



Museums Worcestershire  
Annual Review 2024-25

## Key achievements in 2024-2025



Total museum visitors 119,789



5% increase on 2023/2024, this follows a 12% increase on 2022/2023



Museums driving the visitor economy – more than 44,000-day trippers travelled into Worcestershire specifically to visit museums



£2.6m+ spend brought into Worcestershire by museums visitors

“Absolutely brilliant. Today we discovered a real gem .... So much knowledge, thought and hard work has gone into helping visitors become aware of the rich history found here. The staff are so friendly, welcoming and kind. I look forward to visiting again soon.”

*Visitor to Worcestershire County Museum, 2024-2025*

## 2024-25 Highlights at The Commandery

- A new exhibition supported by the UK Government’s Townsfund transports visitors back to 1890 to explore the darker corners of Victorian life in Worcester, from childhood to the funeral parlour, and all the trials and tribulations faced in between.
- More museum collections available to visitors including Police uniform, chemist’s medicine bottles and equipment, a funeral bier and a prison door originally from Worcester’s Guildhall.
- The introduction of a new evening music event, adult craft workshops, a successful new café partnership, 30% increase in room hires, and steady bookings for the Commandery Quest Escape Room all help to diversify and increase income.
- Visit England’s Welcome accolade (VAQAS mystery shopper assessment) reflects the outstanding quality of the visitor welcome and experience.
- A new mural to welcome visitors to The Commandery commissioned from local artist Anna Best.

Inclusion in a popular history podcast introduced The Commandery to celebrity historian Dan Snow’s 1.5million subscribers.

“It’s one of the best historic buildings in Britain. Just look at this place, it’s been at the centre of our national story for hundreds of years.”

*Historian Dan Snow at The Commandery, December 2024*

“It was a wonderful visit! This place is simply inspirational. From the ghosts to the wonderfully told story of the Civil War, to the birth of Democracy, and all inter-generational. Well done to Worcester City.”

*Visitors to The Commandery, 2024 – 2025*





## 2024-25 Highlights at Worcester City Art Gallery & Museum

Record-breaking visitor numbers: more than 85,000 people visited – a 23% increase on 2023-2024.

Visitor facility improvements have been made:

- Lift and toilets refurbished with support from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- Museum Gallery and activity space redecorated and redisplayed thanks to Arts Council England funding.
- Opening hours refocused to support access for residents and tourists, bringing £1m into Worcester's economy from day trips and overnight stays.

"My children and I attended the hands-on fossils session with Megan today. I just wanted to let you how much my children (aged 7 and 10) enjoyed it. ...This was our second visit to the dinosaur exhibition, but our millionth visit to the museum! We will be back.... It was great to see so many families there today"

*Visitor to Art Gallery & Museum activity session summer 2024*

For the *Connections* exhibition four different community groups selected artworks from the collections which had meaning to them:

- Worcestershire Children's First Care Leavers
- Onside and St Paul's Creative Community
- Sight Concern Art and Craft group
- Work experience students

*Connections* was supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England and was part of Art History Festival 2024 organised by the Association for Art History.

"I thought the experience was brilliant. It shows us what is going on behind the scenes in our local museum. I felt privileged to be invited."

*Connections participant 2024*

## 2024-25 Highlights at Worcestershire County Museum

- 500 pupils enjoyed the new Make Do and Mend learning sessions which use the 1940s to introduce the idea of sustainability.
- The *Introduction to Blacksmithing* course was adapted for Bridge the Gap in Malvern which provides bespoke, supported transition for young people into independence and employment.
- Thanks go to Wychavon District Council who committed UKSPF funding to the purchase of a new display case for the Worcestershire Conquest Hoard.

"Mum and I had a wonderful time going down memory lane and beyond (Mum has dementia). Amazing exhibits and what fun trying on the wigs!"

*Visitor to Worcestershire County Museum 2024*



## CEO of Age UK, Paul Farmer, Visits Worcestershire to Learn About Local Efforts Supporting Older People



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*Above:* Age UK's CEO visited Dementia Centre at Worcestershire County Museum

*Below:* Visitors to Worcester City Art Gallery's spring 2024 Dame Laura Knight exhibition from across the country



## Museum Volunteers

More than **4,382** hours given across the museums, by 70 volunteers

- gardening
- welcoming visitors
- interpreting the buildings
- sharing history
- helping with school sessions
- event preparations
- collections conservation
- exhibition display
- audience research

“I enjoy being part of the Commandery community and sharing the beautiful building with visitors. I have the opportunity to meet new people and keep my mind active, which has a positive effect on my health.”

*Wendy, Commandery volunteer, 2024*

## Museum Collections

The Art Gallery & Museum continues to make progress for Worcester to become a centre for British Impressionism with acquisitions *Plough Horses* by Dame Laura Knight donated by a private benefactor, *Portrait of Stanhope Forbes at the Easel* by Elizabeth Forbes and a print of Camille Pissarro's *Effet de Pluie*, both funded by the Worcestershire Heritage, Arts and Museums charity.

- 410 objects have been newly displayed across the three museums.
- More than 300,000 people have enjoyed objects from the City and County collections displayed across Worcestershire and beyond.

## Museum Learning

- 9,033 numbers of formal learning students engaged (onsite, outreach and loans).
- 4,161 students visited the museums, 84% coming from Worcestershire schools.
- 123 outreach boxes loaned to schools supported at least 3,690 children with their classroom learning.
- 90 children and their families took part in the *Holiday Activities and Food* programme, funded by the Department for Education which offers children eligible for free school meals activities during the Easter, Summer and Winter school holidays.
- Valuable work experience opportunities for Year 12 and 13 students, this year from Haybridge High School and Sixth-Form, King Edwards VI College Stourbridge and University of Worcester.

“We love this workshop. Staff are so knowledgeable and take the children on a historical journey learning about Florence (Nightingale). Continue providing this excellent workshop.” Year 1 teacher

*Teachers' comments, Worcestershire County Museum, 2024*







**Thank you to all our visitors, our Councils, and funders for enabling us to make wonderful things happen for the residents of Worcester and Worcestershire**

Project funding awards to Museums Worcestershire in 2024-2025:

- Art Fund
- Arts Council England
- Association for Art History
- Dame Laura Knight Society
- Elmley Foundation
- John Ellerman Foundation
- Marches Network Legacy Fund
- National Lottery Heritage Fund
- UKSPF, Wychavon District Council and Worcester City Council
- West Midlands Museum Development
- Worcester's Town Deals Programme (department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities)
- Worcestershire HAF programme (Department for Education)
- Worcestershire Heritage, Art & Museums, including the Shirley & Rolf Olsen Art Purchase Fund



In December 2024 the museums' fundraising and advocacy charity (charity registration number 11974480) launched a campaign to save the Worcestershire Conquest Hoard; one of the largest Roman Conquest hoards found to date in Britain and one of the most important archaeological discoveries in Worcestershire in the last 100 years.

The Hoard consists of 1,368 Iron Age and Roman gold and silver coins, which were gathered into a pot and buried in the ground in the Leigh and Bransford area of Worcestershire.

To date the charity has raised over £30,000. The official valuation is awaited but the generous amount of donations has proved how important the Hoard is to the people of Worcestershire.







## Looking Forward

- Museums Worcestershire continues to support the Mercian Regiment (Worcestershire) Museum and the Worcestershire Yeomanry Museum to develop a new Worcestershire Soldier display at The Commandery, which has received development funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- Work continues on preparing for the new British Impressionism gallery at the Art Gallery & Museum, made possible by a generous donation from Shirley & Rolf Olsen.
- We build our resilience through planning and income generation to face reductions in subsidy and create a solid foundation ahead of local government reorganisation.

"The museum service has enjoyed a record-breaking year for visitor numbers and has set itself on a firm foundation by increasing income generation, whilst at the same time working with the most vulnerable in our county to ensure everyone can enjoy and participate in their local museum."

*Councillor Karen May, Chair, Joint Museums Committee 2024-2025*

