
Culture and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission

Museum Engagement Programme

15th January 2025

Lead director/officer: Mike Dalzell

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All.
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- Report version number: 1

1. Summary

- 1.1 This briefing provides an overview of Leicester Museums & Galleries' Museum Engagement programme, which is funded by Arts Council England (ACE)

2. Recommended actions/decision

- 2.1 To note and comment on the scope, impact, and achievements of the museum's engagement programme.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Museums & Galleries Service's community engagement programme is externally funded by Arts Council England's (ACE) National Portfolio Organisation scheme.

This comprises £1.2M of secured funding over the three years 2023 to 2026, with an annual allocation of £407,360, which includes funding for fixed term posts and a range of engagement activities to develop audiences.

- 3.2 The Museum's engagement programme is aligned with LCC's plans in four key areas;

- **To proactively reach out and deliver participation in cultural activity with disadvantaged audiences and communities across the city.**

This includes a specific focus on engaging with two target under-engaged audiences, based on the results of detailed local research, using the definitions created by the Audience Agency;

Frontline Families, who comprise working-class families at social-economic disadvantage, who tend not to participate in wider cultural or heritage activity and tend to live in the western areas of the city.

Kaleidoscope Creativity, who comprise ethnically diverse communities, which are younger in profile, participate in activities within their own communities, and tend to live in the eastern and north-eastern areas of the city.

- **To support Formal and Informal Learning.**

This includes creating resources for both school and family learning, delivering intervention activities to inspire young people at risk of exclusion, delivering Healthy Activities and Food sessions, and to grow and upskill museum and cultural volunteers of all ages.

- **To contribute to Helping with the Cost of Living.**

The provision of free activities which are economically accessible for all is a key feature of our engagement work.

- **And to take collaborative action to support A Healthier Happy City.**

This includes using cultural activity to help people grow their health and wellbeing, to foster understanding and tolerance between communities, to constantly improve services for people with specific needs, and to practically support the creation of a Climate Ready City.

3.2 Please note that the Museums NPO funded engagement programme is delivered in addition to our “core” public programmes funded by LCC revenue and income.

These core activities include, for example, our collections care and access work, our programme of major public exhibitions, and our formal curriculum enrichment provision for Schools and Colleges. The latter, for example, was experienced by over 21,000 pupils in 2023-2024.

4. Summary of Engagement Activity in Year 2 (2024-2025)

Engagement activities are delivered under four different work areas, each consisting of multiple distinct actions and initiatives. The four activity areas are,

1. Telling the Story of Leicester through Co-Production.
2. Engaging Leicester’s target audience segments through offsite & onsite events.
3. Cultural Inspiration & Access for Young People.
4. Delivering World Class Museums.

Activity Area 1: Telling The Story of Leicester through Co-Production

Action 1A: Co-Produced Exhibitions in Leicester Stories Gallery

This consists of our Community Co-Producers working equitably with local grass-roots community organisations to create temporary community exhibitions for The People’s Space in the Leicester Stories community gallery at Leicester Museum and Art Gallery.

This year’s co-working and public exhibitions have included,

- Leicester City of Sanctuary, who created a touring exhibition title “Everyone Welcome” showcasing the talents of local asylum seekers and refugees. This ran between June and October and was enjoyed by 35,591 visitors.
- Unglamorous, the story of Ruth Miller and the women who came together to create a punk music collective, is currently showing at the Museum until February 2025.
- From February, Pedestrian will be Telling Tales, as local people share folklore, myths, legends, historical stories, and memories.

To end October this year these projects have involved 65 participants, of which over 67% were from non-traditional and underrepresented audiences.

Action 1B: Popping to the Shops

Following the major success and extension of 2023's "Popping to the Shops: Narborough Road" at Newarke Houses Museum and Westcotes Library, this year's large co-produced exhibition about retail businesses and communities in differing parts of the city focus on Saffron Lane.

"Popping to the Shops: Saffron Lane" follows the same format, with representatives of eight businesses along the road contributing interviews, photographs, and objects which will be acquired permanently for the museum collection. This exhibition, in final production at time of reporting, will open at Leicester Museum and Art Gallery in March 2025. A complementary taster exhibition in the community is being displayed at Aylestone Leisure Centre.

Action 1C: Co-Produced Library Exhibitions

Each year the Co-Producers work with our colleagues in Neighbourhoods and local communities to place museum objects into three key local libraries: New Parks, St Barnabas, and Highfields. These have been refreshed this year, with a Toys and Games theme, and to end October 2024 had engaged over 31,000 library users.

In addition, we have expanded our reach by adding two new display cases, one at the Brite Centre (adding a fourth library to the project), and another temporarily at St Barnabas. These cases display objects voted for by library users, from a list of "contestants" connected with local stories and communities, and will change regularly through the coming years according to people's choices.

In 2025-26, the case at St. Barnabas will be moved to Hamilton library further expand the project to include a fifth target neighbourhood.

Action 1D: Digital: Alternative Labels

Leicester Museums & Galleries have been recognised as having been pioneering in the use of digital labels since 2021. These are "electronic paper" object display labels, like an e-reader, placed in exhibitions to display the comments and thoughts of visitors and participants to other.

This October, as part of our programme for Black History Month, digital labels were used to add "live" interpretation to the display of the sculpture "A Lesson in Trust" by Bill Ming. Three examples of comments give a taste of how this works to engage people with collections,

- *I like that they're holding hands, and I like the lady's hair (child's comment)*
- *I feel like as a Black woman from the African diaspora this sculpture speaks to me of my opportunities as a young person.*

- *The portrait by Bill Ming establishes a sense of pride with him being from the Caribbean, as I am.*

Digital labels are being used this year in the temporary exhibitions “Global Leicester: the Dryad Craftwork Collection” and in the artist Satta Hashem’s retrospective, which open in March.

Action 1E: Digital Engagement: Online Content

The museum’s Digital and Multimedia staff deliver a range of content each year in support of our objective to engage with non-user audiences and people from target communities.

To date, the team have created,

- Two short films interviewing those who created the exhibitions “Global Leicester: the Dryad Craftwork Collection”, and K. Korias’s “India to Leicester: An Artist’s Journey”.
- Are working on online versions of three popular physical exhibitions; “Procession in Bali”, “Global Leicester” and the co-produced “Unglamorous”.
- And created, to 1st November 2024, an amazing 920 social media posts across our platforms, reaching 930,600 people, of whom 376,100 interacted and commented on our posts. This summer we saw engagement with stories about “National Treasures: Renoir in Leicester” notably driving more people from diverse audiences to our social media for the first time.

Activity Area 2: Engaging Leicester’s target audience segments through offsite & onsite events

Action 2A: Festivals and Pop-Up Museums

To date, the engagement team, supported by other staff and volunteers, have delivered participatory activities at four festivals or non-traditional locations. These activities are based around our travelling “Cabinet of Curiosities”, where people can handle real items from the museum collection, for example, old technology items such as typewriters through to real dinosaur bones.

- Haymarket Shopping Centre pop-up – 30th May, engaging 800 participants.
- Riverside Festival – 1st/2nd June, engaging 2500 participants.
- Leicester Mela – 17th August, engaging 500 participants.
- Leicester Pride – 31st August, engaging with 1000 participants.

Evaluation shows, to date, that 94% of participants were positive about their experiences.

One further project is to come, with our pop-ups visiting Beaumont Leys Shopping Centre in February 2025.

Action 2B: Co-Produced community events and activities

These events and activities are delivered in museums, and are focused around heritage, culture, or commemorations of significance to a range of communities and audiences.

To date, the engagement team have facilitated,

- Visits and workshop for refugee and asylum seeker for Refugee Week in June 2024. 30 participants engaged with the collections before creating art inspired by the collection, which they shared with other museum visitors.
- Worked with Serendipity Institute for Black Arts and Heritage to choose and objects from the museum collection for interpretation and display in the Object of the Month case at Leicester Museum and Art Gallery. This was enjoyed by 8883 people during October's Black History Month.
- Run a day event to explore the sculpture "A Lesson in Trust" by Bahamian artist Bill Ming with diverse visitors, which engaged with 811 participants, and produced content used later on digital audiences to further visitors.
- Worked with 30 people assisted by Dear Albert, a Leicester charity offering help to people relating to substance misuse. Comments from participants included,

"Really enjoyed the workshop. Great variety, was very inspiring and would recommend! Thank you for a fabulous day. Will be visiting again for sure. Thanks."

"It was a very interesting day, and I feel encouraged to visit again, knowing there are such beautiful exhibitions by talented artists. I left with a painting I did there..."

Two further events are in preparation, with a programme for Holocaust Memorial Day in partnership with the Stanley Burton Centre for Holocaust Studies, and a planned take-over of the museum by women from Muslim communities for International Women's Day.

Action 2C: Engagement events in Frontline Family and Kaleidoscope Creativity target areas.

"Doorstep Museums" brings museum objects out of the museum store and directly into local neighbourhoods, where they can be enjoyed and encountered by people who don't traditionally visit museums and art galleries. Doorstep Museums days are usually based in Libraries and Community Centres. They focus upon handling real accessioned objects from the museum collection: this is essential, as it helps to break down the traditional perceptions non-visitors frequently have about museums, shares the excitement of handling real objects, and helps to demonstrate that everyone owns the City's museum collections.

To date the team have delivered three Doorstep Museums events this year,

- Pork Pie Library, 13th July, engaging with 250 participants.
- Hamilton Library, 2nd August, engaging with 690 engagement participants.

- Highfields Centre, 25th October, engaging with 370 participants.

A further event at Beaumont Leys Library is scheduled to take place on 14th December 2024 (at time of writing) .

Action 2D: Healthy Museums: Inspired & Inspiring volunteer development programme.

Our Volunteer strand now support nearly 400 volunteers from diverse backgrounds, who together contribute over 15,000 hours of support for the museum service, including to the flagship venue at Leicester Museum & Art Gallery. Activity ensures that our volunteers have wide ranging opportunities to support our work including front of house, exhibitions and collections care.

The initiative's "Inspired & Inspiring Volunteer Development Programme" helps to upskill volunteers of all ages. This develops individual's their skills and knowledge in a breadth of subjects including customer care, conservation, exhibitions, and career development. To date 162 volunteers have attended this training this year, of which 105 live in our target audience areas. 4 have gone on to gain employment, and a further 6 work placements.

Volunteers have also

- Formed our "Garden Gang", volunteers who take care of and create our community gardens at Abbey Pumping Station.
- Delivered public events including "Heritage Open Day on Tour" in September, and the popular "Archive Sundays" in October and November.
- Led on the digitisation of the museums photographic archive.
- And worked with the Collections Team to create "Hidden Gems", an object trail for children and families around the museum featuring their favourite rocks and fossils from their collections care work "behind the scenes".

Activity Area 3: Cultural Inspiration & Access For Young People

Action 3A: Holiday Activities & Food programme

We are one of the core providers within LCC's "Holiday Activities and Food" programme, or HAF, which gives eligible children the opportunity to access free activities and food over the Easter, summer and winter school holidays.

Our activity programmes normally take place over 4 hours a day for 4 days, with activities themed around museum exhibitions, art, science, or historical events. Crucially each eligible child is also given a nutritious and healthy lunch on each programme day that they attend. We call our HAF activities informal "the Museum Holiday Club", to ensure no-one feels excluded due differing free-school meals status.

HAF provision over the summer of 2024 delivered 318 participations over three weeks.

Our “Meet the Team” event on Sunday 8th Dec focused on engaging with SEND participants to help them access the programme in easier ways.

The Learning team will provide two days of our “Winter Museum Holiday Club” from Leicester Guildhall in the days after Christmas 2024, with a food hamper and accessible complimentary tickets to the Ice Rink provided by Festivals and Events for the weekend of the 2nd and 3rd January 2025.

Action 3B: Combating Exclusion.

This strand may show lower numbers when compared other initiatives, but has high impact in helping pupils at risk of being excluded come back into education.

Working with Beaumont Leys School and City of Leicester College, the learning team this so far this year delivered two programmes of artist-led printmaking sessions on-site in schools for excluded pupils. 14 pupils are now currently working towards their Bronze Arts Award, raising their self-confidence, and helping our education colleagues to get them back into formal learning.

Action 3C: Developing self-led learning resources for schools and children.

The Learning Team create self-led learning resources for schools to use on site during visits to Leicester Museum & Art Gallery. To date, two “I Spy” object trails have been created, one to support curriculum work on local history, and the other to support visits to the Dinosaur gallery.

One additional benefit this year is that these trails are also suitable for supporting free informal learning “out of the classroom” by visiting families and grounds with children.

Action 3D: Developing family resources in support of exhibitions.

Similar to 3C above, this strand delivers organised family activities during holiday periods suitable for a range of ages. This summer the team provided free activities throughout the holidays focused around “National Treasures: Renoir in Leicester”, with dressing up, art activities in gallery, and workshop sessions. These were enjoyed by 3355 participants.

In February half term 2025, the Learning team will be providing free family activities themed around the idea of “Making your own Museum in a box”.

Activity Area 4: Delivering World Class Museums.

Action 4A: Develop a new environmental gallery.

The major work this year has been towards securing NHLF major funding for Phase 5 of development works for Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, which would include a new permanent natural world and environment gallery. As well as building a business case, and submitting a bid, actual work in this area has included from November the commencement of consultation with children and young people on their thoughts around climate change and the natural world.

Action 4B: undertake access audits, and Action 4C; undertake Green audits.

The focus this year has been the implementation of practical improvements from audits undertaken in 2023-24, and the creation of sustainable focus groups and advisory groups to assist with further improving access for People with Disabilities, and to advise on greening the museum and contributing to being Climate Ready.

5. Future Priorities

ACE have confirmed that they will fund an extension year, 2026-2027, for current organisations in the portfolio, subject to approval. Securing this additional one-year funding is a key priority.

6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications

6.1 Financial implications

This report sets out the engagement programme funded through the £1.2m ACE National Portfolio Organisation grant funding, which is ring-fenced for spending on the agreed activities.

Stuart McAvoy – Head of Finance
9th December 2024

6.2 Legal implications

Legal compliance with the funding conditions attached to the ACE funding will be required throughout the period.

Kevin Carter
(Head of Law - Commercial, Property & Planning)
20.12.24

6.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have a duty to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

This paper provides an overview of Arts Council England funded - Leicester Museums & Galleries' Museum Engagement programme. The programme is aligned with key council plans such as "to proactively reach out and deliver participation in cultural activity with disadvantaged audiences and communities across the city".

Initiatives that aim to create experiences that involve and inspire residents and visitors, sharing the city's significant collections, that celebrate the stories of Leicester's diverse communities and the unique places, art and heritage which shape the city's identity and showcasing these to the world should lead to positive impacts for people from across all protected characteristics. Involvement in art, heritage and culture has the potential to enrich people's lives, having accessible experiences should help to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Equalities Officer, Surinder Singh, Ext 37 4148

6.4 Climate Emergency implications

Following the council's declaration of a climate emergency and ambition to achieve net zero carbon emissions, the council has an important role to play in engaging with the public on these issues, as well as tackling the carbon emissions of its own operations. A number of the pieces of work outlined in this report are expected to deliver positive climate-related outcomes, including the holiday activities and food programme, the new environmental gallery and the green audits work.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer Ext 37 2284
11 December 2024

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

None

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

10. Is this a "key decision"? If so, why?

No