



North East Museums
Impact Report
2023-24
Supporting information

EXHIBITIONS

Arbeia, South Shields Roman Fort

Flora: Plants in Roman Life

25 March -
29 September 2024

Discovery Museum

The Congruence Engine: Digital Tools for New Collections-Based Industrial Histories

28 October -
25 February 2024

Spirit of Invention

16 March -
23 June 2024

Great North Museum: Hancock

Abel Chapman

8 September -
1 December 2023

Voicing Objects

12 January -
24 March 2024

Space Investigators

29 March -
1 September 2024

Hatton Gallery

Fine Art BA Degree Show 2023

2 June -
17 June 2023

Works on Paper

1 July -
5 August 2023

Fine Art MFA Degree Show 2023

19 August -
2 September 2023

Matt Rugg: Connecting Form

23 September -
13 January 2024

ARTIST ROOMS:

Vija Celmins

3 February -
4 May 2024

Katie Cuddon:

A is for Alma

3 February -
4 May 2024

'About suffering, they were never wrong'

9 February -
15 May 2024

Laing Art Gallery

Essence of Nature: Pre-Raphaelites to British Impressionists

27 May -
14 October 2023

New Perspectives: Linking Communities

23 September 2023
- 1 July 2024

The Pursuit of Beauty

14 August -
ongoing

Yevonde: Life & Colour

11 November -
20 April 2024

Segedunum Roman Fort

To the Roar of the Crowd

8 April -
2 November 2023

South Shields Museum & Art Gallery

Creative Calligraphy - Inspired by the Lindisfarne Gospels

22 April -
30 September 2023

NPG Celebration of Portraiture

3 June -
7 October 2023

Scran! A History of Food & Drink in South Tyneside

24 June -
22 March 2025

Arts for Wellbeing

7 October -
20 January 2024

The Art of Vince Rea

4 November -
8 June 2024

Art by Peter Mayne

10 February -
11 May 2024

**FRIENDS,
ASSOCIATES
& SOCIETIES**

Friends of the Laing Art Gallery

laingartgallery.org.uk/about-us/friends

Our constitution sets out that the main object of the society is to “support the Laing Art Gallery and to promote its use and enjoyment by the public.” This we surely do, and have a great deal of enjoyment and friendship while doing so! To achieve this we rely on membership, donations, and social activities, mainly day trips, short breaks, and lectures.

Short breaks which had been on hold have now taken place and more are planned this year. The price of coaches has increased hugely making day trips very expensive but nevertheless have been well supported.

Afternoon talks have resumed with good attendance, subjects ranging from Clementine Churchill to the Bayeux tapestry and a full future programme is in place. These activities help in raising income to pass on to the gallery which we have been able to do this year.

The Saturday morning Picture of the Month programme has resumed, open to anyone and featuring paintings from the permanent collection and we have also given general tours of the gallery to a few groups.

None of these activities could take place without a small band of people and like every other voluntary organisation we could do with more!

The generous legacy from a former member was distributed between the Learning dept which is in dire need of a practical upgrade, and the L-ink project which involves young people collaborating and working with artists and curating exhibitions. Our recent legacy of a gentleman’s large collection of Davidson Cloud glass proved to be an albatross but was eventually sold at auction for a modest amount.

Friends of Segedunum Roman Fort

segedunumromanfort.org.uk/about-us/friends

Friends have had regular meetings at Segedunum from April 2023.

At the AGM in April Geoff Keith Merrin talked about future plans for North East Museums.

In May Freda Thompson talked about the development of railways in the northeast.

Mike Greatbatch gave a talk about the development of industries over time in the Ouseburn at the June meeting.

The next speaker in September was Ian Glendinning who talked about Hidden Roman structures in the Coquet Valley of Northumberland.

In October Anthony Atkinson gave a talk on the famous Admiral Cuthbert Collingwood and how he took over from Nelson to win the Battle of Trafalgar.

In November Nick Hodgson informed Friends of the latest developments at Arbeia Roman Fort.

The first meeting of 2024 included a talk by Keiran-Ann Keilty on some of the not so well-known characters from Cullercoats.

In March Gordon Henderson gave a detailed description of how advanced Roman Medicine was nearly 2000 years ago in Britain.

Following on from Ian McCardle’s talk last year about the Victoria Tunnel that runs under the centre of Newcastle from Spittal Tongues to the Ouseburn, Friends were so enthused by the talk that a visits to the Victoria Tunnel were arranged for later in the year. The visits were a great success.

The Friends celebrated their 20th anniversary in 2023 and following the June meeting a social gathering was held to celebrate 20 years of the Friends and a special cake was provided with 20 candles. Friends recounted some of the highlights over the years at the museum and a good time was had by all.

Volunteers continue to generously give up their time to help at the museum in a number of ways including helping to meet the public at consultation exercises in connection with future plans for the museum, site tours, assisting the learning team and reception team, room stewards, helping with crowd control and collection of donations at the annual fireworks event in November as well as litter picks and gardening.

Special thanks go to all the committee who continue to give up hours of their free time to help support the museum in lots of ways.

Natural History Society of Northumbria (NHSN)

nhsn.org.uk/become-a-member

NHSN is proud of its longstanding partnership with North East Museums and grateful for the work that goes into managing the Great North Museum: Hancock. This partnership went from strength to strength this year, highlighted in several collaborative events held in the museum. Celebratory events marking the start and end of NHSN's first Fields Skills Programme were held in the museum. Events were held as part of Nature's Cure in Times of Need, project supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, sharing the hidden stories of NHSN's North East Nature Archive. We were also pleased to continue work alongside ERIC North East as part of a new publication, Coastal Wildlife, and various events.

Thanks to further investment from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Gosforth's Wild Web project was launched, encouraging local people to enjoy and notice nature across Newcastle. NHSN welcomed two long-term student placements for the first time and supported several student projects.

Building on the success of the previous year, NHSN thrived in 2023-24 thanks to the support of its passionate volunteers, members, and supporters. At Gosforth Nature Reserve, we welcomed a record number of school and community groups to connect with nature and made important improvements to access ensuring as many people as possible can enjoy and use the site. Elsewhere, in-person natural history talks returned in Newcastle University's Curtis Auditorium, three regional citizen science projects continued generating 1000's of records of local wildlife, and a busy programme of events, trips and courses saw people connecting with nature in new ways right across the North East.

A community for nature lovers and naturalists, everyone is welcome to join NHSN. Membership covers your entire household and can be purchased easily through our website.

North Tyneside Steam Railway Association (NTRSA)

stephensonsteamrailway.org.uk/about/friends

Building on our continuing successes with our events at the railway the 2023 season had us hosting our 3rd locomotive gala as a headline event. This featured 2 guest locomotives from the Lambton Colliery system courtesy of the Lambton Locomotive Trust and Aln Valley Railway. The event complimented other vehicles we have as part of our collection on site and allowed us to bring in contacts from local organisations to showcase photographs and their own collections. We also hosted a very popular 1940s themed event which brought together reenactors from around the North East as well as bringing visitors to us who would not normally come to the museum. Passenger numbers are showing a good increase year on year which is giving us confidence to increase the events we offer.

We have seen a steady increase in volunteer numbers and have been able to introduce a lot of new volunteers to roles within the operational railway as well as bolstering our engineering support within the workshops. The railway's new 'Youth Group' is going from strength to strength, in May completed the Gate Guardian project to improve site visibility and is testament to some hard work and dedication from some key volunteers.

The Woodland Walk was launched as a large National Lottery Heritage Funded project to convert 2 acres of brownfield site within our boundary fence. This project itself has brought in several new and dedicated volunteers and has brought us closer to local community and art groups.

As a charity we have grown massively within 2023 and we continue to have success with everything we undertake. Our continued investment in the site, the operations and the events is testament to the hard work of the volunteers and the members that we rely upon.

The Arbeia Society

arbsoc.org.uk

In October we held the conference delayed from the previous year. The conference, on 'Hadrian's Wall, the loss of the Ninth legion and conflict in the Hadrianic period', was well-attended.

More *Notes* have been added to our website. *Arbeia Society Notes* nos 4 and 5 are on gilded disc brooches and on sunburst disc brooches, and both include examples from Arbeia's own collection.

Society members are currently hard at work on producing Volume 2 of the *Excavations at South Shields Roman Fort*, which will look at the late Roman period of the fort. The Society has paid out some grants for specialist work to be carried out on some of the material.

The Light Dragoons Heritage Committee and the Trustees of The Northumberland Hussars and Queens's Own Yeomanry (Command and Support Squadron)

Once again it was a busy year for the museum. Many of our visitors benefitted from meeting our in gallery explainers, who are on hand to answer questions and engage with both adults and school children alike. They add a valuable dimension to the visitor experience with their wealth of knowledge and experience between them.

At the beginning of June we were delighted to welcome members of the French Consulate, Jean-Charles Ledot (Deputy Consul General to the UK) and Eric Donjon (French Honorary Consul, NE and Cumbria), to the museum. We were joined by the Director, Keith Merrin, and other North East Museums' staff, as well as representatives from Home Headquarters The Light Dragoons. As the date of the visit coincided with the 79th anniversary of D-Day a presentation was given by David Weatherstone about the participation of the 13th/18th Hussars and the Northumberland Hussars in the allied invasion of Europe on the 6th June 1944, this was then followed by a guided tour of the gallery.

In March 2024, as a recipient of Heritage Lottery Funding, the gallery took part in the National Lottery Open Week with the volunteers giving a guided tour of the Charge! Gallery, highlighting the stories behind some of the amazing artefacts on display and also a talk about the Northumberland Hussars in the Second World War, detailing their journey from a newly-mobilised Territorial Regiment to elite fighting force and essential component of the legendary 50th (Northumbrian) Division.

We were busy front of house in the gallery and over the course of the year undertook a programme of deep cleaning. This involved cleaning the cases themselves inside and out, and cleaning the objects and whilst it was not a quick process it was certainly a worthwhile one as the gallery is looking as good as the day it opened.

Elsewhere in the gallery we updated the 'Oath of Allegiance' graphic panel to show the allegiance sworn by members of the armed forces to His Majesty King Charles III.

As always, we would like to thank North East Museums for their continued support and commitment to this valued partnership.

The Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne

newcastle-antiquaries.org.uk

In 2024 the Society's programme of activities has continued to run largely on a face-to-face basis but learning from the success of Zoom lectures during the pandemic in reaching a wider national and international audience, face-to-face lectures are now live streamed on Zoom and recordings put on the website.

A summer social was held at the Tyneside Irish Centre and a very successful trip to the Brancepeth Castle, St Brandon's Brancepeth and Coxdale Hall took place, run in conjunction with other societies in order to attract sufficient numbers. There have also been a number of walks and one research showcase, aimed primarily at students, has been held at the Tyneside Cinema with free entry. The Research Committee also held a research day at Newcastle University aimed at postgraduates.

Archaeologia Aeliana 2023 and 2024 have been successfully produced and distributed, with the 2024 volume available before the year end, getting the production timetable back to normal.

Work on digitising Archaeologia Aeliana was completed in 2019 and all but the most recent year will soon be digitally available through the Archaeology Data Service at the University of York. Work on getting the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne online remains to be completed. The digitisation work was supported by the Marc Fitch Fund and the Sir James Knott Trust.

The Society produces a twice-yearly news bulletin for its members and regular e-bulletins with news about events, including those run by other bodies which the Society's members can also take part in. It also has a presence on some social media platforms in order to publicise its activities.

The Society's collection of antiquities continues to be on public display in the Great North Museum: Hancock, while its collections of historical items are on loan to other public museums in the region and elsewhere in Britain. A number of acquisitions have been made during the year. Its extensive archive collections are housed at Woodhorn Museum and Northumberland Archives, where they are publicly accessible. The Society also continues to invest in its Library, in both journals and books, which are available for public reference, and also in preserving its archive at Woodhorn.

During the year a great deal of work has been carried out to prepare for a major upgrade and redesign of the website, in particular moving archival holdings to a separate website to reduce the amount of material on the main website. The archival material will remain accessible to the public. The new website will focus on meeting the needs of members and potential members and will be managed by the Activities and Membership Committee.

During the year the Society has continued to support the African Lives in Northern England project and managed its finances. Related income and expenditure are shown in Restricted Funds.

In autumn 2024 a palaeography course was run jointly with Explore (Joseph Cowen Lifelong Learning Centre) which should equip more members of both organisations to take part in future transcription projects.

The Society is run by volunteers supported by a part-time Membership Administrator, so all this activity is the result of voluntary activity. The Council of the Society (the trustees) are immensely grateful to all of its members who voluntarily run activities and produce publications.

PAPERS & LECTURES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

Alex Croom,
Keeper of Archaeology

The Bronze Age in and around Sunderland
Friends of Sunderland Museum, Sunderland Museum
Roman Military Equipment from South Shields Roman
Fort
Military equipment seminar, Newcastle University

Amy Baird,
Learning Co-ordinator

Lecture: Play and the Early Years. Northumbria
University. October 2023

Andrew Parkin,
Keeper of Archaeology

Colouring in Roman Britain. Projection mapping at the
Great North Museum: Hancock.
Conference: Colours Revealed, Hainburg, Austria
(March, 2024).
Museums, Archive and Empire in the North East’
- Northern Bridge conference hosted by Durham
University on Collecting, Colonialism and Empire (May
2023).

Ana Flynn-Young,
Painting Conservation Officer

Multaka talk and tour and talk introduction to
Conservation
Art Appreciation group- Links skill centre North Shields
Consultancy:
Northumberland University conservation tour - lead
Northumbria University Research Partnership - partner
roll
Newcastle University School of Geography, Politics
and Sociology - Treatment consultancy on damaged
paintings

Bill Griffiths,
Head of Programmes & Collections

1900 Years of Hadrian’s Wall: Wallsend Local History
Society
Other Roman Missile Weaponry - Wall to Wall exhibition
seminar group
Hadrian’s Wall 1900 and Volunteer Engagement - Wall
to Wall volunteer project group
Hadrian’s Wall on Tyneside (with Geoff Woodward and
Andrew Parkin) - Hadrian’s Wall Community networking
conference 2024

Christina Stephenson,
Conservation Officer

Consultancy:
Newcastle University (Special Collections)
Advice and conservation work

Helen Russell,
Project Co-ordinator

HVG (heritage volunteering group) online conference.
-online workshop entitled “Partnering for inclusion”
Vision for Volunteering online conference on inclusion-
online talk entitled “connecting with experienced
voices”

Joanne Charlton,
Assistant Outreach Officer

Consultancy:
York Museums Trust
Community Participation Coordinator
Creative Museum Loan Boxes

Kate Holden,
Learning Officer

Lecture for Sunderland University PGCE Students:
Museum and Gallery Learning
Lecture for Northumbria Education Studies: Engaging
Young People in Museums
Talk at Museums Association Conference 2023 with Art
Fund and Nesta - Early Years Museums Project
Lecture for Northumbria BA Education Students:
Museum and Gallery Learning
Talk for Art Fund webinar on Summer 2023 Early Years
Museums Project

Leslie Palanker,
Learning Co-Ordinator

National Gallery Constable Tour: Film June 2023 <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/across-the-uk/constable-visits/sensory-storytelling-with-constable-s-cornfield>
The Word: Talk on SCRAN June 2023
MA Conference: November 6 2023
Sensory Journeys Talk with stall and activities @ The
Laing
Historic England: CPD March 2024
GEM: Talk on Sensory Learning and partnership with
National Gallery Constable Tour March 2024

Lizzie Jacklin,
Keeper of Art

‘Turner in Newcastle’ at National Gallery partners day,
October 2023

Lizzy Baker,
Archives Lead

‘Tyne & Wear Archives collections, Research Focus’ at
the TWAM/Newcastle University Research Forum, April
2023.
‘Collections in Tyne & Wear Archives’ at the Gender,
Engagement and Inclusion in the archives conference,
Northumbria University, May 2023.
North East Colonial links in Tyne & Wear Archives at the
Northern Bridge conference, Durham, May 2023.
The Unlocking North East Jewish Heritage Project at
Hidden Treasures Conference, London, November
2023.

Rachael Metcalfe,
Conservation officer

Conservation Consultancy, Museums Development
North East

PUBLICATIONS & BLOGS

**Alina Trehitt,
Project Co-ordinator**

Exchanging, Sharing, Recollecting, a GEM Case Studies - Anti-racist Journeys in Museums currently being published.

**Amy Baird,
Assistant Learning Officer**

Blog post: Science Sessions Spark Young Imaginations to Discover STEM. Royal Society of Chemistry. October 2023.

Podcast: POD-CACHE: STEM Learning with Tiny Sparks Early Years sessions. S5E01. October 2023.

**Ana Flynn-Young,
Painting Conservation Officer**

'Workman eating lunch' blog

'Framing Matters: Unveiling the art of conservation and loans' blog

**Andrew Parkin,
Keeper of Archaeology**

'Roman Britain in Colour - Roman Altars from Hadrian's Wall Reimagined' *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal*, 6, 1 - 19.

**Bill Griffiths,
Head of Programmes & Collections**

'Survey of the river piers and west abutment' in Paul Bidwell - The Roman Bridge at Chesters on Hadrian's Wall: excavation and research since 1989, *Archaeologia Aeliana* 6.1 2022 pages 168-175. (With Paul Bidwell).

'Introduction' - Hadrian's Wall 1900 festival celebration booklet.

**Kate Holden,
Learning Officer**

'From the Fair to the Museum' Kate Holden, Jo McSwaine, Georgina Scott GEM Case Studies 31 https://gem.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/GM169-Gem-Case-Studies-31_v2-1.pdf

REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES & CONSULTANCY

Adam Bell,
Assistant Keeper, Social History
South Shields Local History Group, committee member
Social History Curators Group – Member
British Art Network - Member
Northern Ireland Museums Council – Associate member

Alex Croom,
Keeper of Archaeology
The Arbeia Society, Trustee
Amy Baird, Learning Co-ordinator
GEM: Group for Education in Museums, North East Area Representative

Alisdair Wilson,
Project Co-ordinator
Trustee: Fuseliers Museum of Northumberland
Accreditation Mentor: Museum of the Light Dragons

Ana Flynn-Young,
Painting Conservation Officer
BAPCR - The British Association of Paintings Conservator-Restorers – member
Global Conservation Forum (ConsDistList) - member
Diamond Way Teachings and Centres – Lecturer (non TWAM Related)

Andrew Parkin,
Keeper of Archaeology
Member of the Institute of Classical Studies Advisory Board.

Anna Snell,
Development Specialist
Trustee, St George’s Church Fatfield PCC
Board Member – Royalty Theatre Sunderland

Ben Jones,
Project Coordinator (Arts Participation)
Dingy Butterflies CIC, Director

Beth O’Connell,
Learning Officer
North Tyneside Learning and Cultural Education Partnership, Steering Group member
South Tyneside Learning and Cultural Education Partnership Steering Group member
Hadrian’s Wall Learning and Engagement Forum member
Northern Child Health and Wellbeing Network member

Bill Griffiths,
Head of Programmes and Collections
Treasurer – Arbeia Society
Vice President – Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne
Trustee – Senhouse Museum Trust
Member – North East Historic Environment Forum
Member – Hadrian’s Wall Management Board
Chair – Hadrian’s Wall Learning and Interpretation group
President – Wallsend Local History Society
Member – Northumberland Culture Forum
Museum Mentor – Bowes Railway Museum

Cheryl McCarrick,
Communications Officer
Member, Arts Marketing Association

Christina Stephenson,
Conservation Officer
Member of Northern Regional Archives Conservators
Corporate Membership ICON (Institute of Conservation)

Clare Smith,
Learning and Engagement Manager
Member, NewcastleGateshead Cultural Venues Learning and Participation Group

Debbie Graham,
CSO
Chair of The Friends of Kingston Park Primary School

Elizabeth Elliott,
Admin North & South Tyneside
Arbeia Society General Secretary

Geoff Woodward,
Museum Manager North & South Tyneside
Trustee of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne
Secretary of the Activities Committee of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne
Vice Chair of the Wallsend Chamber
Member of the South Tyneside Cultural Partnership Steering Group
Member of the North Tyneside Cultural Partnership

Hugh Stolliday,
Commerical Manager
Chair, Our Lady and St Anne’s Catholic Primary School Governing body

Jackie Reynolds,
Head of Finance, Governance & Resources
Director, TWAM Enterprises
Director, Exhibitions by TWAM
Company Secretary, TWAM Development Trust

Jonathan Loach,
Communications Lead
Member, Sanctuary and Culture Network
Member, Arts Marketing Association

Joy Youngman,
Learning Officer
Steering Group Member, Gateshead Cultural Education Partnership
Steering Group Member, Primary Art Teacher Educator Regional Network

Julie Westgarth,
HR Business Partner
Voluntary Board Director – Beacon Films
Member of Industry Inclusion Group led by Signpost Productions which aims to provide a mutual learning environment for people from a variety of screen and cultural-sector organisations to learn from each other about how we can continually improve the inclusion of Deaf, Disabled and Neurodivergent (DDN) talent within our workforces.

**Kate Holden,
Learning Officer**

Vice Chair of Governors – Brighton Avenue Primary School

**Keith Merrin,
Director**

Board Member, North East Culture Partnership
Co-Chair, NewcastleGateshead Cultural Venues Chief Executives Group
Member, Northern Culture Network
Trustee, Virgin Money Foundation
Member, National Museum Directors Conference

**Kirsty Robinson,
Learning Co-ordinator**

Representative for GEM North East

**Kylea Little,
Keeper of History**

Member of Steering group, Migration Museum Network

**Leann Hay,
Communications Officer**

Steering Group Member, Marketing and Transport Delivery Group, Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site (Hadrian's Wall)
Member, Arts Marketing Association

**Lizzie Jacklin,
Keeper of Art**

'Understanding British Portraits' National Portrait Gallery Subject Specialist Network, steering group member
Lizzy Baker, Archives Lead
Member on The National Archives Public Records Place of Deposit Reference Group representing local places of deposit for Public Records in England.
Peer reviewer for the Archives Services Accreditation Scheme (co-ordinated by The National Archives).
Member of the Executive committee of the Chief Archivists in Local Government Group
Chair of the North East Archives Partnership

**Malavika Anderson,
Manager, Great North Museum: Hancock**

Member of Collections Advisory Group, UK Parliament
Board Member, Kettle's Yard

**Melanie Burgess,
Programme Manager, Regional Cultural Learning**

Vice Chair of Governors at Marine Park First School
Member of North East Family Arts Network Steering Group

**Morgan Fail,
Learning Co-ordinator**

Lead representative for the Group for Education in Museums: North East
Sandford Awards Assessor
Chair of the Hadrian's Wall Learning and Engagement Forum

**Paul Stevens,
ERIC North East Co-ordinator**

Member, Tees Valley Local Nature Partnership, Natural Assets Working Group
Member of Conservation Committee Durham Wildlife Trust.
Rachael Metcalfe, Conservation Officer
Member, Institute of Conservation

**Rebecca Knight,
Great North Museum: Hancock Library Coordinator**

Member, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP)

**Sallie Ball,
Communications Officer**

Member, Arts Marketing Association

**Sheryl McGregor,
Principal Officer: Communications**

Chair, NewcastleGateshead Cultural Venues Communications Group
Chair, Family Explorers and North East Family Arts Network Steering Group
Member, Arts Marketing Association

**Sylvia Humphrey,
Assistant Keeper of Geology**

Member, the Geological Curator's Group
Member, Open University Geological Society
Member, Russell Society
Thomas Elwick, Learning Officer
Volunteer – Lead Volunteer, 5th Seaham Scout Group
Director - West End Schools Trust

**Victoria Page,
Communications Officer**

Member, Arts Marketing Association

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

All staff members completed a range of eLearning modules through our learning management system. Training completed ranged from Data Protection to Action Counter Terrorism to Health & Safety. One of our Conservation Officers designed content to allow us to create our first bespoke eLearning module on Hazards in Collections. All staff in the organisation have completed this important training and opportunities to share the package with other museums is currently being explored.

Our first manager successfully completed their Level 5 Operations/ Departmental Manager Apprenticeship in Spring 2024. We have 6 other managers working towards completion of this programme. 1 staff member also completed a Level 3 HR Support Apprenticeship with Newcastle City Learning. We continue to explore the opportunities apprenticeship can provide to upskill our existing workforce.

To support continuous professional development and ensure staff keep up to date with best practice in Museums and Archives we purchased an online pass to the Museum Association Annual Conference and a season pass for Museum Next Summits. The increased opportunity post covid to attend events remotely and the benefit of reduced travel costs has significantly increased the opportunity for staff to participate in and attend sector development events. In November 2023 the Museum Association annual conference was held in Newcastle/Gateshead and this provided an opportunity for several staff to also attend the conference in person. Staff have also attended subject specific conferences and events including those through the UK Maritime Heritage Forum, Heritage Volunteering Group, Collections Trust, Heritage Railway Association, Museum Computer Group and Arts Marketing Association to name a few.

10 of our staff have received training to become mental health first aiders (MHFA). These staff MHFA's can spot the signs and symptoms of mental ill health and provide help on a first aid basis guiding someone to appropriate support. Through the work of our MHFA's and internal staff Wellbeing group we are continuing our efforts to encourage people to talk more freely about mental health, reducing stigma and creating a more positive working culture. The group plan a regular series of events each year for staff to coincide with World Mental Health Day in October, Time to Talk Day in February and Mental Health Awareness Week and Creativity and Wellbeing Week in May.

In support of our aim to become a Museum of Sanctuary and to ensure we provide a warm welcome to everyone and break down barriers caused by inequality and discrimination staff have attended a range of Equalities themed training.

In March 2023 we finalised content and began the roll out of a range of in person Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training that has been delivered to all staff in the organisation. This was a significant undertaking as all staff were invited to attend 2 in person training sessions. This training provided staff with a space to reflect on North East Museums values, policies and practices in the areas of Equality, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. It also provided a refresher on the legislation, protected characteristics and intersectionality that underpin EDI work, explored inequalities, biases, privilege and power and helped identify and prioritise actions staff could take to foster a culture of inclusion.

Additional courses were attended by public facing staff to help them understand the diverse and intersecting characteristics of our local communities, develop skills to identify barriers to accessing our services and support them to feel more confident in working with different communities.

Our 'all staff' conference in October 2023 was themed around our Commitment 'Equality' and provided an opportunity for consolidation of understanding and reflection.

To ensure North East Museums remains a safe place to both work and visit staff participate in a diverse range of in person health and safety training and development. Activity in 2023-2024 included emergency and outdoor first aid, fire safety training, FLT and Mobile Elevated Working Platform training, crane training, EVAC chair training, woodwork machinery training, abrasive wheels training and power tools training.

Our volunteers and staff who work on site at Stephenson Steam Railway require specialist training to ensure work is carried out to strict safety standards. A range of on-line training, specialist training to operate heritage railways and training to safely operate site machinery such as pallet trucks and tractors is regularly undertaken. We have invested in additional software to help track and record compliance in this area.

Like a lot of other organisations we recognised the impact the cost of living crisis and in work poverty can have on staff. In 2023 we started working with the social enterprise, Society Matters CIC to find out more about how the cost of living is affecting our workforce and to see what measures we could put in place, beyond pay and benefits, to support staff. Key staff undertook training and we asked staff to take part in a Making Ends Meet survey. 102 staff completed the survey facilitated by Society Matters CIC who met with us to share the results. The results provided an overview about the financial wellbeing of staff and the associated challenges they may be facing. We were provided with a framework with suggested actions we can take against a number of results areas. Throughout 2023-2024 we put in place changes to try and support staff more in this area.

In the financial year 2023-24, we advertised over 40 different roles and received over 1,100 applications for these opportunities. We advertise all roles through North East Jobs and our own webpage but also share them more widely on museums and arts-based sites such as the Museums Association, Arts Jobs, the National Museum Director's Council (NMDC) and Leicester University Museum jobs page. In the last year we have worked hard to attract a more diverse range of applicants who reflect our community. To do this we have developed our relationship with the DWP, NHS Employment Specialists, North East Autism Society, Refugee Employment Network and the North East of England African Community Association. We also share vacancies through local organisations such as Vonne and Connected Voice and post to Disability Arts Online.

We have experimented with our recruitment process, recruiting casual staff directly through community partners. We also regularly attend careers and recruitment events in a variety of diverse settings. Our Human Resources, Volunteering and Learning teams have worked closely together to develop up to date resources for careers fairs where we can share information about the diverse range of roles and opportunities at North East Museums and in the wider sector. We have also produced in house careers events for all ages that not only promote the variety of roles in the sector but demystify the recruitment process to further remove barriers to employment.