tailoring our service offer to their current and future needs. Our new data strategy group commissioned an external organisation to a) develop processes where service priorities are data driven by all stakeholders; b) develop a suite of easily accessible service-wide reporting systems; c) develop a differentiated evaluation toolkit that responds to service needs; and d) embed the new data strategy within the Culture Leicestershire Strategy, Museum Access Policy 21-25, Libraries Roadmap 22-25 and in the Access Policy for the Record Office when it is reviewed in 2027.

# Partnerships Stakeholders and Supporters

Anand Mangal  
Ladies Group  
Arts Council England  
Baca Loughborough  
Better Outdoors  
BookTrust  
Buzzing Roots  
Charnwood  
Borough Council  
Charnwood Forest  
Geopark  
Children and Family  
Services Family Hubs  
Coalville CAN  
Creative  
Leicestershire  
Culture Club  
Melton  
Digital Culture  
Network  
East Midlands  
Oral History Archive  
Foxton Canal  
Museum  
GATE (Gypsy and  
Traveller Equality)  
Go Getta Youth  
Organisation

Go Learn!  
Leicestershire  
Adult Learning  
Green Life  
Innovations  
Greener Schools  
Hallam Fields  
Primary School  
Harborough  
District Council  
Harborough  
Woodland  
Heritage  
Volunteering Group  
Hijaz Trust  
Hugglescote and  
Donington le Heath  
Parish Council  
Iveshead School  
Leicester  
City Council  
Leicestershire  
County Council  
Environment team  
Leicestershire  
County Council  
Local Area  
Coordinators  
Leicestershire and  
Rutland Wildlife Trust

Leicestershire  
Shared Reading  
Libraries Connected  
Longfield Academy  
Loughborough  
College  
Loughborough  
Library local studies  
Maplewell Hall School  
Melton Bid  
Melton  
Borough Council  
Museum Development  
Midlands  
The National Forest  
Company  
Natural England  
Passion Youth Group  
Pedestrian  
The Reading Agency  
Research England  
Rutland  
County Council  
School Development  
Support Agency  
Shepshed  
Town Council  
Sikh Welfare  
Association

Social Prescribers  
(internal / NHS)  
University  
of Leicester  
University  
of Nottingham  
The Visitor  
Studies Group  
Whatever It Takes  
**Supporters**  
The Former Friends  
of Leicestershire and  
Leicester Museum  
Friends of Melton  
Carnegie Museum  
Friends of the 1620s  
House and Garden  
Friends of the  
Record Office for  
Leicestershire,  
Leicester and Rutland  
The Leicestershire  
Archaeological and  
Historical Society  
Market Harborough  
Historical Society  
The Museum of Fox  
Hunting Trust  
Richard III Society

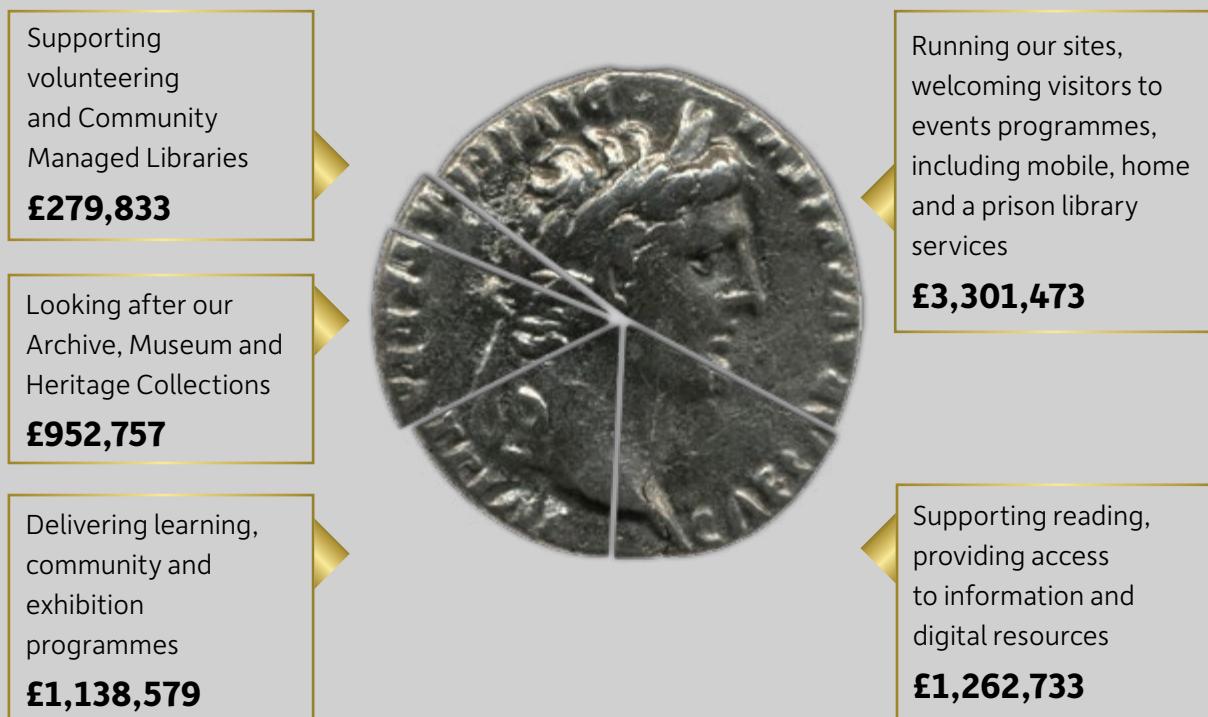


# Funding

## Where Does the Money Come From?



## How Do We Spend It?



# Performance

**Visits**  
to our  
**venues**  
**748,810**

**ROLLR**  
Document  
Production  
**11,846**

Museum and Archive records  
**added to electronic catalogue**  
**7,804**

**Library loans**  
**2,436,129**

**Volunteer hours**  
**20,075**

**Number of volunteers**  
**400**

**1,661**  
participants in  
**24**  
co-created projects

**Website views**  
**3,413,509**

**83,570**  
**Resources**  
**delivered**  
to

**86,341**  
Children and young people  
**taking part in our activities**

**Social media**  
followers  
**44,114**

**59,295**  
pupils and staff

**123**  
workshops  
generated through  
**NPO funded activity**

**Library members**  
**111,052**

**622**  
objects on loan from  
museum collections

Objects used  
in temporary  
exhibitions  
**486**

**Archaeological**  
Archives deposited  
**113**

Enquiries to the  
**Museum and Archive Collections**  
**3,986**

**Home Library**  
Service  
clients  
**49**





A moment of musical illumination from Ricardo Insua-Cao, one of the members of BabyGigs, during the 'Musical Bin Dippers' community project, South Wigston.

Photographer – Bill Newsinger





 Leicestershire  
County Council

THE  
**1620s**  
HOUSE & GARDEN  
at Donington le Heath

  
**BOSWORTH**  
BATTLEFIELD HERITAGE CENTRE  
AND COUNTRY PARK

  
charnwood  
museum

**Harborough**  
Museum

 MELTON  
CARNEGIE  
MUSEUM

YOUR **LiBR@RY**  
KNOWLEDGE • DISCOVERY • ENTERTAINMENT

**The Record Office**  
Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland

 Culture  
to You

 LEICESTERSHIRE  
HOME  
LIBRARY  
SERVICE

 Museum  
Collections

 Creative  
Learning  
Services