

Lancashire Museums Strategy 2022-25

Foreword

Our Museums provide a real insight into Lancashire's past, from castles and historic houses to original textile mills at Helmshore and Queen Street Burnley. With our comprehensive archives collection and highly skilled curators and conservators, supported by friends' groups, volunteers and partners, we can proudly boast a very strong cultural presence here in Lancashire.

This strategy builds on the previous strategy for libraries, museums, culture and archives covering 2019-24 and expands it to incorporate the County Council's recently adopted corporate priorities of delivering better services; protecting our environment; supporting economic growth; and caring for the vulnerable.

The vision for our museums within this framework is for a service to collect and preserve Lancashire's diverse heritage and to make it accessible to everyone through high quality cultural experiences.

County Councillor Peter Buckley
Cabinet Member for Community and Cultural Services

January 2022

Background and National Context

The 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act and the 1972 Local Government Act extended the powers of local authorities to provide museums. However, museums are not a statutory service.

Following the reorganisation of County boundaries in 1974, the Lancashire County Museum Service was created to ensure the history and heritage of the post-1974 county was collected and interpreted for its citizens.

Initially based at the Library Service Headquarters, museum staff worked to collect material specifically relating to all aspects of the history and heritage of Lancashire with a particular emphasis on agricultural and rural life to reflect the make-up of the new Lancashire.

In 1984, the Museum Service moved to its present Museum Headquarters location on Stanley Street, part of the historically significant entrance area to Preston from the south. This venue contains the administrative, specialist services and core collection storage.

The Museum Service now administers a number museums and archaeological sites covering collections from a broad range of disciplines. Several historic houses and industrial buildings were transferred to the County Council as the industries they housed closed production and other buildings were no longer used. These included Judges' Lodgings and Helmshore Mills.

Lancashire County Council Museum Service is currently responsible for 8 sites which are listed buildings, 2 reserve collection stores and workshops and one site which is used for educational purposes. Two further sites contain museum collections of significance to Lancashire's heritage.

At a national level, Arts Council England – as part of its wide remit in the arts and culture sector- is the development agency for museums in England. It wants all museums to be sustainable, focused and trusted organisations, which offer their visitors a great experience.

Arts Council England manages the Museum Accreditation Scheme, which sets nationally agreed standards for museums in the UK that inspire the confidence of the public and funding and governing bodies. There are currently just under 1,800 museums participating in the scheme, demonstrating their commitment to managing collections effectively for the enjoyment and benefit of users.

Its 10-year strategy – Let's Create 2020-2030 - centres around three Outcomes, which it will work to deliver over the next decade:

1. **Creative People:** Everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life.
2. **Cultural Communities:** Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture.
3. **A Creative and Cultural Country:** England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international.

To achieve these, Arts Council England and the organisations and people it invests in will need to adapt, steered by four Investment Principles:

- **Ambition & Quality:** Cultural organisations are ambitious and committed to improving the quality of their work.
- **Inclusivity & Relevance:** England's diversity is fully reflected in the organisations and individuals that it supports and in the culture they produce.
- **Dynamism:** Cultural organisations can thrive and are better able to respond to the challenges of the next decade.
- **Environmental Responsibility:** Cultural organisations lead the way in their approach to the climate emergency.

The Lancashire Museum Service strategy will guide our development to ensure that we are a vibrant and modern service. We also understand that we need to have an in-depth understanding of our communities and audiences so that we can create museums that inspire.

In developing this strategy, we have considered the 4 investment principles from Arts Council England and the strategy will -

- be ambitious and committed to improving the quality of our museum service
- be inclusive and relevant and reflect the history and diversity of the local area
- be dynamic and able to respond to challenges of the next decade
- be environmentally responsible and lead the way in our approach to the climate emergency

This strategy has been developed to build on the success of the past and to enable the service to respond to the future challenges and opportunities facing the people of Lancashire.

What are we?

Clitheroe Castle Museum

With panoramic views across the Ribble Valley, Clitheroe Castle is perched above the town of Clitheroe where it has dominated the skyline for 800 years. The Keep is 12th century Norman and has Ancient Monument status. The museum is located in the former Steward's House, a Grade II listed building that was built in the 18th century to house the Steward of Clitheroe Castle. Owned by Ribble Valley Borough Council and operated by Lancashire County Council under a management agreement, the site is a major tourist attraction for the town and the Ribble Valley. The Museum tells the story of Clitheroe and surrounding local area using exhibits, touchscreen animations and oral history sound points. The galleries are fully accessible and there is a vibrant and visible family friendly offer of monthly themed hunts which drive repeat visitors to the museum. The Heritage Learning Team also provide several different educational sessions with over 5,000 pupils attending each year.

Gawthorpe Hall

This Jacobean historic house was built in 1605 by the Shuttleworth family and remained in their ownership until 1970 when it was gifted to the National Trust. The Hall and part of the grounds are managed by the Museums Service, under a 99-year lease, dated 30 May 1972. This was originally to allow use for adult education purposes, with Nelson and Colne College being the occupier. The Hall was transferred to the Museum Service in 1991, but the College continued to use some of the facilities until 1995.

The Hall is Grade 1 listed with stunning original interiors and with furniture and painting collections on display, Victorian renovations by Sir Charles Barry and decorative elements by Augustus Pugin. The Hall also houses Gawthorpe Textiles Collection (managed by a separate Trust still connected to the Shuttleworth family) and Burnley Football Club have access to their neighbouring training ground. Events are held throughout the year for families, special interest, groups and schools.

Helmshore Textile Mills Museum

Nestling side by side in the quiet village of Helmshore in the stunning Rossendale Valley are two original Lancashire textile mills, Higher Mill and Whitaker's Mill, together known as Helmshore Mills Textile Museum. Higher Mill was constructed in 1789 and Whitaker's Mill around 1828 by the Turner family, who were textile manufacturers from the Blackburn area.

While Higher Mill has always been a wool fulling mill, Whitaker's Mill for the first century of its existence alternated between working wool and cotton. By the mid-1920s, it was solely working recycled cotton. Commercial production ceased at Higher Mill in 1968 and at Whitaker's Mill in 1978.

The two mills were both preserved as they were on the days of their individual closures due to being acquired for the purpose of becoming heritage venues and museums. Higher Mill Trust was formed to take responsibility for the Higher Mill. The County Council acquired Whitaker's Mill upon its closure as well as taking responsibility for Higher Mill under a 99-year management agreement with the Higher Mill Trust from 1975. The swift action in preserving these sites resulted in protecting wonderful working in-situ original machinery, as well as extensive collections of national importance for future generations.

Judges' Lodgings

Built in the centre of Lancaster against the backdrop of Lancaster Castle and Lancaster Priory this elegant, Grade 1 building was home to Thomas Covell, Keeper of Lancaster Castle and notorious witch hunter. Between 1776 and 1975, the house became an impressive residence for judges visiting the Assize Court at the Castle. When use of the house by visiting judges ended in 1975, the County Council became the owner and the building was converted into a museum; featuring a museum of childhood, and the Gillow furniture collection.

Lancaster Castle

Steeped in almost 1000 years of history, the Castle is built on a commanding hilltop location which dominates the City of Lancaster. Owned by the monarchy for over 600 years, this impressive castle was used as a prison from the Middle Ages until 2011 and is still used as a court. The civil courtroom, known as the Shire Hall, is one of the most iconic rooms in the north of England and contains an impressive collection of heraldry spanning 800 years. There are over 650 shields on display representing the arms of every English monarch from Richard The Lionheart onwards, as well as those of all the Constables of Lancaster Castle and High Sheriffs of Lancashire. The County Council has leased the Shire Hall since the 1930s and the Museum Service is responsible for providing guided tours around the Castle.

Queen Street Mill Museum

The last operational steam-powered weaving mill in the world, Queen Street Mill is located just outside Burnley, a town once dominated by the textile industry. In its Victorian heyday, Queen Street Mill specialised in producing plain calico cloth. Visitors can see the machinery – a complete collection of national importance – preserved in full working order, including the Lancashire looms, boilers and a steam engine named Peace.

The Mill was producing cloth until its closure in 1982 when it was down to 440 looms, having originally been equipped with 900 and a further 366 added in the 'bottom shed'. It is now a perfect time capsule of Victorian manufacturing, bringing the past to life and telling the story of cotton cloth production as well as offering insights into local social history along the way.

Ribchester Roman Bathhouse

The bathhouse at Ribchester (known to the Romans as Bremetennacum) was built about AD 100. It was designed to serve the needs of the soldiers garrisoned in the nearby fort and later for the local civilian population until c245AD. Initially discovered in 1837, various excavations continued until 1978. The Museum Service holds the archaeological items discovered during excavation. Today, the remains of the ruined Bath house are visible and

there are information boards explaining the site. This is a free to access site, open dawn to dusk, and it is a key stopping off point for walkers as it sits on the route of on the Ribble Way Long-Distance Path.

Lancashire Conservation Studios & Collections

The Museum Service has maintained centralised specialised services and stores to support its operation across the County. Based in Preston in the original Territorial Army HQ building adjacent to the Museum of Lancashire, it houses our research collections. The Conservation & Collections Team is based across this site as it provides access to our collections and responds to public and organisational enquiries. Behind the Headquarters sites is the 1836 Church of St Mary's which was converted into the Lancashire Conservation Studios in 2007. This Grade 2 listed building houses the specialist conservation, technical and design service which supports both the County Council's museums and other museums, heritage bodies, and private individuals through the provision of practical, preventative conservation as well as workforce development and training for staff and volunteers. The building is open to the public via pre-booked tours and the Team undertakes a number of special events throughout the year.

Lancashire Heritage Learning Team

This team gives school pupils the opportunity to explore and appreciate Lancashire's rich heritage through access to our unique collections, stimulating sites and outreach.

We offer:

- Fascinating places to explore and real historical objects to see and touch.
- The chance to be inspired and encouraged to think creatively during one of our practical school sessions.
- Active participation in new and unique experiences with our programme of special events, which are based on a variety of themes and hosted by many of our sites throughout the year.
- Museum loan boxes to use in the classroom in order to enhance and complement learning sessions.
- Outreach learning programmes
- Risk assessed activities and trained staff with enhanced DBS certificates
- Teacher training and CPD programmes.
- Curriculum development

Other interests:

Scarisbrick Hall Collections

Scarisbrick Hall was remodelled by Augustus Pugin and is one of the finest examples of Neo Gothic architecture in the UK. It is in private ownership but, in December 1963, the County Council obtained a Building Preservation Order to stop the removal of internal fittings and works of art. Subsequently, on 3rd December 1965, a Purchase Order was served on the County Council and, in 1969, following payment of £5,500 a number of 16th & 17th Century works of art and complete panelled interiors became the property of the County Council. These works of art remain in situ and cannot be removed from the building.

Fleetwood Maritime Museum Collection

The Museum occupies the Old Custom House, which was designed by the important Victorian architect Decimus Burton. The collection is centred around the development of the new town of Fleetwood dating from 1840's and the history and operation of deep sea and inshore fishing industries.

In 2018 the operation of Fleetwood Museum transferred to the independent Fleetwood Museum Trust. However, the bulk of the collections displayed and stored at Fleetwood Museum are on loan to this Trust from the County Council.

Our Service and the Museums Partnership Framework

National museums are working to deliver recommendations from the Strategic Review of DCMS-Sponsored Museums (2017), which was published alongside the Mendoza Review. Here the particular focus is on enabling a more consistent approach to lending and borrowing between museums for the benefit of the whole museum sector. By seeking input from non-national museums and engaging widely with colleagues across the museum sector, we aim to develop a Framework that will enable more strategic, collaborative and impactful partnership working for the benefit of museums and audiences across the UK. The national museums will, through the National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC), work with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund in building a new 'partnership framework' to extend their reach throughout England in a more strategic way. It is expected that this will be based on an assessment of museums' and audiences' needs informed by existing activity. It will cover areas that include: collections management, learning, working with audiences, digital, international, and commercial.

Our Vision, Purpose and Values

Our vision

Here at Lancashire County Council, we are helping you to make Lancashire the best place to live, work, visit and prosper as well as being the place where everyone acts responsibly.

- The above is the vision of Lancashire County Council and forms parts of the county council's planning and performance framework. The Museum Service contributes to the vision through the goals and objectives that will be detailed in this strategy
- Museums will provide connections to our communities and audiences, which will create a sense of place and help to celebrate Lancashire as a great county in which to live, work and visit

The goals and objectives detailed in this strategy will help Lancashire County Museum Service to deliver the vision of the County Council.

Lancashire County Museum Service's vision is:

“To collect and preserve Lancashire’s diverse heritage and to make it accessible to everyone through high quality cultural experiences”.

Museums will become the venue of choice:

- Community groups and a wide range of businesses will be encouraged to use our spaces for meetings, displays and exhibitions
- People and families will experience high quality and a wide range of cultural and theatrical events and be able to come together as communities to learn about and celebrate and contribute to our county’s heritage

Our Purpose

Enriching lives in Lancashire

- Museums enrich people's lives across Lancashire by providing a vibrant, and modern museum service
- We have a positive impact on people's lives, through the information we provide and the experiences we offer both virtually and face to face
- Our purpose is to offer information, inspiration, and connectedness and to strive to create opportunities for all

The Museum Service aims to provide access for everyone to quality resources, knowledgeable and customer focused staff and welcoming museum spaces.

Our Values

Supportive	Innovative	Respectful	Collaborative
We support our customers and colleagues, recognising their contributions and making the best of their strengths to enable our communities to flourish	We deliver the best services we possibly can. We are always looking for creative ways to do things better, putting the customer at the heart of our thinking, and being ambitious and focused on how we can deliver the best services now and in the future	We treat colleagues, customers and partners with respect, listening to their views, empathising with them, and valuing their diverse needs and perspectives. We aim to be fair, open and honest in all that we do	We listen to, engage with, learn from and work with colleagues, partners, and customers to help achieve the best outcomes for everyone

Strategic Priorities - Our Goals

The Museum Service has identified 4 strategic priorities which will help it to meet the County Council's vision of enriching lives in Lancashire:

1. Engaging with all our customers and potential audiences by having a Museum Service which is well resourced, accountable, and creative for everyone now and in the future

2. Preserving Lancashire's memory by providing community access, building a sense of place and identity by actively collaborating with partners for mutual benefit
3. Support resilient communities – use museums to ensure that customers are healthier and have a better quality of life
4. Innovative and sustainable museums, which are flexible and adaptable to respond quickly to changing circumstances

The implications of COVID-19 mean that customer interactions and requirements of the Museum Service are likely to continue to change. This strategy provides the flexibility and opportunity to allow the Museum Service to respond appropriately to differing needs and opportunities.

Strategic Priority 1 - Engaging with all our customers and potential audiences by having a Museum Service which is well resourced, accountable, and creative for everyone now and in the future

Corporate priorities: Delivering better services; Caring for the vulnerable

We aim to raise awareness of museum services and their benefits to ensure wider community engagement.

We will be ambitious and committed to improving the quality--- of our museum service.

We will be inclusive and reflect the diversity of the local communities and our wider audiences.

We will provide a high-quality Museum Service in line with the standards of Arts Council England's Accreditation Scheme, which will support service development and meet the needs of local communities.

By raising awareness and expanding the range of museum services on offer, we will increase the number of local people who benefit from the skills, resources and opportunities available in museums and the heritage teams to improve their quality of life and fulfil their potential through participation, creativity and learning.

Strategic Priority 2 - Preserving Lancashire's memory by providing community access, building a sense of place and identity by actively collaborating with partners for mutual benefit

Corporate priorities: Delivering better services; Caring for the vulnerable

We will continue to use our museums to preserve Lancashire's memory.

We will build and maintain a sense of Lancashire's identity through the collection and preservation of physical and digital artefacts of the county's history.

We will place museums at the centre of a collaborative network of partners both within the County Council and the wider local and business communities, for mutual benefit,

encouraging and expanding existing networks with onsite partners, volunteers, friend's groups and Lancashire's thriving education sector.

We will ensure better access to our collections by improving and accelerating the digital recording of items and increasing historical and interpretive content on our website.

Strategic Priority 3 - Support resilient communities – use museums to ensure that customers are healthier and have a better quality of life

Corporate priorities: Delivering better services; Supporting economic growth

We will use our museums to deliver services that ensure customers are healthier, have a better quality of life and are resilient and well connected.

We will stimulate our customers' and our communities' mental wellbeing through our offer of venues, services and utilising our collections to help to build better resilience, overarching health and quality of life.

We will provide a range of learning opportunities allowing the people of Lancashire to realise personal and shared ambitions.

We will work with our partners to offer a wide range of opportunities, which will support the citizens of Lancashire to obtain employment and provide them with the skills to grow and flourish in the workplace.

Strategic Priority 4 - Innovative and sustainable museums, which are flexible and adaptable to respond quickly to changing circumstances and technologies

Corporate priorities: Delivering better services; Protecting our environment

We will be adaptable and innovative to future proof our museums and specialist heritage teams. We will keep up to date with national and local trends as well as maintaining a good understanding of our local communities and audiences.

The Museum Service will be environmentally responsible and innovative in our approach to the climate emergency. Arts Council England recognises that cultural organisations lead the way in their approach to environmental responsibility and states "*The climate crisis and environmental degradation will be the most significant challenge facing all of us over the next decade and beyond*"

We will ensure that our workforce have the right blend of skills, competencies, attitudes and behaviours to face the future with confidence. We will attract, retain and develop talent from diverse backgrounds by providing opportunities which encourage young people into the workplace.

We will endeavour to make each museum and heritage team as financially sustainability as possible.

We will use digital technology to provide better access to our collections for all and to widen the range of engagement and interpretation that we provide.

How we will measure our performance

We have established different ways of measuring our performance. Each year we will: -

- produce an operational plan and ensure that the strategy is delivered. We will create and review annual plans within the framework of this strategy. This will ensure that we deliver a service which is relevant to the individuals and communities of Lancashire
- contribute to the annual report for Cultural Services
- have key performance indicators for all areas of our strategy which are reviewed annually
- continue to benchmark all aspects of performance against other local authorities and the wider heritage sector
- monitor our services by using both data and the experiences of our communities and audiences in line with Arts Council England's Museum Accreditation Scheme
- measure our performance against our financial budget each year
- review progress and make any additional actions needed to implement the strategy

Background Documents

This strategy has been informed by and supports the message and ambitions of the following key documents:

- DCMS strategic toolkit (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/longer-term-evidence-based-sustainable-planning-toolkit/longer-term-evidence-based-sustainable-planning-toolkit>)
- Let's create: Our Strategy 2020 – 2030, Arts Council England, 2020
- Our strategy for Libraries, Museums, Culture and Archives 2019 – 2024, Lancashire County Council 2019