



**CULTURE,  
TOURISM AND  
HERITAGE**

**2024/25**

**BUSINESS PLAN**



**CULTURE  
TOURISM  
HERITAGE**



# Report Contents

- 1: Introduction from Cllr Helen Howell**
- 2-5: Service Plan Introduction**
- 6-15: Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre**
- 16-31: Learning and Engagement - Chester House Estate and ARC**
- 32-39: University of Leicester Partnership**
- 40-52: Chester House Estate Commercial**
- 53-62: Discover Northamptonshire**
- 63-67: Corby Heritage Centre**
- 68-72: North Northamptonshire Greenway Project**
- 73-88: Cornerstone**
- 89-92: Shared Business Resource - Business Operations**
- 93-99: Future Development**
- 100-102: Service Finances**





"As we embark on this exciting journey, I am thrilled to introduce the new Culture, Tourism, and Heritage Business Plan. Our vision for North Northamptonshire is clear: to celebrate the rich tapestry of our heritage, ignite a passion for culture, and invite visitors to experience the unique treasures that grace our region. The launch of this plan marks a significant step in our commitment to preserving our legacy while paving the way for a vibrant, sustainable future.

In a world of ever-evolving demands and expectations, our multifaceted approach is a testament to our dedication to making North Northamptonshire a premier cultural and tourist destination. We understand that our heritage is not confined to the past but serves as a guiding light for future endeavors. Our goal is to inspire, educate, and invigorate our community while extending a warm invitation to visitors from near and far.

This plan encapsulates the culmination of meticulous planning, strategic thinking, and unwavering dedication from our team. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the staff, partners, and stakeholders who have played an integral role in shaping this vision into a reality. Your unwavering support and collaborative spirit have been instrumental in crafting a plan that reflects the diverse offer of North Northamptonshire's culture, heritage, and tourism.

We envision a North Northamptonshire where culture, heritage, and tourism thrive together, igniting economic growth, fostering inclusivity, and nurturing a deep sense of pride in our shared legacy and in our communities. I invite you all to join us on this remarkable journey as we shape the future while honouring our past, preserving our treasures, and inviting the world to experience the beauty and charm of North Northamptonshire."

**Cllr Helen Howell, the Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture and Tourism and Deputy Leader of North Northamptonshire Council.**



## Introduction to Report

In September 2022, North Northamptonshire Council undertook a significant reorganisation with the establishment of the 'Culture, Tourism, and Heritage' Service. This strategic initiative streamlined multiple departments under the umbrella of the Communities and Leisure Directorate. This move underscores our unwavering commitment to safeguarding, promoting, and celebrating the rich cultural heritage and vibrant tourism assets that distinguish North Northamptonshire.

### Our Vision

Our vision is based on by a resolute commitment to developing a sustainable, operationally efficient, and immersive experience for both residents and visitors. We are resolutely focused on illuminating the unique cultural treasures within North Northamptonshire while preserving these valuable legacies for the benefit of future generations. Our collaborative efforts with partners are geared towards revitalising the tourism economy through infrastructure enhancement and innovative marketing strategies, with the overarching goal of attracting investment and visitors.

### Service Area

The 'Culture, Tourism, and Heritage' Service is an comprehensive and intricately linked network encompassing a multitude of departments, each serving a specific function in realising our overarching vision. This approach ensures the strategic and sustainable management of North Northamptonshire's cultural and historical assets.

The Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service includes the following areas:

- The Chester House Estate (CHE)
- Corby Heritage Centre
- Cornerstone (Alfred East Art Gallery and Kettering Museum)
- Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC)
- North Northamptonshire Council Events
- Discover North Northamptonshire
- Local Visitor Economy Partnership
- Destination Nene Valley (DNV)
- The Northamptonshire Greenway Project
- Theatre Contracts for the Corby Core Theatre, The Lighthouse Theatre and The Castle Theatre.
- Visitor Attraction / Park contracts for Stanwick Lakes and Twywell Hill and Dales
- Cultural, Heritage and Tourism Partnerships

The management of all sectors will now be consolidated under a unified business plan, under the diligent oversight of a newly appointed Head of Service. This cohesive approach combines the business plan with operations, benefiting from an innovative strategy that optimises revenue generation and expenditure control, including the efficient sharing of resources across departments. Our primary objective is to optimise asset utilisation and space allocation, ensuring a varied range of offerings that cater to a diverse audience throughout the year, even during off-peak seasons. Our comprehensive service portfolio encompasses both commercial and core components, listed below:



**Education and Learning:** Our commitment to education and learning extends across all venues. We offer engaging and informative programs designed for schools, colleges, and lifelong learners, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of North Northamptonshire's rich cultural heritage. These programs are tailored to accommodate various learning styles, ensuring accessibility for all visitors. This inclusive approach reflects our dedication to making the region's history and culture accessible to everyone. By offering hands-on educational experiences, we aim to create a sense of ownership and pride in the cultural assets of the region while providing valuable learning opportunities in cultural, heritage and environmental management.

**Archaeological Stewardship:** As stewards of the County's Archaeological Depositary at the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC), we manage and safeguard a diverse range of archaeological artefacts, some dating back thousands of years. Collaborating with local, national and international universities, scholars, and experts, we support ongoing research and academic works. The ARC is a centre of archaeological research excellence, contributing to a broader understanding of the region's history. Additionally, we actively engage the community through public lectures, workshops, field school experiences and guided tours, promoting a deeper connection between the public and their archaeological heritage.

**Museums and Art Gallery:** Our free-to-enter museums and Art Gallery - the Chester House Estate, Corby Heritage Centre, Kettering Museum and Alfred East Art Gallery - serve as repositories of history and culture. We prioritise meticulous preservation and employ state-of-the-art techniques to protect valuable artifacts and historical records. Our commitment extends to improving and introducing climate control, security systems, and fire prevention, ensuring long-term conservation. Beyond static displays, our museums will offer interactive exhibits and educational programs suitable for all ages, making learning engaging and immersive. Our curators and historians continually update exhibits to ensure accuracy and relevance. Over the coming months, we will be working with Museums Development East Midlands to renew and introduce museum accreditation (from Arts Council England) status.

**Tourism Promotion:** The Tourist Information Centre at Rushden Lakes, operated by Discover Northamptonshire, is more than an information desk; it's a data-driven hub for tourism. It collects and analyses data on tourism trends and visitor preferences, allowing us to tailor marketing strategies and offers to evolving customer needs. Furthermore, it collaborates with local businesses to ensure visitors have access to the best accommodation, dining, and recreational options, strengthening North Northamptonshire's appeal as a tourist destination. We are also in the process of developing a new Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Northamptonshire, working with Visit England.

**Commercial Catering:** At the Chester House Estate, we will prioritise an authentic culinary experience that showcases locally sourced produce. We collaborate with local suppliers and farms, emphasising sustainability and supporting local businesses. Our menu features a range of dishes, from traditional to contemporary, to represent the diversity of North Northamptonshire's cuisine. We are committed to accommodating dietary preferences for inclusivity. In our retail spaces, we curate unique, locally sourced products that reflect the artistic and cultural traditions of the region while promoting sustainable consumer choices, fostering economic development in the community. Following the opening of the Cornerstone in Kettering, will model will be replicated.

**Flexible Event Spaces:** Our venues are adaptable and multifunctional, serving as spaces for a wide range of events, from corporate conferences and weddings to art exhibitions and community gatherings. These events contribute to the area's economic growth by attracting visitors and facilitating business activities. Moreover, they foster a sense of community and cultural cohesion, allowing residents and visitors to come together and celebrate North Northamptonshire's heritage.

**Year-Round Cultural Engagement:** Our year-round events program is diverse and inclusive, offering something for everyone. Music and art festivals celebrate the region's cultural heritage, providing platforms for local talent and offering immersive experiences. These events serve not only as entertainment but also as educational opportunities, fostering an appreciation for the region's cultural heritage and contributing to the service's economic sustainability.

**Land Management:** free-to-enter country estate at The Chester House Estate offers a peaceful escape from urban life. Environmental stewardship ensures the preservation of its natural beauty. Educational programs and guided nature walks provide insights into the diverse ecosystems of North Northamptonshire, and the estate serves as a hub for outdoor enthusiasts, with trails, picnic areas, and educational signage enriching the visitor experience.

**Future Capital Projects:** In addition to our core initiatives, the service is committed to managing several ongoing and upcoming capital projects, enhancing the region's appeal and infrastructure.

The North Northamptonshire Greenway project is set to create an extensive network of walking and cycling routes, enhancing connectivity and accessibility. These routes will not only promote active lifestyles but also provide an eco-friendly mode of transportation for residents and visitors, reducing the carbon footprint and showcasing the natural beauty of the region.

The restoration of the Manor House at Kettering Museum is a significant undertaking to preserve and revitalise a historical landmark. This project will not only restore the structural integrity of the building but also enhance its role as a cultural and educational centre, creating an enriching environment for visitors and residents.

The replacement of the Kettering Library roof is a critical maintenance project to ensure the longevity and safety of a valuable community resource.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the 'Culture, Tourism, and Heritage' service is committed to enriching North Northamptonshire with a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to cultural preservation and tourism. Our dedication to preservation, education, and community engagement underscores our commitment to a prosperous and sustainable future for heritage, culture, and tourism in the region. We continuously seek opportunities for growth and innovation while preserving the treasures of our past to illuminate the path forward for residents and visitors alike. Through these strategic efforts, we aim to foster a vibrant, culturally rich, and economically robust North Northamptonshire, ensuring a sustainable and enriching future for all.



## Finance Summary

| Department                           | Income           | Staffing Costs | Utilities    | Operational Costs | Repairs and Maintenance | Investment  | Department Cost (+/-) |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Culture Tourism and Heritage Service | £ (855,890.00)   | £ 84,780.00    | £ -          | £ -               | £ -                     | £ -         | £ (771,110.00)        |
| Chester House Estate (Commercial)    | £ (1,418,627.00) | £ 799,038.98   | £ 97,992.00  | £ 341,500.00      | £ 92,384.96             | £ 28,000.00 | £ (59,711.06)         |
| Chester House Estate (Core)          | £ (118,785.66)   | £ 174,190.48   | £ 18,000.00  | £ 86,980.50       | £ 6,000.00              | £ 20,000.00 | £ 186,385.32          |
| Business Operations                  | £ -              | £ 228,362.16   | £ -          | £ 62,040.00       | £ -                     | £ -         | £ 290,402.16          |
| Corby Heritage Centre                | £ (600.00)       | £ 37,932.00    | £ 2,400.00   | £ 6,000.00        | £ 2,400.00              | £ 3,600.00  | £ 51,732.00           |
| The Cornerstone                      | £ -              | £ 218,772.68   | £ 27,000.00  | £ 1,200.00        | £ -                     | £ 48,000.00 | £ 294,972.68          |
| Discover Northamptonshire            | £ (185,100.00)   | £ 147,668.90   | £ 24,744.00  | £ 17,016.00       | £ 3,000.00              | £ -         | £ 7,328.90            |
| <b>Total</b>                         | £ (2,579,002.66) | £ 1,690,745.20 | £ 170,136.00 | £ 514,736.50      | £ 103,784.96            | £ 99,600.00 | £ (0.00)              |

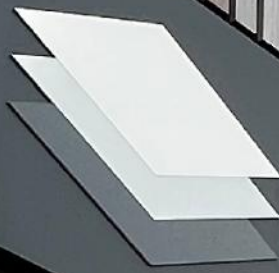
This report presents the finances for the 24/25 financial year. In the table above the finances for each service are presented. We forecast that with the council contribution of £855.890, the service will cover all costs.

The income and expenditure targets for the 2024/25 fiscal year have been meticulously crafted and endorsed by our Head of Service and department managers. These targets are rooted in our past achievements and the future strategies outlined in this report.

Throughout the fiscal year 24/25, a primary focus is dedicated to investigating diverse governance alternatives for various assets and departments. This includes exploring opportunities within the voluntary sector and establishing charitable trusts, as detailed in Section 10 titled 'Future Development.' It is anticipated that these efforts may yield a positive impact on the baseline budget provided by the council to the service for years to come.

Moving forwards from 25/26 if we do not implement new governance models and initiatives that are set out within section 10, we anticipate an annual average decrease of 2.5% in council contributions from 2024 to 2029. To counterbalance this reduction in our budget, we have set a goal of increasing income generation by an average of 4% each year.

It's essential to note that the current service plan and financial projections do not encompass the mobilisation and launch of the Cornerstone. The Cornerstone's initiation will entail significant expenses related to both the core operations and commercial facets, including staff wages and catering stock. Once a definitive opening timeframe for the Cornerstone is established, a comprehensive business plan will be crafted for the department. This will lead to a revision of the overall service finances to incorporate the additional income and expenditure associated with the Cornerstone's operations. Any surplus generated within the service prior to this milestone will be actively reinvested back into the continuous development of the service.



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE  
THE  
ARC

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
RESOURCE CENTRE

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
RESOURCE CENTRE

archives and objects from  
archaeological fieldwork from  
more than 20,000 boxes of  
archaeological sites within the county.  
Preserving these archives so  
they can be used by researchers. Our archives are  
kept in optimal conditions so  
they can last for generations.



# SECTION 1 NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE CENTRE



## Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre

The Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC), located at the Chester House Estate, is a state-of-the-art climate-controlled facility that acts as the publicly accessible archaeological archive store for both North Northamptonshire and West Northamptonshire Councils. The ARC is an almost unique facility with only one other local authority area (Greater London) in the UK boasting a specialist archaeological store that is easily accessible to the public.

The core aims of the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre are:

- Connecting the people of Northamptonshire to their archaeological past and helping provide a sense of place to the county's residents.
- Providing open public access to these collections to all to ensure that Northamptonshire's heritage is both at the forefront of national research and easily accessible by local people.
- Facilitating archaeological displays for museums and other organisations within Northamptonshire and beyond.
- Caring long term for these collections to national standards to they are still accessible for future generations.
- Providing hands on opportunities for the public to engage with archaeology and archaeological objects through volunteering, tours, and engagement events.
- Fulfilling the need for a publicly accessible archaeological archives for projects resulting from the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- To be recognised as a leading model for access and care for archaeological collections within the United Kingdom.

The ARC provides free and open access to archaeological collections for all, regardless of background. Researchers and users of the ARC include members of the public interested in their local history, school groups, university students, professional archaeologists and academic researchers (see accessibility & engagement section for further details on users). The ARC also carries out public tours of the building showing members of the public highlights of Northamptonshire's archaeological past allowing us to engage a non-specialist audience. In most other areas of the UK, these archaeological collections are usually very limited in their accessibility or completely inaccessible to the general public. It is a key part of our core offer that we make these collections accessible to all.

The ARC cares for and curates the Northamptonshire's archaeological collections. Our collections are curated in the perfect environmental conditions for archaeological objects within our state-of-the-art facility. This will ensure they will be accessible and useable long into the future. Currently, as of November 2023, the store holds over 21,000 boxes of archaeological objects from over 4,000 pieces of archaeological fieldwork that has taken place within the county with another 4,000 boxes due to arrive over the coming years from existing archaeological projects.

The vast majority of our archaeological collections are the result of the planning process (e.g. housing developments, infrastructure projects, quarries) and the ARC fulfils the requirement within the National Planning Policy Framework for developers to create a publicly accessible archive for any archaeological mitigation work they undertake as a result of development. Each year Northamptonshire generates on average between 350 and 400 boxes of archaeological archives as a result of the planning process. We also engage with community groups within Northamptonshire who undertake archaeological fieldwork in their area to help ensure that their hard work and research is accessible to the wider public.

The ARC facilitates loans of objects to other museums, heritage organisations and venues in Northamptonshire and beyond to engage the public with their local heritage. Archaeological archives take up a lot of space and none of the museums or other heritage organisations within Northamptonshire are able to store this material themselves, especially as many are voluntary run organisations without the capacity. Instead, the ARC is able to loan objects directly to local museums so that the public are able to directly engage with them within the communities that they were found.

The ARC is currently open 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday for researchers and tours and is open on some weekends throughout the year.

## **Funding**

The ARC's annual running cost (including staffing) is £117,555. As a joint service the ARC receives £61,000 in funding from West Northamptonshire Council which is covered by Inter Authority Agreement between North and West Northamptonshire Councils as we store and make publicly accessible archives on behalf of them.

The ARC also generates income from a box deposition charge for commercial archaeological projects taking place within Northamptonshire (current charge is £120 + VAT per box for archaeological projects taking place between 2020 and the present, £20 + VAT for those pre 2020). This figure is charged for each box that is deposited within the ARC as a result of developer funded projects (e.g. housing developments, infrastructure schemes, quarries). Currently the majority of archives being deposited are from pre-2020 schemes of fieldwork as it can take over 5 years for a site archive to be ready for deposition. The ARC also seeks to gain additional income through grant funding applications (see Partnerships and Grants for further details).

## **Staffing**

The ARC is served by two full time curators.

The Archaeological Curator takes on the overall responsibility of the collections and the strategic direction for the ARC. They are responsible for ensuring policy documentation is up to date and they liaise with internal and external stakeholders. Along with the Head of Service they are overall responsible for the application for and maintenance of Arts Council England museum accreditation.



The Archaeological Curator line manages the Assistant Archaeological Curator and the CHE Learning team and supports the Learning and Engagement Manager at a strategic level ensuring that they are fulfilling their key aims. They are responsible for the interpretation elements of the CHE estate. They are also the co-director of the Irchester Field School working on the strategic direction of it along with our academic partners at the University of Leicester.

The Assistant Archaeological Curator assists the Archaeological Curator with the day to day management of the ARC collections', accessing new and legacy archives while ensuring they meet the highest possible standards of collections care. They also co-ordinate and lead the volunteers working within the ARC on collections based tasks. They facilitate research visits to the collections from the public and professional researchers. They deputise for the management of the ARC in the absence of the Archaeological Curator.

To help care for our collections, the ARC provides many volunteering opportunities to a large team of nearly 100 volunteers (see volunteering for further details).

### **The ARC's opening two years**

**Mobilisation:** The ARC inherited a disparate collection of archives that were stored across the UK. Archaeological collections from Northamptonshire were stored in over 90 different locations ranging from warehouses to people's garages. There were 5 main legacy stores that had the bulk of the material which were in the care of the former Northamptonshire County Council, the former Northampton Borough Council, Historic England and Museum of London Archaeology but the remainder was stored by either professional archaeological companies or members of the public. The storage conditions were often very poor with pests, mould, damp, and light damage all known issues within the stores. The humidity and temperature controls in the other stores were also not suitable for storing archaeological objects.

Over the last 2 and a half years we have moved over 21,000 boxes to the store with another 4,000 being deposited by professional archaeological companies, community groups, and private individuals. Much of this material was in a poor condition when we received and between 65-70% of the entire collection requires some element of re-packaging to ensure it will be accessible in the future and that its condition would not worsen. Almost all the collection had no previous cataloguing.

Therefore, a key part of the ARC's role has been to re-package and catalogue these archives to ensure they are fully accessible to the public. This is a long term task due to its scale and as of November 2023, a total of 1,700 boxes have been re-packed. A rapid catalogue has been undertaken of the archive with more detailed cataloguing forthcoming. We have also replaced all the silica gel for metal objects (including a large amount of gel that is a known carcinogen) so those collections will be now accessible to the public.





**SMA** Society for Museum Archaeology  
**ANNUAL AWARDS for EXCELLENCE 2022**  
Northamptonshire: An Archaeological Resource Centre  
**Winner Volunteering Award**  
For  
An Borough of Resources Centre  
'Get Up Project'  
Presented at the SMA Annual Conference 2022

Volunteers with 2022 Volunteering Award from Society of Museum Archaeology



**Accessibility & engagement:** Since opening, we have had over 9,000 people visit the ARC building and many more we have engaged with at events either at Chester House or elsewhere. These visits range from academic researchers researching a specific object or archive through to interested local people attending a tour. We also put on a number of open days where we have archaeological activities aimed at engaging the public taking place within the store. The number of visits is far higher than other similar archaeological stores within the UK. Our visitor profile of visit is also unusual within the sector as only around 6% of our visitors fit the profile of a professional researcher (e.g. professional archaeologist, museum professional or academic researcher). Instead the vast majority of the people who engage with our collections in the store are local people interested in their archaeology. This is highly unusual within the archaeological archive sector where most visitors to stores are professionals.

We still get a large number of academic and professional researchers visiting the ARC and within the first 6 months of opening, the ARC has had more than double the number of researchers access archaeological archives from Northamptonshire than the previous 12 years combined. We have facilitated research into Northamptonshire's history by students or academics from 14 universities within the UK (of c.30 universities that teach archaeology), 1 university in Canada and 1 university in Portugal who have used our collections for research. We are still in the process of engaging more universities with our collections as they are learning that they are now accessible for research. Highlights of their research include taking ancient DNA samples to learn more about the lives of the Anglo-Saxon populations of Northamptonshire and research on diseases in cat bones that may inform changes in the modern pet food industry.

As we store the counties archaeological archive, we are able to loan to other organisations for display without those organisations taking on the storage burden. We have provided material for displays for 11 museums and other heritage organisations within Northamptonshire and 1 museum outside of Northamptonshire. We also developed a display at the Discover Northants hub at Rushden Lakes, this is ensuring our collections are reaching a much wider audience than before we begun moving the objects to the ARC. We have also loaned material for research to 5 universities where the techniques they were undertaking required specialist equipment located at the university.

**“Oundle Museum has been able to deposit archaeological items from the museum store at the ARC. This has freed up space in the store which is hugely beneficial to the museum as we are volunteer run and have limited storage space. Being able to borrow objects from the ARC widens the range of objects that the museum can display, which in turn is likely to attract more visitors to the museum and widen our audience.”**

**Museum Trustee and member of the Oundle Museum Organising Committee**



One of the highlights of our engagement has been Operation Phoenix which we have been involved with for the past 18 months. This is a project where we are working with Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue using archaeology engagement as a form of mental health therapy for fire service staff who are suffering. Our part of the project has been engaging the Fire and Rescue staff with archaeological objects within the store. The other project partners include University of Leicester, Rockingham Forest Trust and Breaking Ground Heritage. This project has been a huge success and clear health benefits have been measured amongst the participants. We are intending to continue this project in 2024 with all the project partners and to build upon the first years success. The intention is to include a display element in the project where the Fire & Rescue staff develop a display for the general public using objects within the ARC.

**“The Team at the ARC have been instrumental in the setting up and running of our Pilot Scheme for Operation Phoenix to support Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service staff who are dealing with difficult emotions and wellbeing issues often caused by our line of work. Without the ARC team we would not have been able to offer such a comprehensive and fascinating agenda! Our participants were enthralled and absorbed in equal measure by the range of activities that the ARC Team managed to put on for us. Our participants were totally captured by their experiences, and they all attested to the huge benefits they all felt from their time with the ARC! The team are owed a debt of gratitude and I hope they are proud of what they helped facilitate and of the support they gave to people who needed it!”**

**Operation Phoenix Lead, Northants Fire and Rescue Service**

As the ARC uses their archive collections to reach a wide range of audience, it was selected for a study undertaken on behalf of the Society of Museum Archaeology looking at how different museums and archive stores engage audiences with their archaeological archive collections. The work of the ARC using archaeological archives to engage non-specialist audiences is to also form the basis of research for a PhD as this is an overlooked area within the heritage sector.

**“The ARC is without a doubt the premier resource for archaeological research in Northamptonshire. Not only does the ARC curate an enormously valuable collection of archaeological archives, through the efforts of its staff this collection is helpfully made easily accessible to professional archaeologists and members of the public. As a professional researcher who has worked with the ARC since its opening, the team and their volunteers have regularly been pivotal in not only facilitating my research but also in actively promoting impactful archaeological work and engagement initiatives. Through their efforts, the ARC has effectively developed into a hub through which diverse commercial, educational, and community groups can share expertise and develop close relationships, to the benefit of local communities.”**

**Professional Archaeologist, Museum of London Archaeology**

**Volunteering:** Volunteering is at the heart of what we do at the ARC. Since the ARC opened in October 2021, we have had over 5900 hours of volunteer support from 97 individuals who have spent at least one day helping support the ARC (average of 10 days of 6 hours per volunteer). Their tasks include assisting re-boxing collections to ensure they are meeting national collections standards, cataloguing collections, and running tours of the store for the general public. Our volunteers have a wide range of prior experience, from those where this is their first experience engaging with archaeology or collections, through to those with 40 years of experience working with archaeology. Our volunteers range from ages 16 to 84. The vast majority of our volunteers live within 15 miles and, in particular, live around Wellingborough, Rushden, Higham Ferrers, Raunds, Kettering and Northampton.

We also offer a successful archaeological archive work experience placement over two weeks during the summer holidays for those studying GCSE, A-Levels and undergraduate degrees who would like experience within the archaeological sector. Students from Creating Tomorrow College, the SEN college based at CHE, also work within the ARC, providing an opportunity that they would likely otherwise never have.

Many of them had not engaged with archaeology before and we have been working with them developing their skills. In particular, we have had a group of 16 volunteers working with an experienced volunteer who has a background in human osteology. They have been intensively working on our skeletal remains collections and ensuring they are properly catalogued and sorted. Many of these collections we have never had any information about so their work has been instrumental in making them more accessible for researchers. This has led to them developing a completely new skill and it has inspired many of them to undertake further studies in this area that they would never have considered without volunteering in the ARC.

Working with archaeology has been proven to have mental health benefits for those involved (such as our work with Operation Phoenix) and this has also been a benefit on our volunteering programme. A sizable group of our volunteers, many of whom are retired, have noted that volunteering in the ARC helped them with post-covid anxiety. Volunteering has also helped several with difficult situations such as loss or dealing with a loved one who is long term ill. This can be summarised by a quote from one of our volunteers:

**“I began volunteering at the ARC at Chester House a couple of years ago. At that time I knew my husband was terminally ill. The days I spent volunteering gave me respite from caring from him and a chance to concentrate on things that I enjoyed rather than dwelling on my personal circumstances. Since my husband’s death earlier this year, the ARC has continued to provide me with regular opportunities to get out of the house and spend time with sympathetic and caring people who have offered me so much support, whilst doing work I love. It has all had a very positive impact on my mental health and helped me cope throughout an incredibly difficult time”**

Our volunteering programme was awarded the Society of Museum Archaeology Volunteering Award in 2022. This was a testament to the fantastic work that they are undertaking. One of the judges’ comments was ‘the sheer scale of this volunteering project is amazing’ which highlights how professionals within the archaeological and museum sector appreciate how unusual it is to have so many volunteers working with archaeological collections within an organisation.

## Partnership & Grants

During our first two years we have been able to receive £119,000 of grant funding from Historic England. This grant was associated with the ARC being able to receive the archives from the excavations of a Roman Villa at Stanwick and a large number of smaller archaeological sites. This one off grant allowed the ARC to purchase new shelving for the paper store and metal store and to build a specialist shelving unit to store 16 partially complete pieces of Roman mosaic. We have also received a smaller funding grant from Nene Rivers Trust worth £3000 to provide equipment to support our volunteering programme.

Over the last 2 years we have built partnerships with several different universities and professional archaeological companies which have led to benefits for wider public. In particular we have built a strong partnership with the University of Leicester (see also Irchester Field School). The ARC has been approached to be a collaborating organisation for funding applications from 3 universities (Leicester, Exeter, Sheffield) and one professional archaeological company (MOLA). The successful projects have been worth over £75,000 of funding. While this money does not come directly to the ARC, these grants provide opportunities that facilitate public engagement that would otherwise be impossible for us. For example, one grant was associated with a project where collections in the ARC were x-rayed and that research led to a practical pottery project where local people were able to make their own pots based upon the research and some of which were later displayed at CHE. We are currently project partners for 5 separate current applications from universities with the Arts and Humanities Research Council and other funding bodies which are worth a combined total of £3m.

Due to the unique nature of the ARC, how accessible our collections are and our building of relationships, it is clear that universities and other heritage organisations want to work with us. These relationships are able to provide opportunities for the public, volunteers and staff that otherwise would not be possible through our own means. Universities have also provided training and engagement opportunities for our volunteers, community archaeology groups and the wider public within Northamptonshire.

## Model of best practice

The sustainable business model for CHE and the ARC, the state-of-the-art facility we have, and the levels of our public engagement has generated significant interest amongst professionals working within the heritage sector within the UK. We have had visitors from many other museums, heritage organisations and national heritage bodies around the United Kingdom who have come to further understand how we operate. The ARC has recently been cited as a case study for a project commissioned by Arts Council England and Historic England looking at storage solutions for archaeological collections within the UK. Organisations from across the UK have visited and discuss with us how we do things to inform their planning and development for similar projects in the future.



## Future Challenges

During the survey work for the ARC before it was built, it was anticipated there were around 15,000 boxes of material. Instead there are currently 25,000 boxes of archives in total that are either already within the collection or are due to be deposited. This substantially impacted the long term storage projections. In order to maintain sustainability and to ensure there is space for future archives in the future, there is some work that can be undertaken within the next two years to ensure space for the next few decades. This work includes:

- Moving the stone from the existing store into a separate building at CHE. Stone does not require the conditions that other archaeological objects do but does take up a substantial amount of space. With the stone in the store it takes up the equivalent of 3,500 boxes worth of space that is long term worth £420,000 of future income over a long term period (based on current box charges). The investment into additional storage at CHE would cost substantially less than this (estimate of £15,000).
- Addition of extra archive shelving within the ARC can be added through the additional of roller racking replacing static shelving. This would account for around 6,000 extra boxes worth of space. This space would be worth £720,000 of future income (based on current box charges). The investment for this is estimated to be around £100,000. We look to attain external grant funding to help secure this long-term storage over the coming years.

## Future Vision

The ARC would look to continue its positive work engaging the people in Northamptonshire and reach more diverse audiences within the county and beyond. This would include further engagement and the use of the archives in pop-up events at Chester House and beyond while continuing to facilitate loans to museums and other organisations.

A key element of furthering this engagement would be to develop the lobby of the ARC. This is currently underutilised space within the building that could be better used for public engagement. Due to the nature of the collections, the ARC remains locked when not facilitating researchers or tours. We could transform this by making the lobby a display space which would contain display cabinets which would rotate objects from within the store. We would also place an internal window into the store room on the ground floor so the public can see into the store if visiting without needing to enter the room. This would transform the visitor experience for our audience. This work has been costed to be around £15,000.

We will look to complete the rapid catalogue of the archive and to develop research questions that universities and other local researchers could potentially target within our collection. This would encourage their use and improve knowledge about the history and archaeology of Northamptonshire. We would continue to work in partnership with universities and other research institutions to maximise the reach of our collections and the historic understanding they can contribute to.





## **SECTION 2 HERITAGE LEARNING CHESTER HOUSE AND ARC**



## Heritage Learning and Engagement - Chester House Estate and ARC

The Chester House Estate Learning department is a team of dedicated professionals who are passionate about bringing history to life for learners of all ages. We are committed to providing high-quality educational experiences for students of all ages. We offer a variety of programs and workshops that are designed to engage students, develop their critical thinking skills, and help them to gain a deeper understanding of history and culture.

The core aims of the Chester House Estate Learning Department are:

- Provide high-quality educational experiences for students of all ages that engage them with history and culture, develop their critical thinking skills, and help them to gain a deeper understanding of the past.
- Support the teaching of the National Curriculum through a variety of programs and workshops that are aligned with the curriculum's objectives.
- Make the Chester House Estate's rich heritage accessible to the wider community through outreach programs, loan boxes, and other public events.
- Inspire the next generation of historians and archaeologists by providing hands-on learning opportunities and encouraging students to explore their own interests.
- Be a leading model for access and engagement in the heritage sector.

The Chester House Estate Learning Offer is a suite of educational resources and experiences designed to engage visitors of all ages with the rich history and heritage of the site. The offer is divided into two main strands: formal and informal learning.

**Formal Learning:** Formal learning is offered in three strands: onsite facilitated learning, outreach, and loan boxes. All these programs are designed to support the National Curriculum and are accompanied by in-classroom resource packs with a selection of activities that teachers can incorporate into their teaching. The program covers all key stages, from early childhood to post-secondary education, and is also open to other groups such as home-school groups, childcare providers, and scouting groups.

**Onsite facilitated learning visits:** Onsite learning visits to Chester House typically take place during term time and last for four hours. They are scheduled to fit within a school day to minimize disruption and to avoid conflicts with coach pickup and drop-off times. Excluding the Irchester Field School (the learning programme which runs alongside the excavation), a visit typically costs £175 for a class of up to 32 students (excluding the Irchester Field School Learning Programme), which is roughly £5.80 per student. During a typical visit, a class experiences:

- An interactive enquiry-based workshop session, in which students interrogate original and replica objects to develop an understanding of the lives of the people who lived in the Nene Valley, why they settled here and how the landscape shaped the way they lived. Primary workshops include a historical craft element to the programme in which children get the opportunity to create their very own replica item to take home with them whereas Secondary workshops focus in on the objects in greater detail.
- A guided tour of the wider site, providing students with the opportunity to learn more about the history of Chester House Estate and the occupation of the site throughout history.
- Self-guided time during which groups can explore the exhibitions using our on-gallery resource packs, and shop.



The onsite learning programme covers several subjects which is split into a further 11 topics. Where appropriate, programme strands are replicated across different key stages and activities and outcomes are adapted for the education level and needs of the students participating.

### **Topics include:**

- History (the most popular and extensive subject taught, due to the nature of the site)
- Museum maths (EYFS)
- Changes in farming (EYFS and KS1)
- Prehistory in the Nene Valley (KS1 and KS2)
- Nene Valley Romans (KS2)
- Nene Valley Saxons (KS2)
- How do we know about the past? (KS2, KS3, and KS4)
- Irchester Field School (KS2, KS3, and KS4)
- Where can heritage take you? (KS5)

Geography (developed in response to the Ofsted 2023 report that found that fieldwork is often underdeveloped in schools):

- Hedgerow Habitats (EYFS and KS1)
- Habitat classification survey (KS2 and KS3)
- GCSE rivers fieldwork study (KS4 and KS5) – Currently in development with Nene Rivers Trust in response to teachers getting in touch – taking students out of county to collect fieldwork is becoming less affordable and feasible.

**The Irchester Field School:** The Irchester Field School Learning Programme is a unique opportunity for students of all ages to learn about archaeology through hands-on experience. The programme is run by the Chester House Estate Learning Department in partnership with the University of Leicester and the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC).

The Irchester Field School is an active archaeological excavation site where students can learn about the different stages of archaeological research, from excavation to post-excavation analysis. Students can work alongside professional archaeologists to discover and record archaeological remains. They also learn about the different methods of archaeological excavation and recording, and how to interpret archaeological evidence.

**Outreach visits:** We have developed an outreach program to engage schools during our off-season (October half term to February half term) and to address the main barriers to our learning program: the cost of coach hire, disruption to the wider teaching schedule, and the outdoor nature of Chester House.

- Coach hire costs: Coach hire can be prohibitively expensive (£375 per class of 32 students), which more than doubles the cost of a school trip.
- Disruption to the wider teaching schedule: A school trip can disrupt the teaching of the wider curriculum, as children miss lessons.
- Outdoor nature of Chester House: Chester House is an outdoor site, which can make it difficult for schools to visit, especially during bad weather.

Our outreach program addresses these barriers by bringing our workshops to the school. A member of the Chester House Estate Learning Team visits a school with a selection of original objects and delivers at least two practical workshops. The workshops are flexible and can be adapted to fit each school timetable. The topics covered are history-based and replicate program strands across different key stages, with activities and outcomes adapted to the educational level and needs of the participating students.

### **Topics offered:**

- Unveiling Ancient Secrets: Life in prehistory (KS1 and KS2)
- Unveiling Ancient Secrets: Romans (KS2)
- Unveiling Ancient Secrets: How do we know about the past? (KS2, KS3, and KS4)

**Loans boxes:** In addition to our onsite and outreach programs, we also offer loan boxes. Loan boxes contain around 15 original and replica objects from either the Roman or pre-history era. Schools can borrow loan boxes for half a term and receive a resource pack that includes background notes on the objects and a selection of suggested activities. Loan boxes are a great way to bring history to life for students and to help them develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Some of the benefits of using loan boxes in the classroom:

- Hands-on learning: Loan boxes allow students to handle and examine real and replica objects, which can help them to better understand and appreciate the past.
- Inquiry-based learning: Loan boxes encourage students to ask questions and investigate the objects, which can help them to develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Differentiated instruction: Loan boxes can be used to differentiate instruction by providing students with a variety of activities and resources to choose from.
- Cross-curricular learning: Loan boxes can be used to teach across a variety of subjects, including history, science, and art.

**Informal Learning:** Informal learning covers family-based workshops typically delivered in school holidays. Activities are designed to be a fun way for children to either learn about their local heritage, practice a skill, or enjoy an activity with their family groups. These workshops are run concurrent to (or as part of) wider events.

### **Funding**

The Learning Department generates income from its core offer which has been designed to be both affordable to local schools and sustainable for the department:

School trips to and from Chester House: Schools can book a facilitated visit to Chester House for £175 per class of 32 students (excluding the Irchester Field School), or £120 per class (with a minimum of two classes) for an outreach visit.

Loan boxes: Schools and other organisations can borrow loan boxes from the department for £70 per half-term. This fee covers the cost of packing, checking, and storing the loans boxes in addition to repairing or replacing any items that may be damaged or lost during borrowing period.

## **Working with our local SEND community**

The Chester House Estate Learning Programme is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment for all learners, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The department has a growing number of SEND schools and adult SEND centres (such as Spectrum and Northants Cube Disability Trust) that engage with both its formal and informal programmes, as well as its events.

The partnership with the Creating Tomorrow Trust has also helped to increase the number of SEND learners participating in its programmes. The department's status as a Disability Confident site has also helped to raise awareness of its SEND offer and to encourage more SEND learners to visit.

The wider Chester House Estate is now also incorporating SEND sessions into its events programme. This is a positive development that will help to make the estate more accessible and inclusive for all visitors.

## **Staffing**

The Learning Department is served by a full time Learning and Engagement Manager, a part time Learning Engagement Officer and casual facilitators.

The Learning and Engagement Manager is responsible for the management of the Learning Department. They line manage the Learning Engagement Officer and lead on the development of new programs, internships, and the family learning program. They also oversee the safeguarding of visitors on site and coordinate the work of volunteers in the Learning Department. The Learning and Engagement Manager is a key figure in ensuring that the Learning Department is providing high-quality educational experiences for all visitors. They are responsible for developing and implementing a strategic plan that aligns with the overall goals of the Chester House Estate. They also work closely with schools and other organisations to create and deliver programs that meet the needs of their learners.

The Learning Engagement Officer is responsible for engaging with schools and filling the bookings diary. They also generate new business, process bookings, and are the first point of contact for schools. Additionally, they generate itineraries for school groups. The Learning Engagement Officer plays a vital role in ensuring that the Learning Department is accessible to all schools. They work closely with schools to understand their needs and develop programs that meet those needs. They are also responsible for marketing the Learning Department's programs and promoting them to schools in the local area.

The Learning Facilitator is part of the visitor experience team and is responsible for delivering the learning programs and ensuring that students achieve the learning outcomes advertised. They also provide a fantastic learning experience for all learning visitors. The Learning Facilitator is the person that students will interact with most during their visit to the Learning Department. They are responsible for delivering engaging and informative workshops and activities. They also use their knowledge of the site and its collections to create a memorable and educational experience for students.





Young Archaeologist Day, 2023



## Volunteers

Volunteers play a vital role in the Learning Department at the Chester House Estate. They support the delivery of both formal and informal learning programmes, as well as events, and help to create a welcoming and inclusive learning environment for all visitors.

The Learning Department values the contributions of its volunteers and is committed to providing them with a positive and rewarding experience. "I love volunteering at the Chester House Estate because I enjoy interacting with people of all ages and helping them to learn about the estate's history and heritage. It is also very rewarding to see the children's faces light up when they make a new discovery."

Volunteers receive training and support, and they have the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge. "I am passionate about education and I believe that everyone should have the opportunity to learn. Volunteering at the Learning Department allows me to share my knowledge and passion with others. I also enjoy working with the other volunteers and staff, who are all dedicated to providing a high-quality learning experience for visitors."

The Learning Department is grateful for the contributions of its volunteers. They make a significant difference to the department's ability to provide high-quality learning experiences for all visitors.

## Marketing and Engagement Strategies

The Chester House Estate Learning Programme is marketed and promoted to local teachers and schools through a variety of channels, including:

- Word-of-mouth: Teachers are encouraged to refer other teachers to the programme
- Networking: The Learning Department maintains a network of contacts within the teaching community, which is used to promote the programme. We support local business and education conferences as part of our network offer.
- Teacher Event: The Department hosts termly teacher events to highlight upcoming events and changes to the programming.
- Educational Events: The Learning Department regularly supports local educational events, such as the Milton Keynes Education Awards and the Northampton Education Awards. At these events, the department distributes promotional materials and speaks to teachers about the programme.
- Advertising: The Learning Department takes advertisements in the headteacher bulletin and sends emails to its teacher mailing list. These advertisements promote upcoming events and workshops, as well as special offers and the wider site.
- Rebooking incentives: Schools are encouraged to rebook visits by offering a discount on future visits. A follow-up email is also sent after a visit to thank the school for their participation and to remind them of the benefits of the programme and request feedback.
- Teacher training: The Learning Department offers free teacher training events on a variety of topics related to teaching and learning. One free teacher place is offered per school per booking.

The Learning Department currently offers two strands of teacher training, which were developed at the request of schools:

- How to plan your first school trip: This strand is targeted at trainee teachers and early career teachers and provides them with the knowledge and skills they need to plan and deliver a successful school trip to the Chester House Estate.
- How to incorporate original sources into your teaching: This strand is suitable for any non-subject specialists and provides them with the knowledge and skills they need to use original sources, such as artifacts and documents, in their teaching.

The Learning Department collaborates with other specialist suppliers, such as Classics for All (a charity that promotes the teaching of classical subjects in state schools) and Historic England, to offer a broad range of training opportunities to teachers.

The Learning Department's marketing and engagement strategies have been successful in reaching a wide range of potential participants and building relationships with teachers. The department's focus on responding to the needs of schools has helped to make the programme a success.

### **The Development of the Learning programme since opening in 2021**

The Chester House Estate Learning Programme opened in 2021, facing the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools were not taking part in school trips, and there was a risk of trips being cancelled, resulting in lost transportation fees. However, the programme began to gain traction in Easter 2022, as all restrictions were lifted, and schools began to feel more confident about booking trips.

In the 2021/22 financial year, the primary income for the Learning Department came from informal family learning. During the 2022/2023 academic year, the department had welcomed over 10,000 learners through its formal and informal programmes, the majority of whom were from informal programmes. At the time of writing this report, a total of 26954 learners have engaged with the learning programme through either formal or informal learning strands.

Family learning has continued to grow, with 6009 participants in the 2021/22 financial year and 6071 in the 2022/23 financial year, despite the department pausing family learning for six months to focus on developing formal learning programmes. Family learning recommenced for the October half term of the 2022/2023 financial year, and during this nine-day period, family learning activities engaged with 3150 children and their parents and generated £6300 income for the department.

The formal learning offer has also grown significantly. The department began with a limited two-strand programme due to limited capacity in the team, but the offer has now expanded to include a 14+ strand onsite programme. As a result of this development and investment, the department has grown from 964 children visiting by the end of the 2021/22 academic year to 3853 visiting by the end of the 2022/23 academic year. In response to the needs and demands of local schools, the department is continuing to develop and expand its onsite, loans, and outreach offering.



The Learning Department has also grown in terms of staffing. The department opened with a single Learning and Heritage Officer, but the team has now expanded to include a Learning and Engagement Manager, a Learning Engagement Officer, and casual Learning Facilitators.

## **Future Vision of the Department**

The Learning Department at the Chester House Estate has a bright future ahead. The department is committed to:

- **Increasing engagement:** The department aims to increase the number of visitors who participate in its programmes and events. The department will do this by developing new and innovative programmes, as well as by making its programmes more accessible and affordable.
- **Increasing outreach:** The department aims to expand its outreach programme to reach more schools and communities. The department will do this by developing new partnerships and by offering more outreach workshops and activities.
- **Broadening the programme:** The department aims to broaden its programme to include a wider range of topics and themes. The department will do this by consulting with schools and other stakeholders to identify their needs and interests.
- **Improving gallery resources:** The department aims to improve its gallery resources to make them more engaging and informative for visitors. The department will do this by developing new interpretive materials and by creating more interactive exhibits.
- **Developing of a bank of online resources:** The department aims to develop a bank of online resources for teachers and educators. These resources will help teachers to deliver engaging and informative lessons about the history and heritage of the Chester House Estate.

### **Teacher Feedback**

**"We had the most amazing trip, all thanks to your team and especially Natasha who pitched the whole day perfectly. She quickly assessed that it was a high ability group and fitted all activities to satisfy their thirst for knowledge. She was also so passionate about history and make it all come alive, cross curricula also!"**

**"All the staff were really enthusiastic, eager and friendly. the organisation worked well. They enjoyed the museum activity and listening to the experts."**

**"It all worked well, was good to have time in the play area factored in to the timetable. Resources sent to school were useful for creating own worksheets in the galleries that met the children's needs."**

**"Age-appropriate activities, well-pitched, plenty of resources for every child, hand-on, right time, good facilities - room was well kitted out and everything was on hand, not too much talking before we got started."**

**"Strong leader within the classroom session who was great at engaging the class. The different activities were informative and age-appropriate. The handling of real artefacts was a great link to the work we have been doing. The worksheets were age-appropriate. The opportunity to take home something made was a real plus for the children too and something we can look at using within school (the importance of replicas). Timings were good for the session too."**

**"The learning sessions was fantastic, allowed the children to show off what they already knew, and they also learnt new facts."**

## Heritage Events Delivered by the ARC Team

**Chester House Roman Festival:** During the last two years CHE has run a weekend Roman Festival aimed at families and the wider public to engage with Northamptonshire's Roman heritage. It has already become CHE's premier heritage engagement event and it is already one of the largest heritage events taking place within Northamptonshire. It developed out of the Nene Valley Festival of History and Archaeology that was run in partnership with University of Leicester and Rockingham Forest Trust and involved a series of heritage events along the Nene Valley in 2022. Roman Fest is run in partnership with University of Leicester, and It is timed to take place during the Irchester Field School so visitors can also see the active archaeological excavations.

The first Roman Fest on Saturday 25th June 2022 attracted over 2,000 people to CHE and this engagement grew to 4,500 people attending on the weekend of 24th and 25th June 2025. Tickets for this event are kept to free to ensure that the widest possible audience could attend and ensure that it would be easily accessible anyone can engage with the Roman heritage of the Nene Valley. Visitors predominately came from Northamptonshire and the surrounding counties, but some came especially to this event from further afield including London and Manchester.

The event involves historic re-enactments, historic crafts, talks from leading archaeological specialists, pop up stalls and tours of the ARC and excavation area. Many local and regional museums, community archaeological groups, professional archaeological companies, heritage organisations and commercial companies based at Chester House are now involved with the event. These organisations include: Community Landscape and Archaeology Survey Project (CLASP), Corby Heritage Centre, Cornerstone, Eden Wild, Ermine Street Guard, Fane Road Archaeological Group, Higham Ferrers Archaeological Society, Leicestershire Museums, Leicester Museums, Middle Nene Archaeological Group, Museum of London Archaeology, My Ancient World Learning Ltd, Northamptonshire Archaeological Society, Peterborough Museum, Piddington Roman Villa Museum, Roman Trader, Saxby Cider, Trinity Court Potteries, University of Leicester School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester Archaeological Services, and Upper Nene Archaeological Society.

The event has been highly successful for engaging the public with their archaeology and the public feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. One of the re-enactor groups involved commented:

**“Roman Fest was an excellent event as it combined re-enactment, historical crafts, academics, professionals and amateur archaeologists and was aimed at engaging the public with all of this work. This combination is unusual in re-enactment events and worked well”**

The intention is to continue to grow this event in 2024 and beyond with more local heritage stakeholders being involved while maintaining the excellent visitor experience.



Roman Festival, 2023



**Young Persons Archaeology Days:** During the past two years of the Irchester Field School, we have along with our partners at University of Leicester, have trialed a Young Persons Archaeology Day where young people aged 8 to 17 are able to get a chance to have a go at excavating on the site. This is not possible as part of the regular digging days and instead we aim the event at young people. These events took place on weekends when young people and their parents and guardians were able to give it a try.

The days consist of a 90-minute session digging supervised by professional archaeologists and volunteers and a 30-minute session in the ARC analysing archaeological finds. The ARC also runs an open day on the same day. The event inspired many of the attendees and over 50% of those who attended have signed up for the Young Archaeologists Club that is due to open at CHE/ARC in 2024. The events are very well received with feedback from parents including:

**“The staff and volunteers were brilliant with the kids, and there was a lot to do and get involved in. My son has already decided we’re coming back for the event next year!”**

**“My child is hoping to study archaeology at university and this opportunity has provided them with some experience and they came away 100% sure that this is the career that they wish to undertake”**

Going forward the intention is to do at least 4 of these events during the summer which would ensure 240 young people (60 for each event) are able to participate. It is costed sustainably to ensure that we can bring in support from professional archaeologists to ensure the young people get the maximum experience from the day. The chance for young people to get hands on experience undertaking an excavation is a rare opportunity and very few other sites across the UK are able to offer this experience to young people.

**Heritage Open Days:** Every September thousands of volunteers across England organise events to celebrate our fantastic history and culture as part of Heritage Open Day. It's a chance for residents and visitors to see hidden places and try out new experiences, all of which are free to explore. 2024 is the 30th anniversary year (6 – 15 September), and the aim will be to encourage visitors to explore the history of routes, networks and connections. West Northamptonshire Council has been successful in delivering events and activities over the last few years and opportunities exist to deliver a unified and countywide approach given the delivery of a new tourism strategy and the development of a new Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Northamptonshire.

We would be looking to start engaging with this event within North Northamptonshire and the ARC, Discover Northamptonshire and CHE will be working together to develop an offer as part of this event for 2024. This series will also link in with the Destination Nene Valley Festival.

**Archaeological Talks:** In 2022, a series of free talks were trialed at CHE as part of the Nene Valley Communities Past and Present: Festival of History, Archaeology and Heritage event. These talks covered many recent archaeological discoveries within Northamptonshire such as those found at the Stanton Cross development in Wellingborough and those from the Priors Hall Estate in Corby. These talks were very well received by the public and between 40 and 80 people attended each talk within the series. This demonstrated a clear public desire to learn more about the archaeology of their local area. The CHE team would look to expand on these talks and develop a yearlong programme where the public can learn more about archaeological excavations in their area through monthly lecture.

The CHE team will also look to start a lunchtime lecture series. This will involve a talk on local or regional history, tea, cake, and lunch. Similar lunchtime offers have been shown to be successful at other heritage organisations within the UK and would bring in a daytime audience to the site while enhancing our visitors knowledge of their local area.

**Archaeological Courses:** There is currently a skills gap for those participating in archaeology within Northamptonshire. Since it has opened, the ARC and CHE teams regularly field questions for people who want to get involved with local groups but many of the local groups do not have capacity and those interested may not have the current skillset themselves to start a group or undertake a project on their own. Archaeology is known to have a positive benefit for people's health and wellbeing and CHE would look to host courses run by professionals in the field to upskill local people in undertaking different aspects of archaeological fieldwork so they could go back and do it in their local area. This would likely have a wider appeal as there is a shortage of courses providing information how to undertake an archaeological project for the public within the UK.

### **Museum Accreditation Plans**

The Chester House Estate (CHE) and Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) would look to attain Arts Council England (ACE) museum accreditation within the next 3 years. The intention would be that it would be a joint application as between them they meet the key criteria of what a museum is in terms of accessibility to collections and the existing staffing and standards in place would ensure that a joint application would be beneficial.

ACE museum accreditation is the national industry standard within the UK for museums, galleries and organisations engaging the public with collections. There are more than 1700 museums and galleries participating within the scheme across the UK ranging from national organisations such as the Science Museum through to small voluntary run museums.

Museum accreditation ensures that museums and galleries meet agreed national standards in how they are run, how their collections are managed and how they engage with their users. These are all key areas for CHE and the ARC already. The requirements include the creation of policy documentation on how the collections are managed and used, and collections and audience development planning. It also covers organisational health including future business planning.

Both organisations already fulfil many of the requirements for accreditation through their existing policy documentation and planning, but it would ensure they build public confidence in how the collections are managed in trust for society as it would underline that national standards are being met.

CHE/ARC would apply for the scheme and following an initial assessment of governance by ACE, they would then have 3 years to complete the application. It is anticipated that accreditation would be achievable in a shorter time frame as much of the documentation required already exists. Once an organisation has achieved accreditation, it would then be valid for approximately 5 years, after which point, they'd have to re-submit.

Along with having the benefit in increasing public confidence that CHE/ARC are meeting the national standards for museums and galleries, it would also open potential funding opportunities for the organisation as there is funding pots specifically for those that have achieved ACE Museum Accreditation that currently CHE/ARC are not eligible for. These grants can include support for acquiring objects, exhibitions, and training.

To achieve ACE museum accreditation the leads would be the Head of Service and the Archaeological Curator. The CHE General Manager, Learning and Engagement Manager, Facilities & Estates Supervisor and Assistant Archaeological Curator would all feed into different aspects of the process. As part of the process, the organisation would need to engage with an external museum professional who would act as an Accreditation Advisor. Several potential candidates for this role working within the wider region have already been identified.

## **Heritage Interpretation**

The Chester House Estate (CHE) is looking to build upon its successful existing interpretation offer to further engage the public with the historic landscape of the upper Nene valley, the Roman town of Irchester and the historic farm buildings that form the estate. This interpretation scheme would have four main strands:

- Development of the Chester House Museum to further tell the 10,000 year story of the estate, the Nene valley and Roman Irchester. This would build upon the existing museum in place and be based upon the regular discoveries taking place during the Irchester Field School excavations.
- Transform the field that contains the Roman town within it by planting a wildflower meadow and constituting a path around the field following the plan of the Roman streets. This would be complemented with interpretation boards at the locations of key locations within the town. The field currently is very difficult for the public to understand what lay beneath and this work would transform the visitor experience at Chester House.
- Increasing the offer covering the later history of the site. Currently the offer is limited in this regard, but the next phase of interpretation would look to develop this area and tell the stories of the buildings and the people who lived and worked within them.
- Improve the online interpretation offer through the CHE website and look to create a digital museum based on the finds made on site. This would ensure that the story is accessible even to those who are not able to actively visit regularly.



It is understood that there is not the current funding available to support this work. Therefore, the project team would look to engage with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and develop a funding application. The CHE team has a strong track record of delivery of NLHF projects given the success of the CHE scheme.

This work would be led by the Archaeological Curator, who along with the Head of Service, would look to develop the grant application required for this work. Their work would be supported by the Assistant Archaeological Curator and the Learning and Engagement Manager. This would ensure that the National Curriculum would be integrated throughout the text to ensure that school groups can use it as a resource.

The project team would look to survey the public and our volunteers to see what stories they may want to be told during this phase of the interpretation scheme. Historic England would be engaged from an early point to ensure their support and approval given the complexities of the Chester House landscape and its Scheduled Monument status. The project team would work extensively with external partners including the University of Leicester School of Archaeology and Ancient History and other historical organisations to ensure that the information being included is correct. Nene Rivers Trust CIC would also be engaged in relation to the natural environment side of things. Following the securing of funding, a museum design company would be procured to assist with the development of this project.

### **The Creating Tomorrow Trust Partnership**

The partnership between The Chester House Estate and The Creating Tomorrow Trust and Creating Tomorrow College stands as a remarkable partnership, deeply committed to the realms of education, heritage preservation, and community enrichment. In this unique collaboration, students with special educational needs and diverse ages, find themselves at the heart of an extraordinary educational ecosystem. As part of the growing partnership, they are granted invaluable opportunities for hands-on learning within the authentic setting of Chester House, where they actively engage in roles that span customer service, education delivery, archaeology, events delivery, food preparation, and retail management. This immersive learning experience not only enriches their academic knowledge but also equips them with practical skills that are essential for future employment.



At the core of this partnership lies a strong emphasis on mentorship. The dedicated team at The Chester House Estate play a pivotal role in guiding and nurturing the students, offering insights, knowledge, and practical training in their respective fields. This mentorship approach extends beyond the transfer of skills; it instils a sense of responsibility, encourages teamwork, and fosters a steadfast commitment to excellence.

Students, regardless of their barriers, have the unique privilege of learning from seasoned professionals who are deeply passionate about preserving and promoting cultural heritage.

The decision to establish this partnership at Chester House was deliberate, rooted in a profound commitment to hands-on learning and mentorship. With its diverse facilities, including a functioning cafe and shop, Chester House provides an ideal environment for students of varying ages and abilities to gain practical, real-world experience. This unique approach to education equips them with valuable skills and knowledge through planned work experience that prepare them for future employment, thus bridging the gap between education and the workforce.

Furthermore, this collaboration has recently been extended for an additional five years following the first two successful years. The decision to continue this partnership underscores the substantial progress made in fostering a vibrant learning environment and promoting the region's rich cultural heritage. It reflects a steadfast commitment to education, heritage preservation, and community enrichment, ensuring that these efforts continue to flourish in the years to come.

There is a pressing need for a national emphasis on the significance of supporting young people with special educational needs in securing fulfilling jobs with a current UK average of only 4.7% of adults with SEN being able to gain paid employment following school or college education. Recent NHS data indicates that this figure is 2.3% in North Northamptonshire for those with a learning disability. Promoting supported internships more widely, particularly among young people with SEN, is crucial, particularly for those with learning disabilities. Additionally, improved careers guidance and better access to apprenticeships, irrespective of where children live or the additional needs they may have, are fundamental aspects of this endeavour.

As The Chester House Estate and The Creating Tomorrow Trust and Creating Tomorrow College continue their journey, we look forward to ongoing growth, innovation, and substantial community impact. Our service commitment to a five-year lease and partnership, which underscores the shared vision for a brighter future, where education, heritage, and community engagement thrive harmoniously, ensuring that these core values remain central to their mission.







# SECTION 3 UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LEICESTER**



## University of Leicester Partnership

In June 2020, a landmark partnership agreement was established between the University of Leicester (UoL) and North Northants Council (NNC) to create a dynamic and transformative alliance that is redefining heritage and community engagement. This report outlines the key objectives, achievements, and future aspirations of this collaborative endeavour, showcasing how it is making a profound impact on archaeology, education, and social well-being.

The partnership aimed to create a collaborative field school and research project, building on the pilot project in June 2019. This initiative serves multiple purposes:

**Community Research Project:** Establish a long-term, collaborative, inclusive, and sustainable community research project focused on the Roman small town and its wider landscape.

**Archaeological Training:** Provide accessible archaeological training for UoL students, community volunteers, schools, and young people from diverse backgrounds for at least the next five years.

**Post-Excavation Analysis:** Complete post-excavation analysis for previous excavations and offer post-excavation experience/training for UoL students and the wider community year-round.

**Inclusive Field Work Experience:** Provide a wide range of inclusive and accessible fieldwork experience, lifelong learning opportunities, professional development, and training for the wider community.

**Enrichment Activities:** Develop a program of accessible enrichment activities and resources for local/regional schools, informed by UoL research, facilitating engagement with the Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC).

**Publication and Presentation:** Facilitate the publication and presentation of previous excavations and wider research in diverse and accessible formats.

**Collaborative Grant Applications:** Serve as the basis for collaborative grant applications in the field.

The partnership envisioned a collaborative and participatory learning and community engagement program that includes:

**School Programs:** Develop programs for schools, aligned with the national curriculum, focused on the Roman town and cemetery to raise the site's profile and establish Chester House Estate (CHE) as a hub for archaeology and classical subjects in Northants and surrounding counties.

**Mentoring and Professional Development:** Provide UoL archaeology/heritage/education mentoring and professional development opportunities for the CHE team to enhance skills, ensure sustainability, and minimise single points of failure.

**Co-Production:** Engage in co-production of resources, activities, and exhibitions with teachers, young people, and community groups, focusing on archaeology, excavations, local history, and material in the ARC and SAAH research.

**Training and Lifelong Learning:** Develop a flexible program of training, lifelong learning opportunities, and support for community volunteers to ensure program growth and sustainability, encourage a shift to a participatory approach to research and dissemination, and meet National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) funding requirements.

**Stakeholder Engagement:** Establish or consolidate links with key stakeholders such as Creating Tomorrow Trust, Moulton College, and a range of heritage and non-heritage organisations to promote the site and resources and establish CHE as a hub for school and community engagement in Northants and surrounding counties.

**Joint Funding Applications:** Collaborate on joint funding applications for collaborative learning/heritage-related initiatives.

**Flexible, Accessible, and Accredited Professional Development Opportunities:** Provide a wide range of sector-leading, flexible, accessible, and accredited professional development opportunities and placements for young people, the wider community, and UoL students, aligned with the strategic goals of CHE and the ARC.

This partnership seamlessly combines archaeology, education, landscape history, the study of human communities, social and economic history, and social well-being. The aim is to promote interdisciplinary collaboration, enterprise knowledge exchange, and, most importantly, benefit the health and well-being of diverse communities in Northamptonshire and surrounding counties by facilitating access to and participation in heritage, learning, and professional development opportunities.

Under the leadership of Professor Sarah Scott, the UoL team is composed of academics including Dr. Jeremy Taylor, early career researchers, and students. Together, they have not only developed a successful field school but also engaged in heritage events, enterprise initiatives, volunteering opportunities, collaborative research and learning, and interpreting on-site.

UoL has played a crucial role in brokering partnerships and collaborations regionally and nationally, expanding its reach to organisations such as Stanwick Lakes (Rockingham Forest Trust), Nenescape, Nene Park Trust, the Creating Tomorrow College, Rushden Lakes, Museum of London Archaeology, the Leather Conservation Centre and Museum, Northampton Museum and Art Gallery, Northants Heritage Forum, Northampton General Hospital, the Enabled Archaeology Foundation, Northamptonshire Archaeological Society, Northants Fire and Rescue Service, Saxby's Cider, Eden Wild, the Council for British Archaeology, the Council for British Archaeology East Midlands, the Community Archaeology Geophysics Group, the Council for British Archaeology South Midlands, Classics for All, Leicester City Council, and Leicestershire County Council.

### **Partnership Priorities**

The collaborative activities under this partnership have covered a wide spectrum of priorities, including:

**Place-Making:** Enhancing community and place-making efforts through initiatives like Roman Fest and the Irchester Field School.

**Inclusion and Accessibility:** Providing inclusive opportunities for education, especially for Creating Tomorrow College students and School Programs.

**Skills Provision, Capacity Building, and Graduate Retention:** Offering various training, staff development, volunteer opportunities, student opportunities, and work experience to develop and retain talent in the field.

**Health & Wellbeing:** Initiating programs like "Operation Phoenix" in collaboration with Northants Fire and Rescue Service, demonstrating positive impacts on health and wellbeing.

**Tracking and Evaluation:** Piloting a holistic evaluation approach using LeicSurvey to gain a nuanced and holistic understanding of the impact of engagement.

**Accessible Archives:** Engaging schools and young people with a program informed by UoL research and encouraging participation in archaeology.

**Heritage Science:** Pursuing Heritage Science Infrastructure funding to purchase equipment for collaborative collections research.

**Research & Interpretation:** Supporting all aspects of on-site interpretation.

**Participatory Research:** Emphasising participatory research, especially through the Irchester Field School.

**Regional Partnerships:** Networking activities and opportunities to cross-promote, including collaborating with Leicester City Council.

**Transforming Cultures through Creativity and Innovation:** Costing activities to ensure sustainability, enhance income generation, and support innovation.

Partnership Impact





## Partnership Impact

The UoL and NNC partnership has delivered a multitude of positive impacts:

- The opening of a museum on time with an estimated cost-saving of £27,000 on research, interpretation and writing alone.
- Collaborative and inclusive programs and events, such as Roman Fest, largely funded by UoL.
- Significant learning and participatory research through the Irchester Field School and related opportunities for volunteers.
- Engaging over 6,000 individuals in archaeology and heritage activities in June and July 2023.
- Involvement of 1,800 children and 39 schools during a three-week period in June and July 2023.
- A national profile for archaeology and heritage, including nominations for the Council for British Archaeology Achievement Awards 2023 in two categories.
- Major funding bids exceeding £2 million and support for NNC bids such as "Levelling Up."
- Leveraging UoL resources and partnerships to develop a sustainable model, with over £30,000 for the school engagement program in 2023.
- Providing professional development opportunities, including fee waivers for practice-based Ph.D. programs.
- Amplification of achievements through awards and support from UoL External Relations, as well as contributions to CHE films and podcasts.

## Future Aspirations

The UoL and NNC partnership has ambitious goals for the future. The University of Leicester's Heritage Hub is actively facilitating cross-disciplinary and cross-sector collaborations. They are working towards the holistic and strategic development of a ten-year strategy for collaborative learning, school and community engagement, and participatory research.

This partnership has the potential to bring about transformative change in the region. It is not only about the activities themselves but the opportunity for diverse communities to participate in heritage programs, which can be life-changing. By addressing social and educational disadvantages, promoting well-being, sustainable tourism, supporting local businesses, and helping young people develop transferable skills and confidence, this partnership aims to make a lasting impact.

The UoL's Heritage Hub is closely aligned with the aspirations of SHAPE (Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts for People and the Economy), with a focus on making sense of the human world, valuing and expressing the complexity of life and culture, and addressing global issues. The partnership is aligned with NLHF funding priorities to deliver a place-based approach and establish new partnerships for long-term collaboration.

In summary, the partnership between the University of Leicester and North Northants Council is a transformative collaboration that is making a significant impact on heritage, education, and well-being in Northamptonshire and surrounding counties. It has ambitious goals for the future and aims to continue driving positive change in the region.





Field School, 2023



## Irchester Field School

The Irchester Field School's remarkable journey from a small-scale excavation project to a nationally recognised and sustainable program is a testament to the power of collaboration, community engagement, and a commitment to making archaeology accessible to all. Between 2019 and 2023, this transformation unfolded, and the impact has been profound. This report section outlines the key developments, achievements, and strategies employed by the Irchester Field School to achieve sustainability with the UoL partnership.

The 2020 field school, originally planned to be larger in scale, had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this period of interruption allowed the leadership team at the Chester House Estate to re-evaluate their approach and plan for excavations in 2021. It was during this time that the potential for broader partnerships in research, enterprise, learning, and community engagement was recognised, leading to the establishment of a formal partnership agreement in 2020.

The Field School's goals, as outlined in the partnership agreement, are extensive. They include establishing a collaborative field school and research project focused on a Roman small town and its landscape, providing accessible archaeological training, completing post-excavation analysis, offering a wide range of fieldwork experiences, providing enrichment activities for local schools, and facilitating the publication and presentation of research. The UoL team comprises academics, professional archaeologists, early-career researchers, and students.

The Irchester Field School made significant progress in 2023 with 16 UoL students, 88 volunteers, 1,800 school children and over 4000 visitors participating in the programme. The Field School was also shortlisted for two Council for British Archaeology Awards: Engagement & Participation and Learning & Skills.

UoL provided extensive support, including the school engagement team, excavation team, equipment, and academic time, amounting to a total contribution of £113,324.

The team's impact was not limited to archaeological excavations alone. The Field School, in collaboration with CHE volunteers and students, provided valuable experiences to a diverse group of individuals:

**Volunteers:** 2023, 88 CHE volunteers participated, accumulating over 2,644 volunteer hours of archaeological experience. For some, it was their first time gaining experience on an excavation.

**Youth Engagement:** 75 young people aged 8-16, including students with special educational needs, were introduced to excavation work. This program offered accredited archaeological training and school and community engagement experience.

**The Creating Tomorrow Trust:** The educational institution based at the Estate, allowed young adults with special educational needs to gain experience on-site and develop skills with the support of job coaches.

**Community Participation:** The Field School attracted over 6,000 people to activities and events in 2023, including school groups, local community organisations, and a well-being project with Northants Fire and Rescue Service, known as Operation Phoenix.



**Co-production:** Community volunteers became integral to the Field School's operations, receiving extensive training and mentoring to maximise their involvement. Their contributions, feedback, and input into on-site interpretation, learning materials, and public engagement were highly encouraged and incorporated into the program. These volunteers also played a significant role in supporting post-excavation work, contributing to the sustainability of the Field School.

University of Leicester students contributed to the Chester House Estate through various activities, fostering collaboration and inspiring new collaborations. Notably, this partnership led to students becoming University of Leicester students, further demonstrating the far-reaching impact of the program.

The Field School's sustainability has been underpinned by a comprehensive ten-year strategy focused on collaborative learning, community engagement, and participatory research. This strategy has been informed by collaborations with more than 40 groups and organisations, fostering innovative cross-sector partnerships in the Nene Valley and beyond. The combination of income generation, impact and enterprise funding, grants, teamwork, and contributions from staff, students, and volunteers has allowed for the development of sustainable and scalable working models.

Field School has actively contributed to place-making through a range of events and collaborations with local businesses. The Nene Valley Festival of History and Archaeology in 2022 and Roman Fest in 2023, along with partnerships with local archaeological and historical societies, have amplified local knowledge and research. By making archaeology relevant, accessible, and engaging, the Field School has contributed to community well-being and sense of place.

The transformation of the Irchester Field School over the years showcases the power of collaboration, community engagement, and inclusivity. By fostering partnerships, offering high-quality educational experiences, and embracing a commitment to equality and diversity, the Field School has evolved into a sustainable and nationally recognised program. The journey towards sustainability is ongoing, and the Field School continues to inspire and empower individuals and communities while making archaeology an accessible and meaningful endeavor for all.

**“I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for creating such an inspiring environment for us over the past few weeks! Being in my first year, ... I found the entire experience validating, motivating and an important part of my learning journey. I also really value the ethos surrounding the entire project and am especially grateful for your lecture, Prof Scott. It’s been quite an adjustment tackling a degree in my later years, but my dream is as strong as ever and I look forward to many years, learning from and working with you”.**

**“I wanted to thank you again for having me over the past three days. This experience has been amazing and I am very grateful for the opportunity. You have all been so friendly and helpful which has made this work experience all the more valuable- I have learnt so much”.**

**“I just wanted to thank you and the team for an excellent day on Saturday. X was lucky enough to uncover the large broken pots in the far corner of the dig site with X, an experience that they will not forget. X is hoping to study archaeology at university in September 2024 and this opportunity has provided them with some experience and they came away 100% sure that this is the career that they wish to undertake”.**



# **SECTION 4 CHESTER HOUSE ESTATE COMMERCIAL**



## The Chester House Estate

The Chester House Estate stands as a beacon of heritage, education, and community engagement, offering visitors an extraordinary journey through over 10,000 years of Northamptonshire's rich history. Its unique appeal is encapsulated in the phrase "10,000 years of Northamptonshire's heritage brought to life." This nationally significant site is overseen by North Northamptonshire Council and has undergone a transformative journey supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. With its completion in October 2021, it has already welcomed well over 500,000 visitors.

**Our Vision:** Our vision is to make The Chester House Estate a destination that transcends the ordinary tourist experience. We aspire to create a place where education, learning, and enjoyment add value to people's lives, fostering a deep appreciation for Northamptonshire's outstanding heritage. We are committed to delivering a quality, unique, and sustainable educational offering, championing accessible education for all ages and communities. Our mission is to give everyone the opportunity to engage with The Chester House Estate's past, present, and future.

At the core of The Chester House Estate are the following aims:

- **Connecting the Community:** We aim to forge a profound connection between the people of Northamptonshire and their 10,000-year story.
- **Community-Centric Approach:** The community is at the heart of all we do, ensuring that our endeavours serve the needs and aspirations of the local population.
- **Pioneering Education:** We are dedicated to delivering a diverse and pioneering education program that is accessible to all ages, making learning an enjoyable and immersive experience.
- **Free-to-Enter Estate:** We offer a free-to-enter estate, making it accessible and inclusive for everyone, fostering a sense of ownership and pride among visitors.
- **Financial Sustainability:** Through innovative commercial offerings, we aim to achieve financial sustainability, ensuring the estate's long-term viability.
- **Supporting Local Business:** We actively promote and grow local businesses, products, and tourism, contributing to the economic development of the region.
- **Preservation of Heritage:** Caring for and preserving the natural and historical landscape is central to our mission, ensuring the legacy of Northamptonshire's heritage is safeguarded.
- **Community Well-Being:** We are dedicated to enhancing the well-being of residents, offering a space that fosters engagement, learning, and a sense of community.

The operations of The Chester House Estate are supported by an innovative approach to income generation, ensuring its financial sustainability while fulfilling its commitment to education and community engagement. The estate is open seven days a week, from 10 am to 4 pm. These offerings include the following:

**Wedding Venues:** The estate offers two exceptional wedding venues, including a charming 100-person threshing barn and an elegant 200-person marquee. These spaces provide the perfect backdrop for couples to exchange their vows in a setting that exudes timeless elegance and charm. Revenue from weddings adds to the estate's financial sustainability and fosters a sense of community celebration. An average wedding at the Chester House Estate achieved an average room booking value (in 2023) of £6000 plus food and beverage which is delivered in house.





Kids Summer Festival, 2022



**Farmhouse Café:** The Farmhouse Cafe at The Chester House Estate is more than just a place to dine; it's an integral part of the estate's charm and offerings. The cafe provides a delightful culinary experience that celebrates local flavours and ingredients. Our dedication to sustainability and support for local businesses is evident through our collaboration with regional suppliers and farms. The menu offerings reflect the diverse cuisine of North Northamptonshire, from traditional dishes to modern interpretations. Our culinary team takes pride in accommodating dietary preferences and needs, ensuring inclusivity for all visitors. The revenue generated from the Farmhouse Cafe not only contributes to the estate's financial sustainability but also enhances the overall experience for visitors, in 2022 the café achieved an average of £5.60 spend per head. It is hoped over the next 3 years, the café can extend its opening hours into the evenings and early mornings.

**Hay-Barn Bar:** New for 2023, The Hay-Barn Bar is an integral part of our commitment to enhancing the visitor experience. The bar serves an array of snacks, cold and hot drinks, providing a much-needed oasis for guests exploring the estate. In addition to traditional offerings, the Hay-Barn Bar plays a central role in leading our outdoor catering experience. We take pride in providing a diverse and delightful outdoor dining experience, including stone-baked pizzas, BBQ delights, and savory paella. The Hay-Barn Bar's role in outdoor catering adds to the overall charm of The Chester House Estate. It provides a space where visitors can indulge in culinary delights while surrounded by the estate's natural beauty. The revenue generated from the Hay-Barn Bar and outdoor catering not only contributes to the estate's financial sustainability but also supports the busier days by putting less pressure and footfall within main café and supporting an increased spend per head for weddings and conferences.

**Gift Shop:** The estate's gift shop goes beyond being a souvenir store; it's a curated space that features unique and locally sourced products. Revenue from the gift shop supports the estate's sustainability and also contributes to local businesses. The estate currently achieves an average spend per head of £1.80 within the gift shop.

**Artisan Retail and Leisure Lets:** The estate supports local entrepreneurship by offering short-term retail lets to local businesses, providing valuable exposure to a wide and diverse audience. Revenue generated from these rentals benefits local businesses and contributes to the estate's financial sustainability. The current offering is Saxby's Cider, Eden Wild (Florist), The Canine Cottage (Pet Shop) and Trapped Escape Rooms.

**Conferences and Space Hire:** The estate offers versatile conference and event spaces, catering to a wide range of business and community needs. Hosting conferences and events generates income while enhancing the cultural vibrancy of the region.

**Filming Location:** The Chester House Estate provides a stunning backdrop for filmmakers and production companies. Our picturesque estate, with its diverse historical and natural settings, offers a unique canvas for a wide range of film and photography projects. Whether it's a historical drama, a period piece, or a contemporary production, our estate's versatility and visual appeal make it a desirable location for creative endeavors.

**Events Programme:** The Chester House Estate hosts a year-round events program, offering something for everyone. These events celebrate the region's cultural heritage in various forms, fostering an appreciation for the region's history and contributing to the economic vitality of the area. The programme ranges from lambing (cade bottle feeding), Father Christmas visits, Woof-festival, Roman Festival, and a Giant Pumpkin Patch. We also work with a number of event partners on a percentage ticket split arrangement to deliver specialist events such as outdoor concerts and theatres.

**Children's Outdoor Adventure Play Area:** The estate provides a children's outdoor adventure play area, creating a dynamic space for children to explore and play while learning about the outdoors. This amenity enhances the estate's family-friendly appeal and community engagement. This space, located next to the main café, is designed to increase dwell time and overall visitor spend per head.

**Visitor and Corporate Donations:** The estate also offers visitors the opportunity to make contactless donations, further supporting its mission of education, preservation, and community enrichment.

**Onsite Accommodation:** The Chester House Estate offers a unique opportunity for visitors to extend their stay and immerse themselves in the heritage and beauty of the region. Our two-bedroom bed and breakfast accommodation, available via Airbnb, provides a comfortable and historical setting for a memorable stay. The estate's lodging option allows guests to experience the tranquillity and charm of the estate beyond a day visit. The revenue generated from onsite accommodation not only contributes to the estate's financial sustainability but also adds to the allure of The Chester House Estate as a destination that offers more than a day's worth of exploration.

## Visitor Reviews

“Wonderful place. Staff very friendly and informative. Lovely shops etc. Ample parking. Clean & well presented WC's. Great place to take the family. Easter egg hunt was well organised my granddaughter loved it and fed the baby lambs”. (Google Reviews, 2023)

Chester House Estate has something for everyone with beautiful walks, unique shops and the Farm House Kitchen serves delicious food at reasonable prices. We've attended many of the events here and enjoyed every one of them. Always so well organised with plenty of friendly and helpful staff available. (Google Review, 2023)

We went to the Kids Festival with our Granddaughter and had an amazing day. Very well organised. Lots of entertainment for the kids. Plenty of space for picnics. All in all a most enjoyable day and excellent value and the sun shone on us all day. Brilliant. (Google Reviews, 2023)

“Spent a week on the Irchester dig site and Chester House is absolutely incredible. Just so many aspects of this place that deserve a visit. Be sure to have lunch there! Museum is great and schedule your visit for an ARC tour” (Google Reviews, 2023)

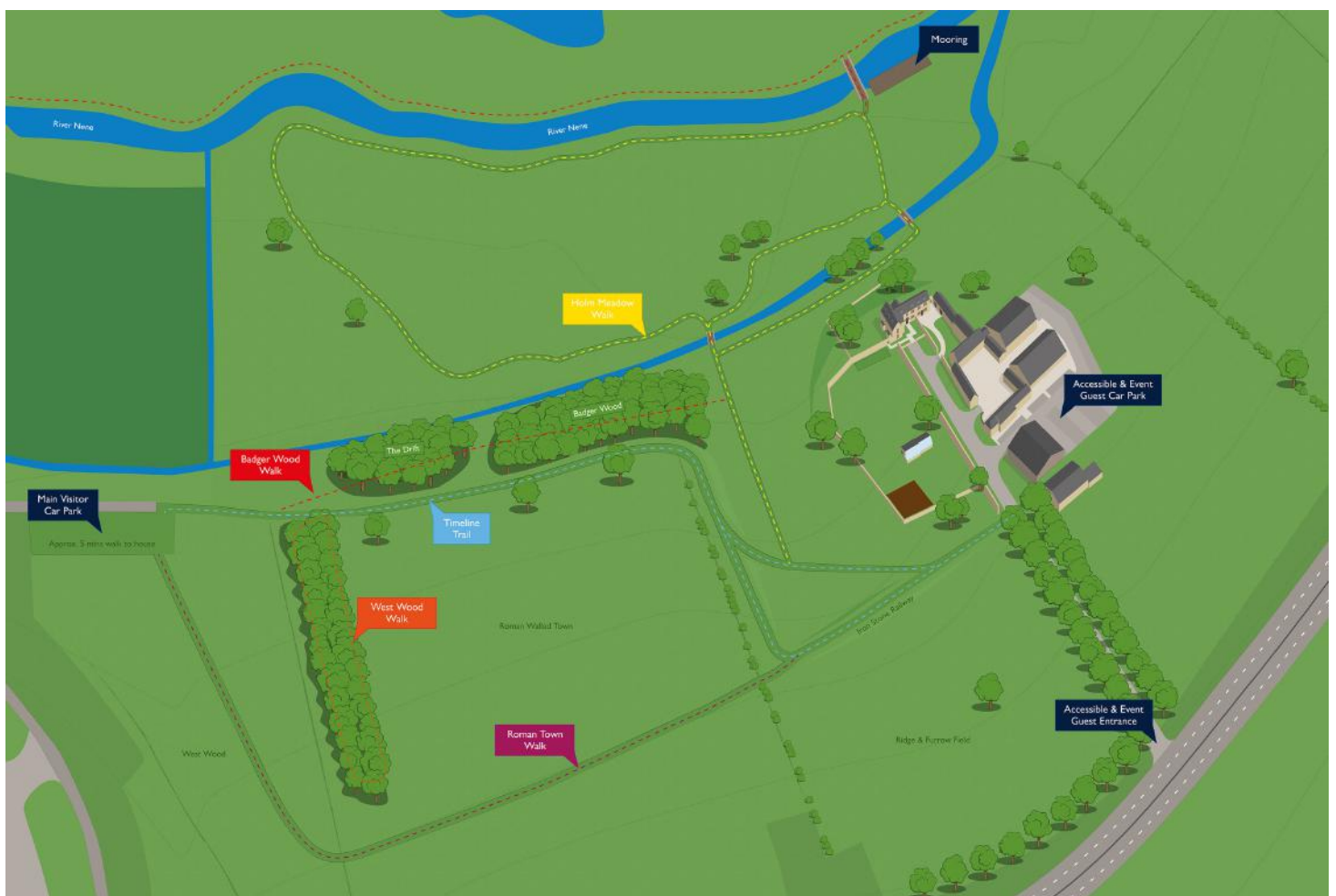
“Brilliant food, service, incredible learning experience about the excavations and the scenery is beautiful. Lovely garden setting, indoor oak panelled rooms in the restaurant, each with lovely views. There's a dog-friendly and dog-free room as well. Events get organised there to. The food is amazing! They also have a licensed bar and rooms that can be privately rented for weddings and get-together. Lovely outdoor spaces. Children's party area. Farm shop and flower shop etc. Visit the museum!! That's a must”. (Google Reviews, 2023)



## Map outlining uses of buildings:



## Map outlining land holding, footpaths and car parks:



## Marketing the Estate

Our marketing strategy for The Chester House Estate revolves around a cohesive narrative that highlights our unique offerings, community-centred approach, and commitment to preserving heritage. By leveraging online platforms, building local partnerships, and engaging with the community, we are attracting a diverse range of visitors, from history enthusiasts and families to event planners and those seeking a getaway. Our goal is not only to inform potential visitors but also to inspire them to embark on a journey through history, education, and community engagement at this extraordinary destination. The below marketing techniques are used to maximise income for the estate, led by the Marketing Officer:

**Crafting the Narrative:** At the heart of marketing The Chester House Estate is our compelling narrative. We are sharing the estate's rich history, education, community connection, and sustainability with potential visitors, emphasising its role in preserving heritage, fostering community well-being, and offering an educational and enjoyable experience. We consistently create a blog section on our website to tell captivating stories related to the estate's history, community engagement, and the people behind the scenes. Regularly published articles inform and inspire, connecting readers with our mission.

**Engaging Content and Visuals:** We are consistently creating high-quality content and visuals that capture the essence of The Chester House Estate. Professional photography, immersive videos, and engaging written content are featured on our website, social media, and promotional materials to highlight the estate's historical significance, landscapes, and diverse range of activities.

**Social Media Presence:** We actively leverage the power of social media to reach a broader audience. We regularly update platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter with visually appealing posts showcasing the estate's beauty, events, and visitor experiences. Engaging with our followers, responding to comments, and sharing user-generated content help build an active and involved online community.

**Website:** Our website is user-friendly and informative, making it easy for visitors to navigate, load quickly, and provide comprehensive information about the estate, its activities, and accessibility. We have implemented effective search engine optimisation (SEO) strategies to boost the website's visibility in search engine results.

**Email Marketing:** We have built an email list of interested individuals and regularly send newsletters and updates. We share news about upcoming events, special offers, and educational programs. Our personalised emails cater to different audience segments, such as families, history enthusiasts, and event planners.

**Collaborations and Partnerships:** We collaborate with local businesses, tourism organisations, and historical societies to expand our reach. Cross-promotions and joint marketing efforts attract visitors who may be interested in The Chester House Estate's unique offerings.





Chester House Half Marathon, 2023



**Events Promotion:** We actively promote the year-round events program through targeted marketing. We create event-specific campaigns, including event listings on local event websites and collaboration with influencers and bloggers to generate buzz.

**Online Booking and Ticketing:** We facilitate online booking and ticketing to make it convenient for visitors to plan their trips. We offer exclusive online discounts and promotions to incentivise early bookings.

**Community Engagement:** We actively engage with the local community through outreach programs, partnerships with local schools, and community events. Showcasing the estate's commitment to community well-being builds strong local support.

**Visitor Testimonials:** We feature authentic visitor testimonials and reviews on the website and promotional materials. Positive feedback from past visitors is a compelling marketing tool.

**Data:** We have implemented data analytics to assess the effectiveness of our marketing efforts. We monitor website traffic, social media engagement, and email campaign metrics to refine our strategy and focus resources on what works best.

## Volunteering

The estate offers a wide range of volunteer opportunities, including support in the café, events, shop, estate maintenance, car parking, and gardening. This variety of roles allows volunteers to choose activities that align with their interests and skills.

With around 200 registered volunteers, the estate has a substantial and active volunteer community. Such a significant volunteer base makes a substantial impact on the estate's daily activities and visitor experience. Full-time staff members support and mentor the volunteers, which is essential for ensuring that volunteers have the guidance and resources they need to perform their roles effectively.

The team actively allocate a budget for training and development shows a commitment to enhancing the skills and knowledge of volunteers. This can lead to a more satisfying and fulfilling volunteer experience. We are currently using an online volunteering system to register opportunities streamlines the process for both volunteers and the organisation. It makes it easier for potential volunteers to find and sign up for opportunities that match their interests and availability.

The estate's intention to develop a wider volunteering strategy over the next 12-24 months is a positive step. This strategic approach can help attract more volunteers will be improve volunteer retention. The recruitment of a dedicated Volunteering Officer can be instrumental in coordinating the program, serving as the main point of contact, and ensuring the program's success.

By focusing on expanding the volunteering program, recruiting a Volunteering Officer, and continuing to support and engage the existing volunteer community, the Chester House Estate can strengthen its operations and the overall visitor experience. This approach can help preserve the estate's cultural and historical significance while also benefiting the local community.



Volunteers, 2021



## Chester House Estate Team

The below roles at the Chester House Estate collectively form a dedicated and diverse team responsible for the day-to-day operations, events, catering, and facilities maintenance on the estate. Each role plays a crucial part in maintaining the estate's functions, visitor satisfaction, and overall success.

The General Manager, a full-time position with a 7-day rota, holds a pivotal role in the hierarchy. Reporting to the Head of Service, the General Manager oversees the commercial activities, operations, health and safety, and staff recruitment and retention. They are also responsible for meeting commercial and visitor feedback score targets set monthly by the Head of Service. While they manage the day-to-day business, they also oversee broader estate functions like land management and stewardship.

The Events and Operations Manager, also a full-time role on a 7-day rota, reports to the General Manager. They manage a team that includes an Events Officer and Outdoor Chef. Their responsibilities encompass overseeing income and expenditure for events, as well as planning and delivering various activities and events on the estate. Additionally, they act as a Duty Manager responsible for the daily operation of the visitor attraction, with an annual events target of approximately £400,000.

The Events Officer, another full-time position with a 7-day rota, reports to the Operations and Events Manager. This role is dedicated to planning, delivering, and reviewing all events and programming on the estate and supervises volunteers during events.

The Catering Lead role, with three individuals working 37 hours each, reports to both the Operations and Venue Manager. They are responsible for managing the daily operations of the catering outlets on the estate, including the Farmhouse Cafe and Wagon Hovel. This role also involves overseeing the Visitor Experience Assistants when they support food and beverage activities.

The Visitor Experience Assistants work in a casual role with up to 40 individuals based at the estate. They report directly to the estate's management team and provide support across various areas, including events, weddings, retail, conference/space hire, and catering.

The Operations Manager, who reports to the General Manager, plays a crucial role in the day-to-day operations of the estate. This includes overseeing the gift shop, accommodation offerings, and event delivery. They also serve as a Duty Manager, acting as the primary point of contact for visitors, partners, and managing first aid incidents. This role may require working on weekends, bank holidays, and evenings.

The Venue Officer, managed by the Operations Manager, is responsible for setting up, running, and packing down weddings, conferences, and space hires. They support the manager by preparing quotes and managing bookings, often requiring weekend and evening work.

The Catering Assistants, working in full-time positions with three individuals on a 37-hour rota, report to the Venue and Operation Lead and are indirectly managed by the Catering Lead. Their role involves providing support for all food and beverage activities at the estate.

The Estate and Facilities Officer, along with three full-time Assistants working 37 hours each, is an integral part of the team at Chester House Estate. This role, operating on a 7-day rota with frequent weekend work, is dedicated to maintaining the physical aspects of the estate to ensure its optimal functioning and presentation. They report directly to the Estate Manager and have a significant impact on the overall appearance and upkeep of the estate. Their responsibilities encompass presentation, cleanliness, grounds maintenance, and building repairs across the estate. Additionally, the Estate and Facilities team plays a role in supervising volunteers when they work within the estate department, ensuring a well-attended and preserved estate and fostering community engagement.

Collectively, these roles ensure the efficient and successful operation of the Chester House Estate, from its commercial activities and events to catering, facilities maintenance, and visitor experience. Each role is instrumental in preserving the estate's historical significance, enhancing visitor satisfaction, and contributing to the estate's ongoing success and community engagement.





## Heritage Building Management and Scheduled Monument

The team at The Chester House Estate recognises the paramount importance of preserving and maintaining their Grade II\* and Grade II listed farm buildings and the wider Scheduled Monument of Irchester Roman Town in collaboration with Historic England. These historical structures and the scheduled monument represents an integral part of the local historic and cultural environment.

A listed building is a structure that has been identified by Historic England as being of historical and architectural interest. A Scheduled Monument the highest level of heritage protection within the UK for archaeological sites is a status given to those deemed to be of national importance by Historic England. Both of these statuses can significantly impact what is possible on site in order to protect the sites historic environment. For example, any works that would penetrate the earth within the landscape (e.g. replacing a fence post), need permissions from Historic England before they can take place.

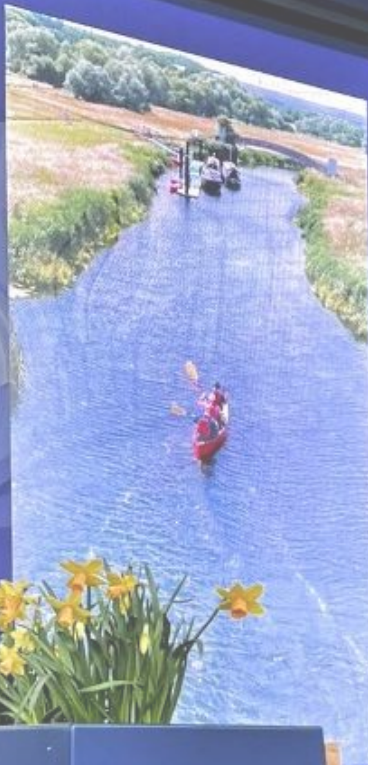
Prior to the restoration of the Chester House Estate site, the buildings were all included on Historic England's Heritage at Risk's register. This is a list of historic buildings that are at risk because of neglect, decay or inappropriate development or are vulnerable to these risks. In 2022, the buildings were removed from the register, highlighting the importance of the conservation and preservation work that had been undertaken.

Preservation efforts are essential to ensure that both the buildings and land 'stand the test of time', continue to be cherished by future generations and remain off the Heritage at Risk register. By actively engaging with Historic England, The Chester House Estate demonstrates its commitment to safeguarding the nation's historical treasures, thereby serving as a beacon of responsible stewardship for the wider heritage sector and the public.

To facilitate this crucial preservation work, The Chester House Estate has an allocated dedicated budget to deal with these areas. This financial commitment underscores the estate's determination to maintain the necessary skillset and resources required for the task at hand. By earmarking funds for the preservation of these structures, the estate is not only demonstrating its commitment to heritage conservation but also leading by example within the community. This proactive approach sets a standard for responsible management of historical assets and showcases the estate's dedication to the long-term sustainability of the Listed farm buildings and the Scheduled Monument.

We work under the strict guideline Historic England provides The Chester House Estate. The team sometimes must bring in outside expertise and guidance to support navigating the complex landscape of historical preservation, including professional archaeologists and building conservation officers. The team are currently looking at submitting a long-term Heritage Management Plan for the wider estate, which if approved by Historic England, would provide Scheduled Monument Consent for allowing for small level of works to take place without the need for continuous permissions, we hope for this to be set up at some point in 2024.

**Discover**  
Northamptonshire



**Discover**  
Northamptonshire  
CULTURE · TOURISM · HERITAGE

# SECTION 5 DISCOVER NORTHAMPTONSHIRE



## Discover Northamptonshire

The local tourism sector in Northamptonshire is a vibrant and thriving industry that plays a pivotal role in supporting the community. The Northamptonshire Tourism industry sustains 31,000 jobs, boasts 4,500 businesses, and warmly welcomes over 15.8 million visitors, contributing over £500 million annually to the regional economy.

The Discover Northamptonshire Hub stands as a symbol of progress, representing a collaborative effort between The Crown Estate, who are the managing partner at Rushden Lakes, and North Northamptonshire Council. The hub has undertaken the task of establishing a new Tourist Information Centre and community space, ingeniously repurposing a previously vacant unit at Rushden Lakes. This visionary project embodies the core values of North Northamptonshire Council's Corporate Plan, which envisions a community where every resident enjoys the best opportunities and a high quality of life.

The grand opening of the Discover Hub took place on the 20th March 2023 and remains open to the public seven days a week, with operating hours from 10 am to 5 pm, Monday to Saturday, and 11 am to 4:30 pm on Sundays.

The Discover Hub purpose extends far beyond tourism. This establishment creates an avenue for residents to connect with higher and further education partners, such as University of Leicester, through on-site talks, workshops, and captivating traveling exhibitions. The team at Discover Hub is dedicated to forging partnerships with local colleges to provide hands-on tourism and hospitality training. Simultaneously, it offers valuable opportunities for job seekers of all ages to acquire new skills through volunteering and work experiences, as well as providing opportunities to meet with local employers during recruitment days.

The primary objectives of the Discover Northamptonshire Hub are multi-faceted:

**Promoting Local Tourism:** The hub serves as a dedicated space where both residents and visitors can immerse themselves in the vibrant culture and offerings of Northamptonshire. Equipped with interactive tools and engaging exhibits, the Tourism Information Centre showcases all small and large attractions, museums, and town centres.

**Empowering the Community:** The hub extends a helping hand to the community by offering information on current employment and volunteering opportunities available within the county. This helps residents find promising prospects that match their skills and interests.

**Supporting Local Businesses:** The hub serves as a platform to spotlight local Northamptonshire businesses, further boosting their growth and brand awareness. The flexible retail offerings are a testament to the commitment to bolstering the local craft and food and beverage economy.

**Community Engagement:** Beyond just information, the hub provides a space for various community activities, ensuring that it caters to the diverse interests and needs of all audiences.

**Skill Development:** For those looking to enter the tourism sector, the hub provides a wide range of work experience and volunteering opportunities. It is an ideal launchpad for individuals eager to gain insights and knowledge about the industry.

**Sustainability:** As a forward-thinking endeavor, the Discover Hub aspires to become fully self-sustaining by the end of year 3. This self-sufficiency will be achieved through a combination of revenue streams, including retail commission, advertising fees, and room rentals.

2023 witnessed a multitude of accomplishments by the Discover Hub:

- Welcoming an impressive 6000+ residents and visitors (A total of 10,000 is forecast for 2023)
- Offering support to over 450 businesses through interactive screens, the website, and social media platforms.
- Successfully hosting 20 events and activities, adding to the vibrancy of the local community.
- Nurturing 40 local retailers and organising two arts and craft fairs.
- Playing an instrumental role in promoting 50 industry jobs since its grand opening.
- Actively endorsing 1,300 events through a digital screen and website that keeps the community informed about the latest happenings.
- Collaborating with Moulton College to organise an evening drop-in event aimed at inspiring young people to pursue food and drink qualifications.
- Paving the way for internship opportunities through the Creating Tomorrow's Trust partnership.
- Actively supporting the Northants Open Studios throughout the year, with the Discover Hub serving as a central venue during the main event in September.
- Showcasing six heritage exhibitions through cabinet displays, with a dedicated space for the Northamptonshire Heritage Forum. These displays will be rotated every three months to ensure fresh and engaging content. Prominent venues featured include The Arc, Cornerstone, and the Corby Heritage Centre.
- Contributing to the rollout of the new Discover Northamptonshire brand, which includes a comprehensive website and a robust presence on various social media platforms, including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Tik Tok.

Discover Northamptonshire is not confined to the hub's physical space; it extends throughout the region. Here are some of the exciting events and initiatives that the Discover Northamptonshire team is set to deliver in 2024 and 2025 across North Northamptonshire:

**The Nene Valley Heritage Festival:** This festival is set to take place at iconic locations like Chester House, Rushden Lakes, and Stanwick Lakes, providing a unique opportunity to experience the rich history of the area. While now led by the Nene Rivers Trust, the Discover Northamptonshire team will play a vital role in supporting the delivery of the Nene Valley Festival.

**Heritage Open Days:** Every September thousands of volunteers across England organise events to celebrate our fantastic history and culture as part of Heritage Open Day. It's a chance for residents and visitors to see hidden places and try out new experiences, all of which are free to explore. 2024 is the 30th anniversary year (6 – 15 September), and the aim will be to encourage visitors to explore the history of routes, networks and connections. West Northamptonshire Council has been successful in delivering events and activities over the last few years and opportunities exist to deliver a unified and countywide approach given the delivery of a new tourism strategy and the development of a new Local Visitor Economy Partnership for Northamptonshire. We would be looking to start engaging with this event within North Northamptonshire and the ARC, Discover Northamptonshire and CHE will be working together to develop an offer as part of this event for 2024.



**Tourism, Heritage and Culture-Based Events:** The hub is committed to hosting a series of events that celebrate the diversity and cultural richness of North Northamptonshire. These events aim to foster a deeper connection between the community and its heritage.

**NN Fireworks:** North Northamptonshire Fireworks is an event led and funded by North Northamptonshire Council, attracting an average of 35,000 visitors to the event each year. The event takes place at the Corby Boating Lake, with a large bonfire and 15-minute fireworks display. The team will actively search for sponsorship to support the costs of this event.

**North Northamptonshire Festival and Grant Scheme:** Funded through Shared Prosperity Funding, this initiative promises to be a dynamic celebration of the region's culture and heritage.

In conclusion, Discover Northamptonshire is more than just a hub; it is a community-driven initiative that embodies the spirit of North Northamptonshire's growth and prosperity. With a deep commitment to promoting local tourism, fostering community engagement, and supporting businesses, the hub is poised to be a pivotal force in the region's continued development. Its dedication to sustainability and its involvement in a wide array of events further underscore its significance. As the hub continues to grow and evolve, it will undoubtedly play an even more central role in the lives of Northamptonshire residents and the broader community.

### **Northamptonshire Tourism Strategy**

The Culture, Tourism and Heritage Service are currently working with West Northamptonshire Council to produce a long term (10+ years) Tourism Strategy which will be finalised and implemented throughout Winter 2023.

This Strategy sets out to transform the fortunes of the visitor economy, currently seen as one of Northamptonshire's unsung economic heroes. Developed over an 18-month period this work has uncovered and drawn on a wide range of evidence that has underpinned the approach and content, supported by a wide range of contributors from across the economic landscape including public stakeholders, businesses and the third sector. A number of key factors have provided the basis on which our strategy is built:

- The county has a wide ranging array of natural and built assets and a particularly strong visitor attractions base which can be a foundation for driving new and repeat business but there is also a need for new investment, in for example, accommodation.
- Visitor perceptions of the County are generally positive but awareness is low.
- Partnership marketing is a key that can help unlock the potential - and stronger collaboration is critical to progressing all four strategic goals.
- Sustainability and accessibility are principles that will be woven into the strategy from the start, underpinned by UN Sustainability Goals and best practice access principles.
- Improving the skills of our people and helping youngsters into the workforce is a fundamental cornerstone for future success.

Our strategic goals are to increase the value that visitors bring, inspire a new and skilled workforce into the industry, support local visitor economy businesses to grow and identify future investments that will help further define and boost Northamptonshire's visitor economy over time.

This strategy has been informed and supported by a great many different people and organisations and for successful delivery will strive to connect, communicate and collaborate with all local, regional and national stakeholders with an interest. A new private sector-led Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) will be established, made up of a representative group of senior industry figures, to steer the delivery of this plan and make sure that the potential is realised, focussing on four clear objectives:

- Collaboration
- Dynamic & Tailored Marketing
- Planning for the Future, and
- Improving Quality & Skills

A sharp focus on these objectives by the LVEP will help inform and further develop the Draft Action Plan given at the end of this document. Dynamic and tailored marketing will aim to engage and welcome more visitors from far afield but also stimulate a vibrant local market to take more trips in the county, locking in wellbeing benefits for communities and residents alike. There will be a greater effort to join up policies in support of the visitor economy with for example new forms of accommodation, such as glamping sought after by newer markets, prioritised in some of our best blue and green areas, with those areas also better linked by path networks and new travel options. Supporting businesses in their journey towards being ambassadors for the place will help ensure visitors return time and again.

Once implemented, the new strategy will be delivered, with partners, by the Discover Northamptonshire Team along with other departments within North Northamptonshire Council including planning, economic development and communications.

### **Northamptonshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership**

We are currently working in partnership with West Northamptonshire Council and the Northamptonshire Tourism industry to develop a Local Visitor Economy Partnership, with Visit England.

A Local Visitor Economy Partnership is a strategic collaboration between various stakeholders, including local government, businesses, tourism boards, and community organisations, all aimed at enhancing the visitor economy within a specific region. It serves as a unifying force to promote tourism, attract visitors, and stimulate economic growth. Such partnerships are gaining traction in regions seeking to harness the potential of their unique cultural, natural, and historical assets.

In the case of Northamptonshire, developing a Local Visitor Economy Partnership could be a game-changer. This partnership would bring together a diverse range of stakeholders, aligning their efforts towards a common goal: to transform Northamptonshire into a thriving and sustainable tourist destination. By unifying their resources and expertise, the region can effectively market its attractions, provide top-notch services, and create a memorable experience for visitors.



A well-established Local Visitor Economy Partnership in Northamptonshire would not only boost the region's economy but also create numerous employment opportunities, benefiting residents. The partnership would tap into the county's rich heritage, vibrant cultural scene, and natural beauty, drawing travellers from near and far. This influx of visitors translates into increased revenue for local businesses, from accommodation providers to restaurants, artisans, and more. The ripple effect on the local economy would be substantial, promoting economic prosperity throughout the region.

Furthermore, a Local Visitor Economy Partnership would provide a platform for showcasing Northamptonshire's unique assets, helping to preserve and protect its historical and environmental treasures. By promoting responsible and sustainable tourism, the region can ensure that its attractions are cherished for generations to come. In summary, such a partnership is not just an economic endeavor; it's a holistic approach to fostering community pride, enhancing visitor experiences, and securing a brighter future for Northamptonshire.

Following the competition and integration of our long-term tourism strategy, a new organisation will be created with an independent governance from both unitary councils. Our future role will be to support with funding and play a major role in delivering key aspects of the delivery plan including marketing and infrastructure development. We are currently aiming for the creation of the LVEP to be at some point during Spring 2024, with a formal application being submitted on behalf of both councils throughout Winter 2023.

## **Destination Nene Valley**

Destination Nene Valley (DNV) emerged as a ground-breaking partnership initiative inaugurated in 2012, with the primary aim of building upon existing frameworks to promote the Nene Valley and cultivate supportive businesses within the region. The formation of the Nene Valley Partnership was a response to the strong opinions from local stakeholders, partners, and businesses in the tourism sector who were fervent about safeguarding and advancing the industry in the Nene Valley.

The objectives set forth by the DNV project are comprehensive and far-reaching:

- Guide strategic development to reinforce green infrastructure.
- Cultivate a brand that effectively communicates the Nene Valley's geographical location and distinctive identity to visitors.
- Collaborate with partners to fortify the valley's tourism assets and enhance visitor experiences.
- Support both new and existing tourism businesses establishing themselves in the Nene Valley
- Identify opportunities that contribute to social, economic, and environmental welfare.
- Collaborate with partners to foster and champion sustainable tourism principles across all activities.
- Garner funding resources and build partnerships to facilitate the execution of the strategy.

A pivotal endeavor within the DNV's priority projects has been the establishment of the Nene Valley Festival, launched in 2014. This annual celebration commemorates the natural and historic splendour of this picturesque region through a diverse nine-day program of events. The festival, along with initiatives like the Nene Valley website, had previously received funding through the Nenescape Landscape Partnership Scheme.

Currently, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Sport, Leisure, Culture, and Tourism at North Northamptonshire Council serves as the Chair of DNV. The Discover Northamptonshire Manager continues to uphold and promote the legacy Nenescape projects, including the Nene Valley website. Moreover, there is active support for the Nene Valley Festival, with partners Nene Rivers Trust taking the lead on this significant event.

Moving forward, the DNV Board eagerly anticipates the primary findings of the new strategy being formulated for Northamptonshire by West and North Northamptonshire Councils. They will play a pivotal role as a key partner in the emergent Local Visitor Economy Partnership being forged for Northamptonshire.

### **Tourism UK Shared Prosperity Funding**

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund stands as a cornerstone of the UK government's Levelling Up agenda. Its primary mission is to enhance a sense of local pride and expand opportunities for individuals across the UK. This mission is achieved through investments in communities, places, local businesses, and the development of people and skills.

In line with our commitment to bolster the local visitor economy, the SPF's allocation for its inaugural year was channelled into the creation of the Rushden Lakes tourism hub. This hub serves as a hub for local attractions, showcasing the distinctive offerings available across a spectrum of local businesses. An enthusiastic Discover Northamptonshire team is stationed at the hub seven days a week, diligently working to entice the six million visitors to Rushden Lakes to extend their stay, explore other attractions in the county, and contribute to the prosperity of local tourism. The hub itself is a fully immersive space, adorned with captivating visual displays that tout the many facets of Northamptonshire and its neighbouring regions, from enticing day trips to captivating attractions.

Looking ahead to Year 2 (2023/4) and Year 3 (2024/5) of the SPF allocation, our commitment to fortifying the visitor economy remains unwavering, with continued investments in the following areas:

- Funding for the development and promotion of the visitor economy, encompassing local attractions, trails, tours, and tourism products more broadly, with an allocation of £60,000 in 2023/24 and £20,000 in 2024/25.
- Support for local arts, culture, heritage, and creative activities, with an allocation of £60,000 in 2023/24 and £50,000 in 2024/25.
- Funding to spearhead expansive campaigns aimed at inspiring people to explore and visit the local area, with an allocation of £20,000 in 2023/24 and an equivalent sum of £20,000 in 2024/25.

## Theatre and Land Based Contracts

The Discover Northamptonshire are the responsible first point of contact for the management of 3 theatre contracts and two large parklands:

**Castle Theatre:** Located in Wellingborough, the Castle Theatre offers an array of facilities and has a seating capacity of 503. Additionally, the Castle Theatre houses an Art Studio/exhibition space, allowing patrons to immerse themselves in the visual arts. The venue also includes a studio with 84 seats for more intimate gatherings. They have a bar offers a wide range of refreshments. The Castle Theatre hosts a diverse range of live performances, including theatre productions, musicals, comedy shows, and music concerts, making it a focal point for the arts in the area. The Castle Theatre plays a pivotal role in enriching the cultural life of Wellingborough and the surrounding region, offering a blend of artistic experiences for its audience. The building is owned by North Northamptonshire Council with a long-term lease with Parkwood Theatres. The council contribute to revenue and capital funding on a year-by-year basis with the performance of the theatre being measured by agreed KPI's.

**The Lighthouse Theatre:** Located in Kettering, the Lighthouse Theatre has 424-tiered seats at ground floor level with an additional 143 seats available in the balcony. The Lighthouse Theatre features six private boxes, adding an exclusive dimension to the venue. The Lighthouse Theatre hosts a wide array of cultural events, including theatre productions, musical performances, comedy shows, dance performances, and more. These offerings make it a cultural hub in Kettering, enriching the lives of the local community with a diverse and engaging entertainment schedule. The building is owned by North Northamptonshire Council with a long-term lease with Phoenix Leisure Management . The council contribute to revenue funding on a year-by-year basis with the performance of the theatre being measured by agreed KPI's.

**The Corby Core Theatre:** The Corby Core Theatre, situated in Corby, has a range of distinct features and offerings. The main auditorium has a seating capacity of 450. Complementing this space, the theatre also houses a Studio with seating for 160, catering to smaller, more intimate gatherings. Furthermore, the venue features an Art Studio/exhibition space, offering patrons the opportunity to engage with and appreciate visual arts. The Corby Core Theatre's diverse program encompasses a wide array of live performances, spanning theatre productions, musicals, comedy shows, music concerts, and dance performances, firmly establishing it as a cultural cornerstone in the Corby region. The building is owned by North Northamptonshire Council with a long-term lease with the Royal and Dergate Trust. The council contribute to revenue funding on a year-by-year basis with the performance of the theatre being measured by agreed KPI's.

**Stanwick Lakes:** Stanwick Lakes, is a nature reserve designed to serve a dual purpose. Its primary aim is to provide a wide range of outdoor activities and environmental education to the public while simultaneously preserving and enriching the natural beauty and ecological significance of the region. The site offers an array of opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts, families, and school groups, including walking and cycling trails, wildlife observation points, adventure play areas, and educational programs. With several designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and nature reserves, it plays a pivotal role in safeguarding the local wildlife and attracting migratory birds.



Stanwick Lakes is under the stewardship of the Rockingham Forest Trust, a non-profit organisation that oversees the day-to-day operations of the site. This includes the management of visitor services, maintenance of facilities, and the delivery of educational programs and events. The reserve is equipped with a visitor centre featuring a café and shop, making it a welcoming hub for visitors. The site hosts a variety of engaging events and workshops throughout the year, with a strong emphasis on environmental education and fostering an appreciation for nature among its visitors. North Northamptonshire Council own the site and have leased it to Rockingham Forest Trust on a long-term lease agreement. The council are responsible for a capital budget for key infrastructure items including bridges, drainage systems and fencing. The Executive Member and Lead DN officer attending a quarterly board meeting with the Trust to manage the relationship and funding.

**Twywell Hill and Dales:** Twywell Hill and Dales, managed by the Land Trust, is a natural landscape in Northamptonshire, England, encompassing approximately 84 acres. This site features rolling hills, meadows, and ancient woodlands, along with facilities like well-maintained paths, information boards, and picnic areas. It is open to the public during typical hours from dawn to dusk. North Northamptonshire Council own the site and have leased it to the Land Trust on a long-term lease agreement. The council are responsible for a capital budget for key infrastructure items including bridges, drainage systems and fencing. The Executive Member and Lead DN officer attend a quarterly board meeting with the Trust to manage the relationship and funding.



## Discover Northamptonshire Team

The team at Discover Northamptonshire is structured to efficiently manage tourism, events, and visitor experiences. Here's an overview of the key roles:

The Discover Northamptonshire Manager holds a full-time, 37-hour permanent position, working on a 7-day rota. Reporting to the Head of Service, they play a pivotal role in managing the Tourism Hub located at Rushden Lakes, NNC-based events and programming. The Manager also oversees local theatre contracts and directly manages the Discover Northamptonshire Officer, Events Apprentice, and Visitor Experience Assistant roles. While they are responsible for the day-to-day running of the tourism activities, they also have dotted line management to the Business Operations Manager.

The Discover Northamptonshire Officer, another full-time, 37-hour permanent role, works on a 7-day rota and supports the day-to-day running of the Discover Hub. They also play a key role in the development and implementation of events across North Northamptonshire. Reporting directly to the Discover Northamptonshire Manager, they supervise the visitor experience team and volunteers. This role is primarily based at the Discover Hub at Rushden Lakes.

The Visitor Experience Assistants are in casual roles, working on a 7-day rota. There are up to five casual positions within the department that support the smooth running of the tourism centre and events. Their contributions are essential in creating a positive and engaging experience for visitors to Discover Northamptonshire.

These roles collectively contribute to the successful operation and promotion of Discover Northamptonshire, ensuring that tourism, events, and visitor experiences are effectively managed and presented to the public. The team collaborates to create a dynamic and engaging destination for residents and visitors alike.







**SECTION 6  
CORBY HERITAGE  
CENTRE**



## Corby Heritage Centre

Corby Heritage Centre is in Corby Old Village, Corby, Northamptonshire, it sits in the original and oldest part of what is now Corby New Town. The village of Corby is mentioned in the Domesday book of 1086, it was a survey carried out twenty years after William the Conqueror became King of England and it assessed how much William could demand from his Royal properties.

In the 1000 years since that entry in the Domesday book Corby has been known as a Royal Forest Village, for its Brickmaking, its Iron works and then most notably its Steelworks which became the largest combined steelmaking plant in Europe. Corby Heritage Centre aims to tell that story through exhibitions, talks and outreach work.

The Heritage Centre was established through recognition that although one of Northamptonshire's largest towns, with an established historical importance, it had no Heritage or Museum in place. In the early 2000's National Lottery Heritage Fund approached Corby Borough Council to address the lack of Heritage Fund applications that came from the area, the council with advice from the Heritage Fund consulted local opinions on what they would like to see funded by Lottery money and the feedback suggested a museum or Heritage Centre based in Corby Old Village and they had a location in mind, the oldest surviving residential building in the town simply known as 75-77 High Street, Corby Old Village. So, this small building over 400 years old became Corby's Heritage Centre.

But first the council needed to decide upon how to make this a reality and where to find the funding and on the 24th of June 2008, Corby Borough Councils "One Policy" Committee announced that National Lottery Heritage Fund had awarded Corby Council £480,500 in Capital and Revenue funding towards the project costs of creating a small Heritage Centre at 75-77 High Street, Corby Old Village. The funding was split into £140,763 towards capital costs for the restoration of the building (75-77 High Street, owned by CBC) with council match funding of £200,077. The remaining £339,737 was awarded as revenue funding for the provision of a Heritage Development Worker for five years. In November 2007 a full time post as Heritage Development Worker was introduced and in June 2011 Corby Heritage Centre opened to the public.

One of the earliest and most glaring omissions from Corby's heritage offer was that it had no official recognition of items held by Corby Borough Council and that residents could not donate historical items for the benefit of the community or its historical record. Nearby towns such as Kettering and Market Harborough had museums and with those museums came a collection and collecting policy that offered a place for the towns heritage and history to be kept and cared for in a professional manner. In 2016 began the process of application to Arts Council England to gain National Accreditation for this collection, with the help of volunteers the council gained full accreditation in October 2017.

The principal areas of the collection include Corby Steelworks, Archaeological items from Weldon Roman Villa, Stanion and Priors Hall, Social History items relating to Corby and its residents, Corby's unique Pole Fair history. Items held span Photography, archaeology, Historical documents, Roman Coins, Cinematic Films, Industrial Artwork, and a small collection of Art in general. There are around 1500-2000 items.

The Pole Fair and Steelwork's collections are regionally and nationally important being both unique. Corby Pole Fair can trace its origins back many Hundreds of years with specific Pole Fair written articles as early as the beginning of the 18th century. The Fair's very beginnings go back to Henry III in the 13th Century who awarded Corby the right to hold a Village Fair twice a year, over an exceptionally long period this evolved into the Corby Pole Fair which is now held every 20 years with next fair due in 2042. The Steelworks collection held by Corby is of great significance as there is now truly little physical evidence that Corby once had the largest combined steelworks in Europe and made many millions of tons of Steel tubes sold and used across the world.

The collection is constantly evolving and being added to with the premise that it will be made more accessible and helpful to residents and researchers alike that want to know more about Corby and its fascinating history.

### **Corby Heritage Centre Operation**

Corby Heritage Centre is free to enter and is open to all from Monday to Friday 1pm to 4pm and 11am to 2pm on Saturdays. Its Closed-on Sundays and Bank Holidays (Including the Saturday of Bank Holiday weekends) and for two weeks at Christmas.

The Heritage Centre originally changed its exhibitions four times a year, however, this is not possible anymore as we do not have never recovered the number of volunteers who decided not to return after the Covid Pandemic.

Children's activities take place during spring and summer school holidays and are general crafts and making activities. There are school and club visits, for example Uppingham School sixth form and 1st Corby Scout Group. There is also outreach work such as talks for Lakelands Hospice, Great Easton Village Community Group, Irchester Historical Society, LEO II Society, etc. Corby Heritage Centre has worked with many organisations over the years on internal and external projects. Some of the organisations are Museum Development East Midlands, Northamptonshire Heritage Forum, Made With Many, Corby Community Arts, Association of Independent Museums ( AIM ), Late Developers Photographic Group, Our Corby Project, Rare Notions, LEO II Society, Cambridge Computer Museum, Corby Pole Fair, Tata Steel, Paula Boulton, HD Media (PLUTO, Pole Fair, etc ), Paul Balmer, Judy Caine, KGHL (Kingswood and Hazel Leys project ), MBD digital project, Historic England. There are also many individual persons that we have worked with or helped in several ways, through heritage advice, access to information in the council archive collection and help in making funding bids i.e. FOSL 14 Train restoration group, letters of support for Late Developers Photographic group, Deep Roots Tall Trees, Paula Boulton.

Commercial activities are limited, The Heritage Centre is occasionally hired out at £12.50/hour and my outreach work is charged at £25. The centre sells Corby Past and Present books at 10.99 of which we keep £4.99 and £5 is paid to Victoria County History who publish the book on a sale or return basis. The centre also sells the Steelman Statue at £65 each due to increase to £77.

The Heritage Centre is currently managed by the NNC Corby Heritage Centre Officer with occasional cover offered by a volunteer at Corby Collection Room.

## Corby Heritage Centre – Looking Forwards

Our aspiration is to enhance the visitor experience and enrich the narrative of our Heritage Centre. Our primary focus areas encompass the historical significance of the old village, the legacy of steelmaking, the colourful Corby Pole Fair, and the intriguing chapters of Roman and Viking history in this region. In addition to these improvements, we aim to cultivate a vibrant hub for local history enthusiasts and organisations engaged in heritage initiatives, offering a dedicated space for collaboration and meetings.

**Collaborative Engagement:** Embrace partnerships with like-minded organisations, such as Portable Antiquities and Heritage Accelerators, who are already leveraging our facilities for their endeavors. We would also like to host a range of cultural events, including poetry readings and musical evenings, designed to celebrate our shared heritage.

**Collections:** Foster greater accessibility to our collections by digitizing a substantial portion, opening new possibilities for generating income through films, artwork, and related ventures. Establish a user-friendly online platform to enable broader access to our valuable collection.

**Education and Outreach:** Elevate our educational programs, with a particular focus on Key Stage history subjects, including Local History, Viking, Roman, and Victorian eras, as well as the region's industrial heritage. Bolster our outreach efforts through the utilisation of films and artifacts, enhanced PowerPoint presentations for talks to small groups, and the provision of online resources for educators and teachers.

### Challenges and Solutions

**Archive Access:** Address the accessibility issue of our NNC Corby Collection on the third floor of Grosvenor House. Explore options to improve public access while preserving security standards.

**DDA Compliance:** Improve disabled access to our facility to make it more inclusive and user-friendly.

**Security and Tenancy:** Investigate the security and continuity of our current location while considering options for a more central site in the town centre.

**Volunteer Engagement:** Implement a rotational system that allows volunteers to alternate between collection management and front-of-house roles, fostering their morale and commitment.

**Financial Sustainability:** Optimise our limited space by offering the centre as a venue for smaller groups, while increasing the range of saleable items, both on-site and online.

**Increasing Footfall:** Address the visibility issue through improved signage and a more active presence on social media platforms to attract a broader audience.

With these initiatives, we envision Corby Heritage Centre evolving into a dynamic and inclusive institution that not only preserves our rich history but also engages and enlightens the community and beyond.



## Priors Hall Heritage Project

The Priors Hall site, a historic piece of land near Corby, underwent significant changes over the years. Originally known as Priors Haw, it was eventually quarried for iron ore by the Stewarts and Lloyds Steel Company in the 20th century. After the closure of steelmaking in the late 1970s, the land remained unused until housing plans were approved around 2007. In 2011, Oxford Archaeology East initiated a series of archaeological excavations at Priors Hall, revealing intriguing Iron Age and Roman settlements, including a well-preserved high-status Roman road, evidence of large-scale tile production within a converted Temple Mausoleum, and an unexplored Roman Villa.

There is £100,000 in Section 106 funding allocated for arts and local projects related to the Priors Hall development. This funding provides an opportunity to create projects that can bring the remarkable Roman discoveries to the local and wider public while offering educational resources for local and regional schools. The Section 106 money may also serve as a catalyst to attract additional funding from heritage organisations such as the Heritage Fund and Arts Council England. To facilitate this initiative, discussions have taken place with Oxford Archaeology, who shared insights into successful archaeological groups in Cambridgeshire. These groups have become self-sustaining and highly participatory, a model that could potentially be replicated at Corby/Priors Hall. Additionally, local heritage groups on platforms like Facebook have expressed their interest in projects related to the discoveries at the Priors Hall site, indicating a strong community backing for such endeavors. The focus of any proposed projects is to establish a lasting legacy for the Roman sites, aiming for sustainability beyond short-term events, ensuring that the rich historical evidence continues to be celebrated.







# **SECTION 7 GREENWAY PROJECT**

The North Northamptonshire Greenway is a meticulously planned rural network, providing safe, traffic-free pathways for walking, wheeling, and cycling. These routes seamlessly connect various settlements, employment hubs, leisure destinations, and tourism attractions not only within North Northamptonshire but also extending beyond its borders.

The key objectives of the North Northamptonshire Greenway (NNG) encompass:

- Encouraging individuals to choose walking, wheeling, or cycling for a wide range of trip purposes, including school commutes, daily errands, and leisurely outings.
- Establishing an accessible, inclusive active travel network that adheres to contemporary design standards, emphasising coherence, directness, safety, comfort, and aesthetic appeal.
- Contributing to North Northamptonshire's Green Infrastructure network, specifically focusing on the Ise and Nene Valley Corridors, with the aim of achieving at least a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Enhancing the tourism appeal of North Northamptonshire by creating links between market towns, nature reserves, tourism sites, and circular routes.
- Elevating the vibrancy of North Northamptonshire's towns by improving access for commuters and shoppers, thus supporting local businesses.
- Establishing secure routes to schools, ensuring the safety of students.
- Offering sustainable transport alternatives to residents who do not own a car.

The implementation of the NNG is overseen by the NNG Board, composed of Executive Members with a local lead councillor representing each locality, as well as key stakeholders such as Natural England, Environment Agency, National Highways, Northamptonshire Local Access Forum, Wildlife Trust, and other relevant organisations. The NNG Board convenes as needed, with its own established Terms of Reference.

The focus of the NNG's efforts lies in expanding the existing Greenway network, initially delivered through the former East Northamptonshire Council (ENC) across North Northants. Notably, the open Greenway along the Nene Valley was established with funding from various sources, including Safer Schools, Section 106, Community Facilities Fund (CFF), and Sustrans, with the ambition of connecting Wellingborough to Peterborough. This route extends from Rushden to Woodford Lock, passing through Islip, Irthlingborough, Higham Ferrers, Stanwick Lakes, and providing direct links to Rushden Lakes. Additionally, a completed section from Warmington to Elton connects to the Peterborough Green Wheel. Collaborative efforts with landowners on the Greenway Programme Board facilitated the delivery of these routes. Challenges arise due to the unavailability of certain funding sources, such as Sustrans and CFF, and the need to develop sections on private land. In more rural areas, the absence of Section 106 funds limits delivery.

To address these challenges, the North Northants Greenway Strategy was commissioned in late 2022 and is currently in draft form as of November 2023. The strategy identifies 33 priority routes in the area, provides a prioritisation toolkit, suggests ways to overcome Rights of Way issues, and outlines a formula for securing developer contributions. It also presents a Design Recommendation (DRM) booklet template for the 33 identified routes, serving as a high-level document showcasing the envisioned route.





Greenway Champions



The NNG Strategy can be likened to a rural Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), complementing individual LCWIPs in towns such as Kettering, Corby, and the upcoming Rushden and Wellingborough plans.

The ambitious undertaking of the North Northants Greenway involves delivering 33 routes outlined in the strategy, with a projected cost of £44 million. Notably, this figure excludes expenses related to the Ise Valley Greenway and the Rushden to Wellingborough section. Each route presents unique challenges, necessitating additional costs such as Flood Risk Assessments, Habitat Regulations Assessments, Historic England application advice, as well as surveying, inspections, project management, and detailed design expenses. These crucial elements are not encompassed within the £44 million budget.

To establish these secure, off-road routes, there is a requirement for substantial investment in both capital and resources. Persuading private landowners to recognize and embrace the advantages of these routes is paramount. The process of "selling" these benefits to private landowners involves implementing Greenway routes through private land, creating valuable case studies for future development. Further efforts are essential to garner support from various user groups, including organisations like the British Horse Society, to align with the vision and overcome obstacles hindering progress. A comprehensive, collaborative approach is indispensable, wherein all stakeholders are committed to the Greenway Vision and work together to realize these routes.

The initiative to enlist Greenway Champions from the community, initiated during the NNG Strategy consultation, has proven instrumental. These champions play a pivotal role in advocating for the benefits of implementing routes in their respective areas. The success of this concept is evident in the "Friends of North Northants Greenway" Facebook group, established through the Heritage Lottery funded Nenescape Out to Water, Into History project. This group actively cares for the route, serving as its guardian by reporting faults, engaging in litter picking, maintaining the "Peacock Express," and acting as on-the-ground caretakers.

The roles of the Project Officer encompass various responsibilities, including board administration, collaboration with planning and transportation teams, engagement with parishes and communities, liaising with stakeholders like NLA, Ramblers, and the British Horse Society, coordinating with developers to integrate Active Travel and Greenway routes into their projects, and maintaining dialogues with local area councillors.

Ongoing projects include the Hanwood Park Strategic Urban Extension (SUE) and associated Active Travel Routes, progress on the Rushden to Wellingborough route, consultations on the NNG Strategy and DRM booklets, and engagement with developers and external stakeholders.

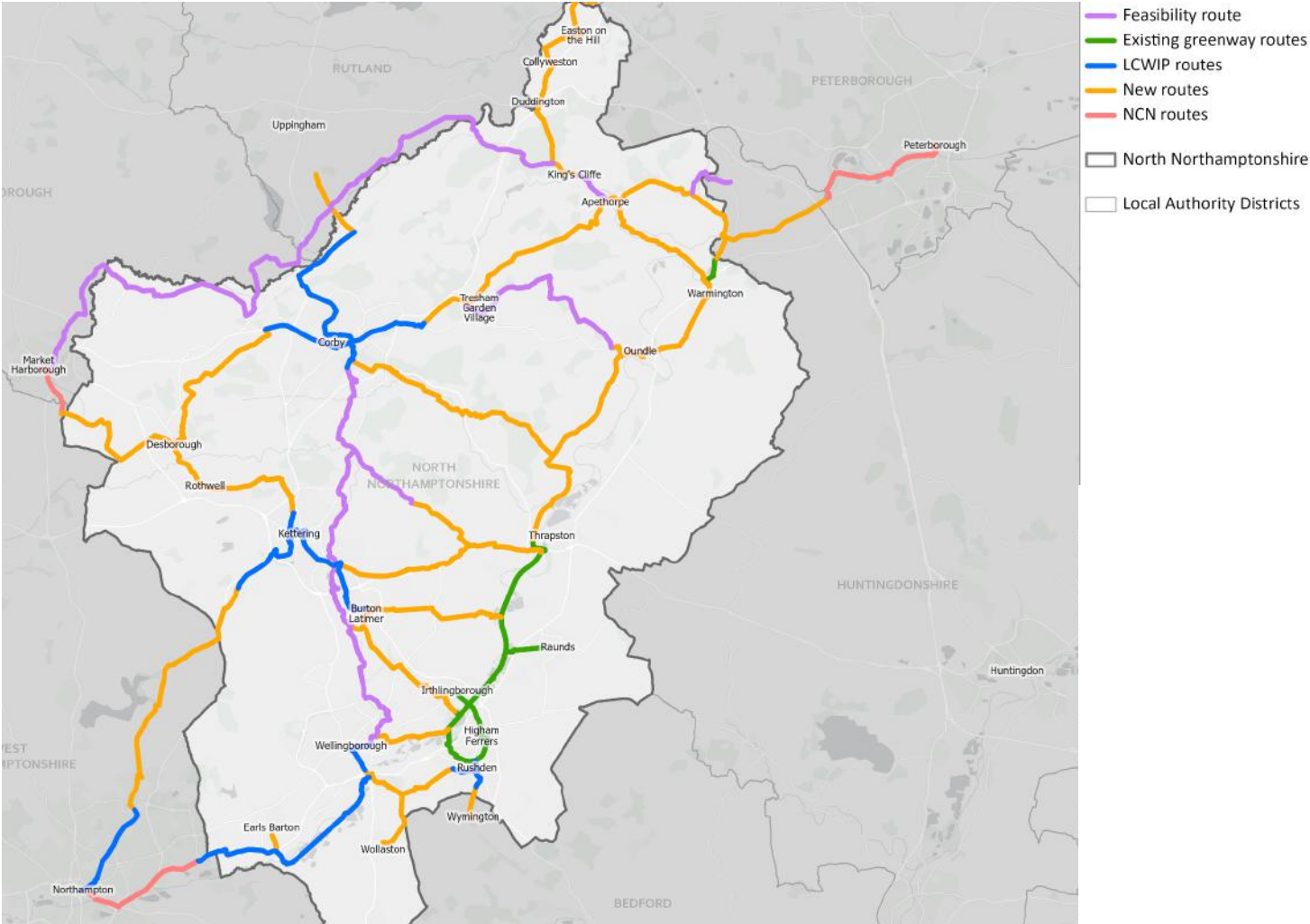
Since its establishment, the NNG has received £120,000 from the Community Renewal Fund to support the Rushden to Wellingborough Masterplan and the Ise Valley Greenway (IVG) Interim Design Study. The IVG will connect Corby to Wellingborough via Kettering, eventually integrating with the Rushden to Wellingborough Strategy. Additionally, £45,000 has been secured for the comprehensive NNG Strategy.

Both the Rushden to Wellingborough Masterplan and the NNG Strategy have undergone consultation processes, garnering feedback from 285 respondents. Collaborative work with local groups and parishes has helped in shaping the DRM booklets and addressing local challenges.

The Hanwood Park developers are actively involved in NNG delivery, particularly within the Kettering LCWIP, through negotiations with Planning and the Greenway Project Officer. Connections have been established with Active Travel England, which expresses interest in funding LCWIPs and Greenway routes.

Rushden to Wellingborough represents the next significant phase in NNG delivery, characterised by its complexity due to landowners, environmental considerations, and stakeholder requirements. The Masterplan outlines the route's delivery, estimated to cost between £10 and £15 million as of 2023. Due to its nature, funding may come from Active Travel England or Levelling Up, necessitating delivery in phases.

### Proposed Greenway Map







## **SECTION 8 THE CORNERSTONE**

## The Alfred East Gallery

The Alfred East Gallery, situated in the heart of Kettering, plays a pivotal role in preserving and sharing the artistic and cultural heritage of the region. Established over a century ago, the gallery continues to evolve, fulfilling its mission to engage the community, stimulate learning, and provide artistic inspiration. This report section explores the gallery's history, its invaluable collection, service offerings, recent renovation, and future prospects.

The Kettering Museum and Art Gallery, specifically the Alfred East Gallery, stands as a testament to the vision of its eponymous founder, Sir Alfred East. Established over a century ago, the gallery's mission is to enable people to explore their past, present, and future through the preservation, interpretation, and accessibility of historical and artistic materials. This report delves into the gallery's history, the evolution of its collection, its diverse range of services, and the recent renovation project that promises to propel it into a promising future.

In 1911, renowned landscape painter Sir Alfred East, a native of Kettering, donated a substantial collection of his artworks to the Kettering Urban District Council. Under his stipulation, the council was to construct a suitable art gallery to house the collection, open to the public free of charge. This initiative marked the gallery's inception, serving as a testament to East's commitment to his hometown.

Adjacent to the Kettering Library, local architects Gotch and Saunders designed the gallery, which was constructed using Weldon stone and adorned with distinctive Tuscan columns, oak-carved doors, and East's name etched on the west wall. On July 31, 1913, the Alfred East Gallery opened its doors to the public, even though its benefactor, Sir Alfred East, was unable to attend due to declining health.

Sir Alfred East passed away shortly after the gallery's opening. His body laid in state at the gallery, allowing the public to pay their respects. His legacy endures, as the gallery continues to fulfil his hope of enriching the lives of the people of Kettering through art and culture.

**Gallery Collection:** The Alfred East Gallery boasts a remarkable collection, unusual for a town of its size, with a rich and varied assortment of artworks spanning various disciplines. This collection holds immense historical and cultural significance, reflecting Kettering's thriving art scene and featuring internationally renowned artists.

The collection began in 1905 when "The Connoisseur" by Walter Bonner Gash was acquired through public subscription, serving as the foundation of Kettering's permanent art collection. In 1910, Sir Alfred East himself gifted 70 artworks to Kettering, further propelling the establishment of the gallery.

Over the last century, the collection has grown substantially and now encompasses nearly 1,000 artworks, valued at £7.5 million in 2023. It includes a diverse range of artistic disciplines, from oil paintings to sculpture, representing local, national, and international talents.

With such an extensive and valuable collection, the Alfred East Gallery is committed to ensuring the preservation and safety of its artworks. The report details the evolution of storage facilities, including the recent addition of a spacious Art Store in the Cornerstone project, ensuring optimum conditions for artwork preservation.



The gallery proudly showcases works from artists with local connections, such as Sir Alfred East himself, Thomas Cooper Gotch, Walter Bonner Gash, Ralph Hartley, Harry Dorr, and George Harrison. These artists, many of whom were members of the Kettering & District Art Society, have played a crucial role in shaping the gallery's collection over the past century.

The Alfred East Gallery has not remained stagnant in its dedication to contemporary art. With the acquisition of modern artworks and the inclusion of notable artists like Sir Howard Hodgkin, Sergio de Camargo, and Leon Kossoff, the gallery bridges the gap between history and the present. These artists' works enrich the collection, making it a vibrant and dynamic cultural hub.

Department Offer: Before the temporary closure in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the gallery offered a wide array of services to engage the community and share its collection. The services ranged from exhibitions to workshops and educational programs, showcasing its commitment to inclusivity and access.

The gallery is a cultural hub that offers free entry to a heritage site, and it actively engages with the community by delivering exhibitions, events, and creative activities. The report provides an extensive list of services, including exhibition previews, art workshops, art demonstrations, life drawing classes, lunchtime/evening talks, film nights, and artist event days.

The gallery recognises the importance of having a strong online presence to reach a wider audience and engage with visitors. Utilising social media and a dedicated website, the gallery shares its collections and fosters interaction and connection with the community.

A significant aspect of the gallery's service is its dedication to learning and engagement. This includes a varied outreach program, facilitated learning workshops, self-guided site visits, resources and learning packs, and a robust online presence. The goal is to make art, history, and culture accessible to all, catering to different learning styles and preferences.

A key milestone in the gallery's history was the recent renovation and extension project, which included the creation of new flexible spaces within the Cornerstone complex. These spaces, including the Garden Room, Studio, and Café, offer expanded opportunities for events, exhibitions, and engagement. They also provide a significant income stream. A future amendment to this service plan will be developed over the next 12 months to how we operate and fund these spaces, once a timeline for the opening of Cornerstone, linked to the Kettering Library roof replacement project, is known.

With the successful renovation project, the Alfred East Gallery is poised for a bright future. The report outlines plans to expand its services, develop its retail offer, and further engage with the community. It aims to provide more opportunities for local and national artists and continue its mission of making art accessible to all. The Alfred East Gallery at Kettering Museum and Art Gallery represents a remarkable journey through art, history, and culture. Its commitment to preserving and sharing the region's artistic heritage, coupled with a dedication to inclusivity and engagement, ensures its place as a cultural treasure for the community and beyond. The recent renovations and future plans promise to further enrich the gallery's offerings and secure its status as a dynamic and vital cultural institution.

The opening and mobilisation of The Alfred East Gallery is reliant on the Library Roof Replacement Project, more details on this in section 10.

## Mobilisation Plans and Future Development of Alfred East Gallery

During the closure period, the Cornerstone team has recognised the need for several essential projects that must be completed before reopening to ensure the smooth operation of the site and services. The team believes that the more of these projects are accomplished during this time, the more advantageous their position will be when they resume operations. Historically, limited resources have often prioritised the delivery and operation of services, sometimes at the expense of back-of-house duties. This closure period provides a valuable opportunity to address these neglected tasks, ensuring that the department is well-prepared for future service delivery and sustainability. By investing in these projects now, the team aims to "future proof" the department, making it more resilient and efficient in the long run. A number of the key projects are presented below:

**Alfred East Bust Display & Permanent Exhibition:** The project involves creating a small permanent display in the North Gallery that showcases Alfred East, incorporating items such as his bronze bust, artist's palette, and sketchbook from the gallery archives and collection. This exhibit is intended to inform visitors about the artist, his connection to the gallery, and his relevance to Kettering's history. It will be of great community value, especially given the North Gallery's frequent displays of artworks from emerging artists and collaborations with local community groups. The project aims to contribute positively to the reopening of the gallery, educating visitors about the building's history and Alfred East himself. The Gallery Manager, with assistance from part-time Heritage Officers, will be responsible for researching, writing, and delivering the project, which includes steps such as artist research, object selection, interpretation development, design, display cabinet procurement, and installation.

In summary, this project's main objective is to create an informative and engaging permanent display in the North Gallery that pays homage to Alfred East, enriching the visitor experience and reinforcing the gallery's connection to the community and local history. The project team, led by the Gallery Manager and supported by Heritage Officers, will undertake several steps to bring this vision to life, encompassing research, design, and installation of the exhibit.

**Kettering Mosaic - Display & Permanent Exhibition:** The project involves creating a permanent exhibition showcasing a replica of Kenneth Budd's mosaic, which has a rich history in Kettering. The original mosaic, previously located on the external wall of Kettering Boys School, was deemed irreparable, leading to the creation of a replica by the artist's son, Oliver Budd. The replica now resides in a public corridor in the new Cornerstone extension. In addition, Oliver has generously donated his father's original drawing of the mosaic to Kettering Civic Society, who, in turn, donated it to the Alfred East Gallery's collection for the benefit of the town's people. This project will celebrate this unique piece of Kettering's social history by creating a permanent exhibition that tells the story of the mosaic alongside a display of the original drawing. Located in a high-traffic area connecting the new Cornerstone entrance with the library and gallery, the exhibition offers historical content within the new building and provides a positive narrative for its reopening. The project will be led by the Gallery Manager in collaboration with the Kettering Civic Society and with support from part-time Heritage Officers. It will involve several steps, including accessioning the original Kenneth Budd drawing into the permanent collection, extensive artist and content research, sourcing images and permissions, creating interpretative content, designing a permanent display, and incorporating branding through graphic design and printing. This initiative aims to celebrate the town's cultural history and enhance the visitor experience in the newly expanded Cornerstone facility.



**Cornerstone Extension Public Spaces - Artwork & Interpretation:** The project focuses on enhancing the extension to the library and gallery buildings by creating a welcoming and engaging space for visitors and users. The new accessible entrance and stairwell will offer access to various facilities within the extension, including the Café, Garden Room, and Studio, as well as new toilet facilities and a route to the original library and gallery buildings. With high footfall anticipated, this entrance aims to serve as a gateway to a cultural hub, introducing many visitors to Cornerstone for the first time. The goal is to adorn the currently blank walls with interesting and inspiring displays that connect the town and its community to the new building. While outlined as one project, it encompasses an information point promoting upcoming events and exhibitions, as well as up to six other individual projects.

The project will be spearheaded by the Gallery Manager, who will collaborate with local artists and the Friends of Kettering Art Gallery and Museum. They will receive assistance from part-time Heritage Officers and casual Officers in its execution. The project includes several key steps, such as identifying spaces for inclusion, designing options for these spaces, collaborating with partners for design input, finalising design details, researching content, working with artists where relevant, procuring artworks, writing and editing interpretation, designing and printing graphics, and sourcing museum-grade display cabinets and case sensors as needed. Additionally, the project may involve purchasing further artworks and their installation, along with the coordination of external trades if required to deliver the project effectively. This initiative aims to transform the extension into an attractive and culturally rich space that welcomes and engages both local and wider North Northamptonshire visitors.

**Gallery Collection Care & Management:** The project revolves around the careful management and care of the gallery's art collection, which is valued at £7.5 million and is a significant cultural asset for North Northamptonshire. This collection, comprising nearly 1000 artworks, features both local artists from Kettering and international pieces of great importance. The collection has returned from secure off-site storage to the newly built Art Store, marking a milestone in the gallery's history. This dedicated storage facility is designed to meet rigorous industry standards and offers a proper environment for the maintenance and care of the collection. Ongoing tasks related to the collection's management are a priority, and the closure period has provided a unique opportunity to address historic issues in the sector due to continuous budget constraints.

The project's implementation involves the Gallery Manager, part-time Heritage Officers, and casual Officers, working in collaboration with industry partners like Arts Council England, Museum Developments East Midlands, Collections Trust, MODES, and EMS. The project steps include sourcing funding for a Collections Review to update the Collecting Policy, accessioning outstanding items into the collection, formalising deaccessioning for items that no longer fit, conducting regular collection audits, condition checking the entire collection, revisiting the conservation program in partnership with external entities, ensuring compliance with Accreditation requirements, addressing the Gallery Archive Project, updating storage for the Frank Thompson Collection, purchasing necessary equipment, and managing pest control. Additionally, a substantial project focuses on copyright and reproduction rights, aiming to fully utilise the collection in various aspects, from exhibitions and events to marketing and commercial opportunities.

Overall, this project emphasises the critical importance of proper management and preservation of the gallery's valuable art collection, positioning it as a vital cultural resource. The dedicated efforts of the team and their partners ensure that this significant collection is well-cared for, accessible, and contributes to the gallery's mission and impact.

**Retail Development:** The project entails the redevelopment of the gallery's retail offerings, aligning them with the new Cornerstone site and brand. This phased approach seeks to create a dynamic retail experience, adapting to evolving visitor needs. The initial phase, overseen by a part-time Heritage Officer under the Gallery Manager's guidance, focuses on preparing for reopening. Steps include defining the retail offerings, clearing outdated merchandise, rebranding and designing print materials, sourcing new items, and setting up the retail space. This phase also includes key publications, budget establishment, and marketing efforts.

Subsequent phases expand the retail offerings, potentially introducing mobile Craft Cases for versatile placement across Cornerstone. The final phase may involve external retail consultancy to optimise offerings, determine budgets, and foster partnerships with local makers and producers. This project enhances the retail experience, supporting local creativity and the cultural hub's sustainability.

**Permanent Collection Guide/Incidental Etcher - Reprints Copyright & Reproduction Rights:**

Two interconnected projects are outlined to enhance retail offerings and copyright management. The first project focuses on revising and reissuing two key books: the Permanent Collection Guide and The Incidental Etcher, both featuring outdated branding. The PC Guide will undergo a 2nd edition to address errors, additions to the collection, and significant building changes. The Incidental Etcher will also be reprinted to align with the new brand. The second project aims to identify copyright holders and secure reproduction rights for the collection's artworks. Progress has been made during the closure, but it remains resource-intensive and long-term, unlocking the potential of the unique collection.

Both projects are managed by the Gallery Manager and part-time Heritage Officers. The steps for the PC Guide and Incidental Etcher include ongoing research, proofreading, updating information, high-quality image production, adding a new chapter, and working with external designers and printers for rebranding and reprinting, followed by marketing. The Copyright & Reproduction Rights project involves contacting artists and estates, documenting communication, researching fees, updating databases and archives, ensuring proper image usage, and correcting errors. These projects contribute to the retail and rights management strategies for Cornerstone, enhancing the visitor experience and ensuring compliance with copyright regulations.

**Research Projects:** An ongoing, multifaceted project with numerous benefits encompasses the research of the Manor House's history, similar buildings, and the Manor House Gardens, including features like the Farraday Fountain and Mulberry bush. As the Manor House Museum and Gardens are under the Cornerstone umbrella, this research has the potential to lead to the creation of interpretation for the gardens, incorporating elements like nature and wildlife. There is also consideration for introducing external sculptures to the Gardens. This research serves as a valuable resource for future exhibitions and museum representation during the closure period.

Additionally, exhibition research is a vital but time-consuming aspect of the service's operation, with three main research projects currently underway. These include research on gallery exhibitions to inform the programming calendar, research into the gallery's art collection to facilitate community engagement and meet the duty of dedicating a space to the collection, and research for event planning, creating a database of ideas and contacts to inform the programming calendar and enhance future programming for talks, film screenings, and art workshop.



**Admin & Resource Project:** This project focuses on addressing a significant backlog of administrative tasks that have accumulated over 35 years at the museum and gallery. The closure period has presented a unique opportunity to engage in this essential work. The effort involves the managing various paperwork and documents, streamlining the storage of hard copies, and creating a comprehensive, user-friendly resource for staff. This encompasses critical areas such as accreditation, documentation, collections management, condition reporting, and more. The project aims to modernise and optimise the management of both physical and digital records, ensuring they are accessible and well-organised for current and future staff.

Led by the Gallery Manager and executed by part-time Heritage Officers and a casual Officer, the project also includes the sorting and organisation of digital images, the clean-up and improvement of the museum's hard drive system, and the benchmarking of services to enhance operational procedures in preparation for the museum and gallery's reopening. By tackling this backlog, the project contributes to the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the institution, supporting its mission and services.

**Manor House Museum - Interim Building Checks & Collections Care:** The Manor House Museum faced budget constraints during the GLaM project, leading to its exclusion from the initial scope. Subsequent issues with the Grade II listed building highlighted the need for separate external funding to refurbish and update the museum as a standalone heritage project.

With the loss of the Museum Officer, interim care for the museum has been assumed by the Gallery Manager and the remaining Heritage Officers, pending the appointment of a Heritage Manager. The project involves several key ongoing tasks, including daily environmental monitoring, site safety and security checks, monthly pest management, clearance of the building for the disposal of relevant items, regular cleaning, condition checking of the collection, specialised cleaning of artefacts, ongoing administrative work, design and installation of exterior vinyl rebranding, relocation of artefacts to external or sensitive storage, documentation updates from previous exhibitions, maintenance of the external store, sorting and labelling of the collection and outstanding projects on-site, updating the Frank Thompson archive, movement of relevant archives to the new Art Store, management of long-term loans, and a Roman Water Bowl conservation project. These efforts ensure the ongoing care, security, and preservation of the museum's collection and building.

**Cornerstone - Completion of Interior Spaces:** The project aims to complete the remaining internal work within Cornerstone from April 2024 to September 2024, in preparation for the building's reopening to the public. This significant volume of work is essential to ensure that all internal spaces are fully ready for operation. The Gallery Manager and the remaining Heritage Officers will play a crucial role in facilitating this work, serving as key members of the team responsible for this project. Recruitment of full Cornerstone staff will also be a part of this process.

The project will involve a diverse team of individuals, each contributing their skills and resources to manage and complete the necessary tasks. This team will be led by the Head of Service and will include the Heritage Manager (once recruited), Gallery Manager, remaining Heritage Officers, Library staff, finance and business support, Property Services, Marketing & Communications, IT, Facilities Management, and external contractors.

The project encompasses a range of activities, including decorating and making necessary repairs, electrical work, staff training for new recruits, space design and allocation, sourcing and purchasing of required items, policy and procedure updates, technology integration, internal signage installation, programming, IT setup, and installation of tills. This work is essential to ensure a smooth and successful reopening of Cornerstone to the public.

**Outreach - Learning & Engagement:** Starting in Spring 2023, a museum and gallery outreach program was initiated with the goal of expanding and enhancing the presence and awareness of the Cornerstone brand and service as it approaches reopening. This project will extend beyond 2024-25 and will continue when Cornerstone is fully operational again. The detailed planning and execution of this outreach program will be outlined in a separate document prepared by the Cornerstone Learning & Engagement Officer. The delivery of this project will be led by the Learning & Engagement Officer, who will receive assistance from part-time Heritage Officers and casual Officers. The Gallery Manager will provide guidance and support to ensure the successful implementation of the outreach program.



## Kettering Museum

Located in the heart of Kettering's town centre, on grounds that can be traced back to the Domesday Book, the Manor House Museum has served the local community for decades, providing a valuable insight into the town's past and providing education and entertainment to generations of local people. The museum's collection contains thousands of historical artefacts, varying from dinosaur bones to Roman pottery and jewellery, all excavated around Kettering. There are also items tracing the post-industrial era history of the town and its importance at the forefront of the UK's boot and shoe industry.

When open to the public, the museum is free entry and fully accessible to everyone, divided into rooms that cover two floors of the ancient Manor House with a lift providing access to the upper floor if required. Each room showcases different elements of the collection, with an archaeology room devoted to the Samian Ware pottery of Kettering's Roman past, extensive examples of machinery used to create footwear, and areas highlighting prominent local people, such as the slavery abolitionist William Knibb.

Two rooms on the upper floor are dedicated to providing a rolling programme of temporary exhibitions that continuously change throughout the year, giving returning visitors something new and fresh each time they visit. These award-winning exhibitions have covered everything from the 75th anniversary of VE Day, to a fascinating exploration of Kettering's musical past, and even an exhibition on the history of witchcraft in the region.

Most recently, the museum received a grant from Art Fund and the Weston Loans Programme which enabled the modernisation of the temporary display areas and saw the installation of state-of-the-art display cases. This enabled world-class items to be brought to Kettering, on loan from the British Museum, and the result was "Local Treasures", the most successful exhibition at the museum in recent times. Items on display included a 1500-year-old gold necklace and other exciting Roman and Anglo-Saxon jewellery, originally discovered in North Northamptonshire and returning to Kettering from London for the first time.

Manor House Museum also hosted events and activities for the local community, most notably the incredibly popular Family Fun Days during school holidays, which saw families converge on the museum and surrounding gardens for fun activities, all available entirely free of charge. This provided a much-needed source of entertainment for local families on a budget and enriched the lives of thousands of children.

Other events available included Family and Local History sessions, where budding historians could receive professional advice on how to research their family trees and different aspects of local history. Children's Craft Activities were a popular event, allowing children to take part in different arts and crafts, learning new skills and exploring their creative sides, and the Archaeological Finds Surgery was available to anyone in the community who had found something of interest during an archaeological dig and would like it appraised by an expert.



## History

Kettering's Manor House has been home to the town's museum since 1989, but the history of both the service and the building goes back much further.

The Manor House is one of the oldest buildings in the town, with elements of the existing building dating back almost 500 years and occupying land that was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086. Over the centuries, there have been various iterations of the "noble hall faced with stone" first recorded in the 13th century, housing important local families and Abbots from Peterborough Abbey. Today, the Manor House is a Grade II listed building, described by Historic England as "17th Century, re-fronted in the 18th Century, perhaps incorporating earlier structure of house, known as Abbot's house, belonging to Peterborough monastery".

The museum itself began in 1903 when it occupied a room within the neighbouring Kettering Library. Initially containing local archaeological finds from a newly discovered Anglo-Saxon cemetery, it grew over the following century to include everything from Roman jewellery and pottery, artefacts from the local boot and shoe industry, one of the area's very first cars, and even a mummified cat used to scare away evil spirits.

The growing collection necessitated a move to its own much larger building, so the museum moved from the library to nearby West Street, where it was known as Westfield Museum, before finally calling the Manor House its home in 1989 after extensive renovation work of the historic building. Manor House Museum is now at the heart of the wider Cornerstone site, alongside Kettering Library and Alfred East Gallery.

## External Store

After the museum moved into the Manor House, it was immediately clear that storage was needed for those items in the collection not currently on display to the public. The decision was made to utilise an industrial unit within the Kettering Borough Council depot (now North Northamptonshire Council) on Robinson Way, Kettering, and in 1994 an external store was created there.

The majority of the Kettering museum's collection has been stored at the external store, measuring 11.6m x 8.7m, since that date. It is difficult to access the collections, due to poor lighting and inadequate record keeping, but the collection is stored on a roller-racking system, wrapped in acid-free paper and stored in acid-free boxes where possible.

In 2003, funding was granted to create a sensitive store within the existing external store, where a more appropriate area was utilised to house the most sensitive items in the museum collection. The sensitive store, unlike the rest of the external store, features purpose-built racking and environmental controls and is used to house the museum's numismatics and archaeological metalwork collections, amongst others.

In 2018, after the Community Space room was created within the Manor House Museum, further storage was required for the agriculture equipment that previously occupied that space. To this end, a shipping container was hired on long-term loan. Situated within the car park of the Robinson Way depot, the container has been used to store the agriculture equipment since.

## Cornerstone Project and Closure

The Covid pandemic of 2020 saw the Manor House Museum and Alfred East Gallery closed to the public, in line with other public buildings, while the country underwent national lockdowns. During this period, multi-million-pound funding was granted to renovate the area, and work began on building an extension to the rear of Kettering Library and the gallery. This new combined site, encompassing Kettering Library, the museum, gallery, and Manor House Gardens, was rebranded as “Cornerstone”.

After the renovation work commenced, architects completed surveys on the Manor House and discovered that there were complex structural problems within the Grade II listed building. It was determined that any work to update the Manor House, in line with the rest of the Cornerstone site, would need additional funding before it could be reopened to the public. Consequently, the Manor House Museum has remained closed since early 2020. We are currently exploring options for how we can re-open the museum in the future, more details on this can be found in the ‘future developments’ section of this report.

During this time, museum and gallery staff have worked tirelessly behind the scenes, using this unprecedented closure to tackle projects that had previously been neglected due to lack of staffing and resources. Thirty-five years’ worth of administrative documents were sorted through, rearranged, and disposed of where appropriate. The museum’s archives, located in multiple extremely heavy filing cabinets, were moved from the problematic top floor of the Manor House, relieving any stress caused to the building from excessive weight. These archives were then sorted and documented appropriately, identifying multiple projects for staff to work on, before being relocated on the ground floor of the Manor House.

The Frank Thompson Collection, an important archive documenting the history of Kettering and surrounding villages, was moved into the brand-new Art Store inside the Cornerstone extension, stored in a properly controlled environment for the first time.

The museum’s closure has also given staff valuable time to review and assess the existing learning and outreach programme. With over 30 “loan boxes” available for hire to local schools, this has always been a vital method of educating children on the history of the local area. Utilising elements from the museum’s collection, these boxes are being redeveloped and updated to bring this important offer into the 21st century and playing an important role in maintaining the museum’s presence in the minds of the local community.

Outreach events began again in 2023, with staff attending local events and engaging with the public face-to-face. Stalls were set up in places such as Kettering Marketplace, Chester House Estate, and Northampton’s Abington Park, providing visitors the chance to discuss Cornerstone and the gallery and museum’s collections. The handling collection, an important resource in the museum that allows the public to touch and feel less-delicate artefacts from history, was brought out at events such as KettFest, Roman Fest, and Heritage Day, again boosting the presence of the museum. With the reintroduction of outreach only just begun, this is an exciting opportunity during closure to build the learning capability, growing this offer into a more robust and fresh resource that will benefit generations of local young people.



 Cornerstone

Outside Cornerstone, 2022



## Learning and Engagement Offer at Cornerstone, Kettering

Our goal is to create an interactive and educational experience that caters to a variety of learning styles and preferences. We seek to inspire and enlighten while fostering a deep connection with history, art, and culture. Here's an overview of our extensive offerings, currently under development during the mobilisation period of Cornerstone. A dedicated Learning and Engagement Officer based on-site is overseeing this development, with a view to engaging audiences in preparation for our full opening.

The Cornerstone learning program will include:

**Facilitated Curriculum-Based Workshops:** Engaging history and art workshops held either at schools or within the captivating confines of Cornerstone. A rich mix of learning, captivating demonstrations, hands-on craft activities, and interactive object handling, featuring real artifacts and replicas from our extensive outreach collection.

Topics will encompass a wide range, including Rocks and Fossils (KS1), Archaeology/Local Treasures (KS2), Prehistory, Romans (KS2), Anglo-Saxons, Beside the Seaside (KS1), Victorians, Kettering Histories, Local Artists & Creative Processes, Drawing, Printing, and Storytelling in Art.

To meet the growing demand, we are preparing to have multiple sets of our most popular outreach boxes. This will enable simultaneous use in schools and on-site. Workshop sessions for the new learning program in 2024-2025 are currently in development to coincide with our reopening, ensuring that visitors can also enjoy self-guided tours of our exhibitions. Our outreach boxes are being revitalised to add fresh relevance to the curriculum and our collections.

**Facilitated Tours and Storytelling Sessions:** Seamlessly blend our workshops with guided tours of our museum and gallery exhibitions and captivating storytelling sessions for a more immersive experience. We offer a range of tour options, each providing insights into both permanent and temporary exhibitions, accompanied by tailored trails and worksheets that align with the curriculum.

Pricing and membership terms for these offerings are under discussion and development. The creation of tours and storytelling sessions for our reopening is also in progress.

**Learning and Engagement Talks:** We are excited to introduce a series of educational talks into our learning program, extending our curriculum-based workshops and community offerings. We are exploring the potential to deliver talks to local groups and organisations as part of various learning projects. Pricing and membership terms for these talks are open for discussion and development. We recommend that welcome talks be free with bookings required. Talks are scheduled for development in 2024/25 or 2025/26 to enhance our outreach and on-site experiences.

**Self-Facilitated Visits:** Encourage independent exploration of our spaces with advance bookings for larger groups. Access permanent Cornerstone trails tailored for all ages and needs, museum gardens, worksheets, free library services and current exhibitions. We provide clipboards and pens for school groups upon arrival, along with maps and guides for young learners. Access to free craft activities and dedicated spaces, where possible. We are revisiting our permanent trails to align with our ongoing Cornerstone project and reopening. Schools prefer access to cloakrooms and lunch storage facilities. Having an indoor dining space, either for a nominal fee or free, is advantageous for schools with extended visits.

**Digital Engagement:** We will be dedicated to maintaining a robust online presence through our website, blogs, and active social media platforms. Our digital engagement includes storytelling, online exhibitions, a comprehensive database of our handling collection, and access to art gallery collection photos and artwork details. Our Roots online platform showcases the Manor House Museum's archaeological collections, supported by a newly developed learning box to enhance our growing outreach program. We are developing sessions for on-site or in-school delivery, complete with engaging activities and object handling opportunities.

**Outreach:** We extend our reach by maintaining a permanent display case at the Discover Northamptonshire Tourism Hub and ARTworks Creative Space. We continually update temporary displays and engage with the public through facilitated sessions and interactive activities. Every school holiday we offer free activities for families with school-age children to engage with the Cornerstone collections and learn and play together safely in community spaces. We are actively seeking outreach partnerships and collaborations to enrich our offerings and reach wider audiences.

**Young Adults Engagement:** Our initiatives include teacher consultation panels, school career fairs, assemblies, takeover days, career taster days, volunteering, and youth panels. We also collaborate with local artists to enhance sessions and expand opportunities for young adult engagement.

**Learning Resource Offerings to Include:**

- Loan Boxes and Resource Packs (Charged)
- Outreach Boxes (Charged)
- Reminiscence (Memory) Outreach Boxes (Charged)
- Artworks to Borrow (Charged or Membership-Based)
- Loose Handling and Event Resources
- Family and Children's Activities

At the Cornerstone, our Learning and Engagement department is committed to providing a multifaceted and enriching experience. We aim to ensure that visitors of all ages and backgrounds find inspiration, knowledge, and delight in our historical and cultural Kettering based offer.

**Heritage Team (Cornerstone)**

**The Alfred East Gallery Manager:** Position involving a 37-hour workweek, with additional hours required as per the service's needs. In this role, they are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Alfred East Gallery and collaborate with the Museum Officer to run the joint museum and gallery service. The Manager oversees Museum & Gallery Attendants and Casual staff, assists with staffing rotas for installations and events, and manages the gallery's budget. They also handle the gallery's small retail offer, oversee the social media presence (with support from Marketing Officer), and cultivate relationships with key stakeholders. Additionally, the Gallery Manager engages in industry-related activities, such as networking and participating in industry-specific events. They work with museum partners to maintain accreditation standards and develop projects with various stakeholders, including the Friends group, Kettering Library, Kettering Civic Society, and KDAS. They also assist in funding applications, plan the gallery's exhibition calendar, work with artists to ensure high-quality exhibitions, curate displays, and manage exhibition installation and deinstallation. The Manager oversees gallery-hosted events, such as art workshops and talks, and maintains the gallery's collection through environmental monitoring, audits, condition checks, and conservation programs. Furthermore, they handle collection loans and manage industry-specific documentation while conducting research and responding to collection inquiries.

**The Heritage Manager:** This role will assume a pivotal role in the day-to-day management and growth of North Northamptonshire's heritage assets (in Kettering and Corby). In this position, you will have overarching responsibilities for visitor services, operational activities, the learning program, and the implementation of retail and catering services. Ensuring an exceptional visitor experience is a key aspect of the role, along with the strategic development of the business for long-term commercial success. Successful candidates for the Heritage Manager role will exhibit a results-oriented, guest-focused management style within the tourism or hospitality sector. This includes the ability to foster teamwork and build effective relationships within teams and with colleagues. Additionally, a track record of delivering outstanding guest service, innovative product development, and sound financial and business acumen is essential. The Heritage Manager will have a multifaceted role that encompasses heritage management, overseeing various teams and functions, and nurturing educational and commercial partnerships while maintaining high standards of security and health and safety.

The Heritage Manager will also take on the role of Duty Manager on a rotational basis as part of the Leadership Team. Given the nature of the business, weekend and Bank Holiday work will be a regular requirement. The Heritage Manager will play a lead role within the Heritage Management Team and collaborate with other managers to ensure visitors enjoy safe and enjoyable experiences at the museums and galleries. The main responsibilities of this role include team leadership and management, development of revenue-generating business initiatives, overseeing key partnerships, financial accountability, health and safety compliance, expansion of the learning and engagement program, preservation of historic buildings and collections, growth of the North Northamptonshire heritage brand, and the development of a project to secure the future of Kettering Museum and the NNC collection.

**Learning & Engagement Officer:** This role holds a pivotal position in bolstering the educational facets of the museum and gallery service. Created during the closure period, the role was designed to address a gap in educational roles and adapt to the evolving demographics of the borough. The Learning & Engagement Officer encompasses a wide array of responsibilities, including the development of learning and engagement programs, outreach activities, and digital engagement initiatives. This role involves close collaboration with schools, community groups, and other stakeholders to build strong partnerships and encourage access to museum and gallery collections.

A significant project has been the reorganisation of learning resources and the creation of extensive reusable activity resources for Cornerstone. The role also involves marketing and promotional material design for exhibitions, events, and learning resources, further amplifying the museum and gallery's presence. Additionally, the officer actively manages loan, outreach, and reminiscence boxes, continuously marketing these resources to schools and community groups. Their dedication to digital engagement has led to the development of online projects, making learning and engagement accessible to a wider audience. Overall, this position's contribution is integral to the success of learning and engagement initiatives at the museum and gallery.



**Venue and Operations Manager:** This role encompasses several key responsibilities. Firstly, it involves leading and managing the visitor services team, which includes the food and beverage, retail, weddings, and conferencing departments. The role plays a pivotal part in developing and expanding the site's revenue through weddings, function hires, conferencing events, and the bed and breakfast offer. As a key member of the Leadership Team, the Visitor Services Manager may act as the Deputy Heritage Manager when necessary. The role involves overseeing operational budgets, focusing on both income generation and expenditure control.

The main accountabilities include creating exceptional visitor experiences, organising and delivering engagement activities to make the estate's hireable facilities come to life. This role is responsible for developing and leading weddings, function hires, conferencing events, and ensuring high standards in all visitor areas. Monitoring the Visitor Survey and providing feedback to the Heritage Manager is another critical aspect. Financial performance management is essential, including monitoring, developing, and evaluating the commercial aspects of visitor services and ensuring financial targets are met.

The role also involves taking the lead in handling internal financial payments accurately and timely, identifying new income opportunities, providing leadership and direction to staff and volunteers, dealing with visitor enquiries and complaints, maintaining site security, and adhering to health and safety regulations. Additionally, they will work closely with marketing and social media teams to drive the amplification and impact of the estate's work, aligning with guidelines and website architecture. This role is pivotal in ensuring a successful and thriving visitor services operation while contributing to the overall success of the property.

## **Volunteering Development**

Over the next 12 months, we plan to develop a new volunteering program for Cornerstone through a systematic approach. Our first step will be to conduct a thorough needs assessment to identify the specific areas where volunteers can have the most impact. This process will allow us to pinpoint the roles and responsibilities that align with Cornerstone's mission and goals.

Following the needs assessment, we will move forward with the creation of a well-defined volunteering program structure. This includes crafting detailed position descriptions, setting clear expectations, and establishing a structured recruitment and training process. We will ensure that volunteers receive comprehensive orientation and training to excel in their roles and responsibilities. To maintain strong relationships and adapt the program as needed, we will implement regular communication channels and feedback mechanisms. A recognition and appreciation system will also be developed to acknowledge the valuable contributions of our volunteers.

In addition, we will focus on marketing and outreach strategies to attract potential volunteers from the local community, encouraging them to support Cornerstone's mission. The success of this new volunteering program over the next 12 months will depend on our careful planning, effective management, and commitment to providing a rewarding and meaningful experience for our volunteers.



**SECTION 9  
SHARED BUSINESS  
RESOURCE**

## BUSINESS OPERATIONS

With all cultural, tourism and heritage departments coming together within the new service, there is an opportunity to share business resource. It has been identified large savings between departments can be made when sharing the following:

- Building Management
- Finance
- Marketing and PR
- Administration
- Volunteering

By combining these services the service will aim to have one voice, brand and strategic direction. There will also be additional support for smaller organisation's such as the Corby Heritage Centre that to date have had no marketing, volunteering or educational support.

## OUTLINE OF SHARED SERVICES

### **BUILDING MANAGEMENT**

- Ongoing repairs and maintenance management
- Fire system management
- Security alarm management
- Building activity risk Assessments and rams
- Painting and decorating
- Cleaning and janitorial management
- Historic England LBC consents

### **FINANCE**

- ERP management
- Raising requisitions / purchase orders
- Stock takes
- Raising invoices
- Setting up customers / suppliers
- EOM reporting
- Cashing-up / banking
- EPOS management
- Donation point management
- Gift-aid management

### **MARKETING**

- Social media management
- Creating press releases / blog content
- Website management
- Overseeing press launches and engagement
- Event ticket management
- Community outreach marketing events
- Grant/bid writing
- CT&H brand management
- FOI requests

### **ADMINISTRATION**

- Booking management (epos/online)
- Phone call enquiries
- Email enquires
- Management of complaints / feedback.
- Printing services
- Booking diary management

### **VOLUNTEERING**

- Recruitment and retention of volunteers
- Role creation and implementation
- Training and development for volunteers and staff



## Business Operations Team

**Business Operations Manager:** The Business Operations Manager holds a pivotal full-time (37 hours) permanent position, functioning seamlessly within a 7-day rota. This multifaceted role oversees a spectrum of critical support services that are the lifeblood of the department. This encompassing portfolio includes the realms of Marketing, Finance Management, Press Relations, Building Management, Volunteer Management and Administration. The role reports into to the Head of Service and the Business Manager's Leads a dedicated team of five professionals, the Business Operations Manager steers the department toward operational excellence.

**Building and Facilities Officer:** The Building and Facilities Officer assumes a vital role as a full-time (27 hours) permanent member, contributing to the seamless functioning of a 7-day rota. In this capacity, they take the helm in overseeing the dynamic landscape of consultants and contractors operating across multiple sites. Their purview extends to the meticulous management of day-to-day building operations, spanning the domains of repairs and maintenance, cleaning protocols and contracts, fire and security systems, and the oversight of health and safety processes, including activity risk assessments and rams. Reporting directly to the Business Operations Manager, this role serves as the linchpin connecting all facilities and sites within the service.

**Business Services Officer:** The Officer embraces a full-time (37 hours) permanent role, operating with finesse across a 7-day rota. This role is the guardian of financial harmony within the service, reporting directly to the Business Operations Manager. Their stewardship encompasses all financial operations, including the diligent oversight of ERP Gold processes and stock control, ensuring the fiscal integrity of the service is upheld with precision.

**Marketing Officer:** The Marketing Officer commands a full-time (37 hours) permanent position, adroitly functioning within the parameters of a 7-day rota. With a direct line to the Business Operations Manager, this role is a linchpin in catalysing dynamic marketing and PR activity across the entire service. Their influence extends across all sites under the service's purview, taking charge of marketing and PR initiatives, including the management of standalone websites and social media platforms at The Chester House Estate, Tourism Hub, and Cornerstone. This role assumes a pivotal position in overseeing the outsourced PR consultant and works in close collaboration with the internal NNC Communication team to ensure seamless approvals and the active involvement of relevant council members in press-related activities.

**Administration Officer:** The Administration Officer occupies a dynamic full-time (37 hours) permanent role that thrives within the heartbeat of a 7-day rota. Directly reporting to the Business Operations Manager, this pivotal position serves as the central hub for all administration processes that pulsate across the various departments. Operating seamlessly across all sites, this role adeptly handles phone call and email inquiries, diary management, and booking systems, ensuring the cogs of administration turn smoothly.

**Volunteering Officer:** The Volunteering Officer, a part-time (20 hours) permanent fixture that harmoniously synchronises with a 7-day rota. With a direct line of communication to the Business Operations Manager and a presence across all sites, this role closely collaborates with department heads to pinpoint the roles and individuals crucial to bolstering the day-to-day delivery of their respective domains. Holding the reins for the recruitment, retention, and nurturing of the volunteer team across the service. This role is planned to be introduced following the Cornerstone opening to the public.

## Brand Management

To support service identity, a new logo has been created that all departments across the Culture, Tourism and Heritage service will use. Along with this whole service logo, the separate department areas will continue to use their recognised branding guidelines and logos as per below:

### Service Logo:



### Archaeological Resource Centre



### Chester House Estate :



### Cornerstone:



### Discover Northamptonshire:



### Greenway Project:



### Corby Heritage Centre:





# **SECTION 10 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT**



## 2024 National Lottery Heritage Fund Masterplan Proposal

In Spring 2024, an exciting initiative is set to unfold as we embark on a journey to secure the substantial sum of an estimated £100,000 for the purpose of crafting and integrating a visionary, long-term heritage masterplan for North Northamptonshire Council. This endeavor will be made possible through the utilisation of the Heritage Fund's Medium Grant Scheme, which ranges from £25,000 to £250,000. Once our application has been submitted, it takes 8 weeks for a decision and funding to be released, the team are currently engaging and working with the Heritage Fund Officers to develop our application.

A heritage masterplan is a comprehensive and strategic document that outlines a structured approach to preserving, enhancing, and celebrating our region's cultural, historical, and natural heritage. It will serve as a roadmap for managing and leveraging North Northamptonshire's heritage assets, such as its historic sites, landmarks, traditions, and landscapes. Below we have broken down what we wish to achieve from this master plan:

**Preservation of historical and cultural assets:** The heritage masterplan for North Northamptonshire will identify and prioritize the preservation of historically significant buildings, landmarks, artifacts, and cultural practices. It will ensure that these assets are protected from decay, neglect, or inappropriate development, thus safeguarding the region's unique identity and history. This will include developing the outline of future capital projects within the council, such as the Kettering Museum and The Corby Heritage Archive.

**Conservation and Restoration:** The plan will lay out strategies for the conservation and restoration of heritage structures and sites, maintaining their authenticity and historical integrity. This can include revitalising our historic buildings, monuments, and landscapes, making them accessible and engaging for both residents and visitors.

**Heritage Tourism:** North Northamptonshire's heritage masterplan will develop the promotion of heritage tourism, attracting visitors who have an interest in the area's history, architecture, and culture. This can boost the local economy, creating new opportunities for businesses, tourism-related jobs, and cultural events. This will eventually feed our newly developed Local Visitor Economy action plan.

**Community Engagement:** The masterplan will encourage active community involvement in preserving and promoting heritage. It may include educational programs, workshops, and initiatives that engage local residents in understanding and valuing their heritage. This fosters a sense of ownership and pride in the community's cultural identity as well as supporting the creation of the masterplan.

**Cultural Events and Celebration:** The plan may outline the development of cultural events, festivals, and exhibitions that celebrate North Northamptonshire's heritage. These events can strengthen community bonds, promote local artists, and attract tourists.

**Sustainable Development:** A heritage masterplan will incorporate sustainable development practices to ensure that heritage preservation is harmonised with modern needs and environmental concerns. It may address issues like land use, transportation, and infrastructure in a way that respects the heritage of the area.

In essence, a heritage masterplan for North Northamptonshire is not merely about preserving the past but also about building a stronger, more vibrant future. It is a vision for the region that recognises the intrinsic value of its heritage and seeks to utilise it as a powerful driver of community cohesion, economic prosperity, and cultural enrichment. By creating and implementing such a plan, North Northamptonshire can define and shape its identity for the benefit of present and future generations. We hope for this to be completed and within the delivery phased by the end of 2024. Following this project, we hope to continue working with the National Lottery Heritage Fund to develop and fund major heritage restoration projects including the full restoration and interpretation re-fresh of the Kettering Museum.

Throughout the duration of this business plan, we have highlighted a number of capital projects that we will feed into the wider masterplan including actively exploring funding opportunities for, these are as follows:

**Kettering Library and Art Gallery Roof:** The library roof has been in need of repair for some time. A survey undertaken by the former county council in 2019 stated that the library roof would need replacing within 10 years. The original plan was to repair the roof once the Cornerstone project had been completed as the roof replacement could not be included in the scope of the works for the Cornerstone extension. However, during the winter of 2022, the roof deteriorated rapidly causing water ingress into the main library building and some parts of the new extension where the old roof meets the new. This resulted in the new extension, a £4.5 million project delivered using SEMLEP funding, being unable to open as originally planned.

Following a period of intensive rain in October 2023, a section of the internal library roof was damaged. This resulted in the library being closed for health and safety reasons. Since the deterioration of the roof last winter, specialist contractors have assessed the works required. The council has carefully considered the findings of this work before moving forward with the project to replace the roof. Due to the roofing works that are now known to be required, it is proposed that the building is covered in a specially designed, purpose-built tent to make it watertight whilst the roof replacement is undertaken. Current costings for the value of the entire project are estimated at £6.807m and a timeframe of two years has been proposed to complete all works.

**Chester House Estate Greenhouse:** The Greenhouse was constructed in the 1920's and was designed by Thomas Messenger, who was the foremost designer of greenhouses in Victorian and Edwardian England. Oral evidence indicates that the greenhouse was still in full use in the 1970's. However, since this time the Greenhouse has fallen into complete disrepair and is hazardous for visitors. The team want to rebuild the Greenhouse to its former glory, to add to its visitor and education facilities on the site. The Greenhouse and surrounding allotments outside will be used to grow Chester House Estate own produce that they can use in their kitchen onsite and to sell in their cafe. In conjunction with this, 'farm to fork' education with schools is planned, and volunteering groups can be run, teaching anyone how to grow their own food and eat healthily. The allotments and surrounding garden will be transformed into a sensory garden, further enhancing school educational visits.

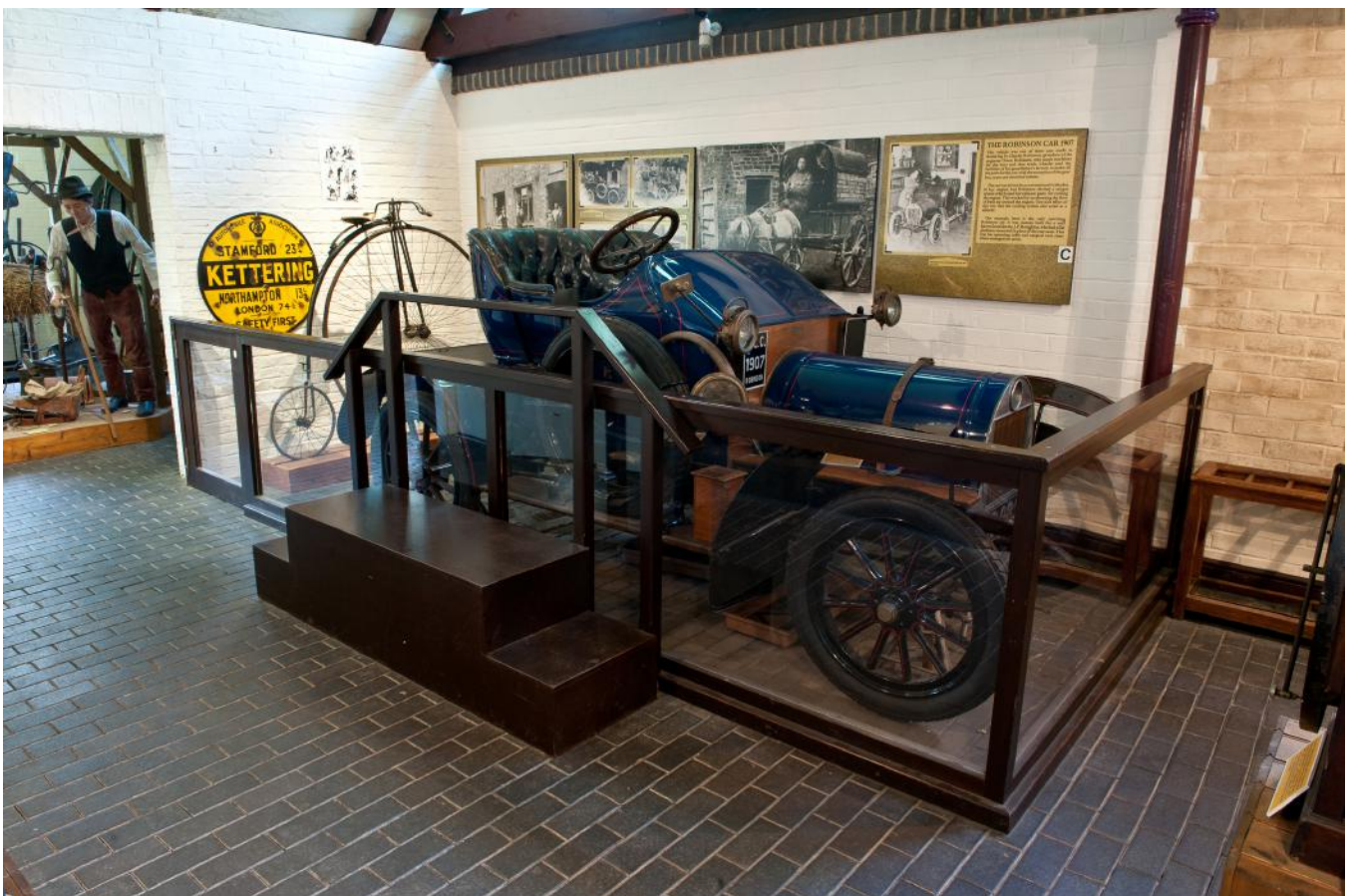
The Greenhouse is expected to be run by volunteers of the Chester House Estate. There is a chance that it may require a part time job; but this is to be decided at a later date. Some of these volunteers will be specialist in their roles of growing and monitoring produce for the Estate. This project is currently forecast to cost in the region of £800,000 with no external funding established to date (2023).

**Kettering Museum Project:** The Covid pandemic of 2020 saw the Manor House Museum and Alfred East Gallery closed to the public, in line with other public buildings, while the country underwent national lockdowns. During this period, multi-million-pound funding was granted to renovate the area, and work began on building an extension to the rear of Kettering Library and the gallery. This new combined site, encompassing Kettering Library, the museum, gallery, and Manor House Gardens, was rebranded as “Cornerstone”.

After the renovation work commenced, architects completed surveys on the Manor House and discovered that there were complex structural problems within the Grade II listed building. It was determined that any work to update the Manor House, in line with the rest of the Cornerstone site, would need additional funding before it could be reopened to the public. Consequently, the Manor House Museum has remained closed since early 2020.

We are currently working with the National Lottery Heritage Fund to explore ‘next steps’ and options for the development of the building and collection. This project is currently estimated at around £10million pounds with at least 10% of the funding needed to come from North Northamptonshire Council. In the short term, we are working with property colleagues to see if with minor works the museum can be made safe to open and a small bid may be made to the NLHF to enable us to curate some of the collection.

Other Projects: The team have also highlighted additional capital projects including the relocation of the Corby archive to an accessible location, the repairs to the Chester House garden wall and Discover Northamptonshire high street interactive screens.





## Future Ways of Working:

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Resilience Grant stands as a beacon of opportunity for North Northamptonshire's Heritage, Culture, and Tourism Service, including The Chester House Estate, Corby Heritage Centre, and the Cornerstone. As we delve into the fiscal year 24/25, the strategic utilisation of this grant, becomes a pivotal component of our approach to fortify the sustainability and resilience of these invaluable cultural assets. An application for the resilience grant (up to £250,000) will be made in April 2023, with in-depth project consultation between the funder and NNC already taking place.

The Heritage Fund Resilience Grant is a targeted financial support mechanism designed to empower heritage and cultural organisations in overcoming challenges and fostering long-term viability. Its relevance to North Northamptonshire's cultural and heritage landscape is substantial, offering a potential catalyst for positive transformation. This grant provides a unique avenue to reassess the governance structures of key assets and departments, aligning with our objective to explore different models that can enhance their resilience and long-term impact.

The North Northamptonshire Heritage, Culture, and Tourism assets, comprising Chester House, Corby Heritage Centre, The ARC and the Cornerstone, are integral components of the region's identity. These sites are not only repositories of historical significance but also serve as cultural hubs that contribute to the overall appeal of the area. Recognising the need for sustainable management and preservation, the decision to tap into the Heritage Fund Resilience Grant is a strategic move aimed at ensuring the continued vitality of these assets.

In the 24/25 financial year, the grant will be instrumental in facilitating a comprehensive examination of governance options for these heritage sites. The focus will be on exploring and establishing new charitable trusts and community-led organisations capable of effectively managing and curating these assets. This transition to alternative governance models aligns with contemporary trends in heritage management, emphasising community involvement and sustainable practices.

One of the primary objectives is to assess the feasibility and viability of setting up charitable trusts to oversee the operations of Chester House, Corby Heritage Centre, The ARC and the Cornerstone. Charitable trusts bring a myriad of advantages, including increased community engagement, diversified funding sources, and a heightened sense of local ownership. By entrusting these assets to community-led organisations, we aim to foster a deeper connection between the heritage sites and the residents, enhancing their cultural significance.

The establishment of community-led organisations also opens avenues for innovative programming and events that resonate with the local community. These organisations, driven by the passion and commitment of community members, can infuse new life into the heritage assets, making them dynamic spaces that evolve with the changing needs and interests of the community.

Moreover, the shift towards charitable trusts and community-led organisations carries the potential to reduce the baseline budget provided by the council. As these entities take on a more active role in managing and sustaining the heritage assets, the financial burden on the council can be alleviated. This not only aligns with the broader trend of decentralisation but also reflects a strategic approach to resource optimisation.

The Heritage Fund Resilience Grant acts as a catalyst for this transformative journey, providing the financial impetus needed to conduct in-depth studies, engage stakeholders, and implement changes effectively. It allows for the hiring of expert consultants and professionals who can guide the process of transitioning to new governance models. Furthermore, the grant supports community engagement initiatives, ensuring that the voices and aspirations of the local population are integral to the decision-making process.

In essence, the utilisation of the Heritage Fund Resilience Grant in the 24/25 financial year signifies a commitment to not only preserving the tangible and intangible heritage of North Northamptonshire but also to revitalising these assets as vibrant, community-driven spaces. The establishment of charitable trusts and community-led organisations represents a forward-looking approach to heritage management that acknowledges the importance of local involvement and adaptability.

In the short term, it is crucial to adopt a strategic approach to investment that encompasses all heritage, culture, and tourism assets within North Northamptonshire. For instance, the exploration of the Corby Heritage Centre's relocation and expansion serves as a paradigm for the meticulous planning required to ensure the viability and success of these entities once they are transitioned into trusts. The council, as the steward of these invaluable assets, holds the responsibility to lay the groundwork for this transformation, ensuring that each facet aligns seamlessly with the objectives of the respective charitable trusts. This comprehensive investment strategy extends beyond physical considerations to encompass operational and community engagement aspects. By proactively addressing the unique needs of each heritage site, we pave the way for a resilient and dynamic cultural landscape that thrives under the community-led model. The council's commitment to these investments underscores a broader dedication to fortifying the foundations for success, ensuring that North Northamptonshire's heritage, culture, and tourism assets not only endure but flourish in the years to come.

As we embark on this transformative journey, the collaboration between heritage organisations, local communities, and the council becomes paramount. The success of this endeavor hinges on effective communication, transparent decision-making, and a shared vision for the future of North Northamptonshire's cultural and heritage landscape.

In addition to our focus on heritage and cultural assets, the upcoming fiscal year will see a dedicated exploration of the future governance of our tourism offerings through the Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP). Recognising the pivotal role that tourism plays in our region's economic and cultural landscape, this initiative aims to assess and enhance the governance structures that underpin our tourism sector. By collaborating with the LVEP, we seek to foster partnerships with key stakeholders, local businesses, and community members to shape a more robust and sustainable tourism strategy. This exploration aligns with our commitment to fostering a holistic approach to cultural and economic development, ensuring that our tourism sector not only attracts visitors but also contributes to the overall prosperity and well-being of North Northamptonshire. Through strategic governance reforms, we aspire to position our region as a premier destination, offering enriching experiences that resonate with both locals and visitors alike.

The Heritage Fund Resilience Grant along with the future Northamptonshire LVEP serve as a strategic enabler for North Northamptonshire's Heritage, Culture, and Tourism assets, offering a pathway towards sustainable governance and community engagement. The establishment of charitable trusts and community-led organisations not only enhances the resilience of these assets but also paves the way for a more dynamic and inclusive cultural landscape. As we navigate the 24/25 financial year, this initiative stands as a testament to our commitment to preserving and celebrating the rich heritage that defines North Northamptonshire.

This initiative is poised to substantially diminish the current annual £856k subsidy that the service receives, paving the way for a gradual reduction over the years. Simultaneously, it guarantees the sustained thriving of the essential functions mentioned within this report, ensuring they remain impactful and beneficial for all residents of North Northamptonshire for the foreseeable future.







# SECTION 12 SERVICE P&L



## Service Finances

| Department                           | Income           | Staffing Costs | Utilities    | Operational Costs | Repairs and Maintenance | Investment  | Department Cost (+/-) |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Culture Tourism and Heritage Service | £ (855,890.00)   | £ 84,780.00    | £ -          | £ -               | £ -                     | £ -         | £ (771,110.00)        |
| Chester House Estate (Commercial)    | £ (1,418,627.00) | £ 799,038.98   | £ 97,992.00  | £ 341,500.00      | £ 92,384.96             | £ 28,000.00 | £ (59,711.06)         |
| Chester House Estate (Core)          | £ (118,785.66)   | £ 174,190.48   | £ 18,000.00  | £ 86,980.50       | £ 6,000.00              | £ 20,000.00 | £ 186,385.32          |
| Business Operations                  | £ -              | £ 228,362.16   | £ -          | £ 62,040.00       | £ -                     | £ -         | £ 290,402.16          |
| Corby Heritage Centre                | £ (600.00)       | £ 37,932.00    | £ 2,400.00   | £ 6,000.00        | £ 2,400.00              | £ 3,600.00  | £ 51,732.00           |
| The Cornerstone                      | £ -              | £ 218,772.68   | £ 27,000.00  | £ 1,200.00        | £ -                     | £ 48,000.00 | £ 294,972.68          |
| Discover Northamptonshire            | £ (185,100.00)   | £ 147,668.90   | £ 24,744.00  | £ 17,016.00       | £ 3,000.00              | £ -         | £ 7,328.90            |
| <b>Total</b>                         | £ (2,579,002.66) | £ 1,690,745.20 | £ 170,136.00 | £ 514,736.50      | £ 103,784.96            | £ 99,600.00 | £ (0.00)              |

The financial targets for the fiscal year 2024/25 have been meticulously crafted and received the endorsement of our Head of Service and department managers. These targets are firmly grounded in our past accomplishments and the future strategies outlined in this report.

In 2024/25, our baseline budget was £760,496 in 22/23, this will be increased to £855,890 to reflect the 2023 increase in staff salaries. In 2021/22 the budget for all areas within the service totalled £932,667. A reduction was identified when we initiated the new service, resulting in anticipated savings of £172,171. This was achieved through a comprehensive reorganisation of resources, including a restructuring of service staffing to ensure the right roles for financial sustainability. This included introducing additional income generation roles and establishing the new shared Business Operations Team.

Going forward, as set out in the 'Future Development' section of this report, we will explore new ways of governance and initiatives to reduce the baseline budget provided by North Northamptonshire Council. If we do not implement new governance models and initiatives that are set out within section 10 throughout 25/26 and beyond, the service will continue to bolster income through various activities, we expect an annual average decrease of 2.5% in council contributions from 2024 to 2029. To counterbalance this reduction in our budget, we have set a goal of increasing income generation by an average of 4% each year.

In this fiscal year, both the Chester House Estate and Discover Northamptonshire are projected to generate an income of £59,711.06 for the broader service. This funding will be allocated to support departments that are anticipated to operate at a loss during the financial year. With the £855,890 contribution from NNC, the service is expected to cover all its costs. The business plan designates 35% of costs as controllable, which includes expenses related to such areas as catering stock, casual wages, and event resources. The service management team will convene on a fortnightly basis to review income and make informed decisions on when to allocate this budget. In case of a drop in income, the team can allocate reserved expenditure to counterbalance the shortfall.

While the service has demonstrated an upward trend in positive surplus year after year, it's essential to note that the current service plan and financial projections do not encompass the mobilisation and launch of the Cornerstone. The Cornerstone's initiation will entail significant expenses related to both the core operations and commercial facets, including staff wages and catering stock. Once a definitive opening timeframe for the Cornerstone is established, a comprehensive business plan will be crafted for the department. This will lead to a revision of the overall service finances to incorporate the additional income and expenditure associated with the Cornerstone's operations. Any surplus generated within the service prior to this milestone will be actively reinvested back into the continuous development of the service.

Additionally, we have earmarked £100,000 within the service for the upcoming financial year to actively reinvest in our facilities. This includes investments in museum interpretation, events equipment, catering equipment, and learning resources. This strategic spending will ensure that our departments can continuously enhance their offerings and meet the increased income targets in the coming years. We have also forecasted for a 'worst case scenario' on repairs and maintenance for our facilities and buildings.

### Chester House Estate Finances

The financial goals for the fiscal year 2024/25 have been meticulously curated and garnered the endorsement of our esteemed Head of Service and department managers. At the forefront of our financial landscape stands the Chester House Estate, a paramount entity contributing significantly to both income and expenditure. In the fiscal year 23/24, the comprehensive portfolio, encompassing core and commercial elements, is poised to generate a total revenue of £1,727,658, offset by an expenditure of £1,992,147.

|                             | <b>22/23 Actuals</b> |                | <b>23/24 Forecasted</b> |                |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Council Contribution</b> | £                    | (298,224.00)   | £                       | (298,244.00)   |
| <b>Income</b>               | £                    | (1,022,026.00) | £                       | (1,727,658.00) |
| <b>Expenditure</b>          | £                    | 1,292,906.00   | £                       | 1,992,147.00   |
| <b>Total Cost</b>           | £                    | (27,344.00)    | £                       | (33,755.00)    |

Starting from the fiscal year 23/24, the proposed budgets for the Chester House Estate have been meticulously divided into two distinct cost departments – 'Core' and 'Commercial':

The 'Core' department is dedicated to the operation and advancement of the onsite learning programs, university partnerships, and the Archaeological Resource Centre. Projections indicate a targeted income of £118,800, derived from sources such as school visits, box depositions, talks and lectures, and the Inter Authority Agreement with West Northamptonshire Council. The 'Core' department will operate within an expenditure budget of £295,311, which includes salaries and associated costs for 5 positions (3 full-time and 2 part-time).

The 'Commercial' department oversees the operation and development of the broader estate, including the artisan shopping village, accommodation, retail offerings, food and beverage services, events, space rentals, and weddings. Anticipated revenue aligns with the successful performance observed in 21/22, totaling £1,418,627. The commercial department's operating budget is set at £1,313,687, covering repairs and maintenance, salaries for 15 full-time positions, and up to 50 casual and part-time roles, as well as stock purchases and ongoing development projects.

While we've experienced substantial income growth between 21/22 and 22/23, we approach the future with a prudent outlook. Our forecasts reflect a conservative estimation, prioritising stability to ensure the sustainability of our income and expenditure for the years ahead especially with the current UK economic climate.