



# Investing in Culture and Our Communities



# Bringing Heritage to Life

Since 1979, Amberley Museum, an accredited museum and registered charity, has managed a 41-acre site in the heart of the South Downs National Park, in rural West Sussex. This site tells the story of the **historically and archaeologically significant** chalk pits which were once the site of a flourishing local industry.

Home to a variety of flora and fauna, as well as a historic narrow-gauge railway, a nationally significant radio collection, and a series of vintage buses, **Amberley is a living and working museum** which offers an eclectic mix of collections for visitors to discover, learn and enjoy.

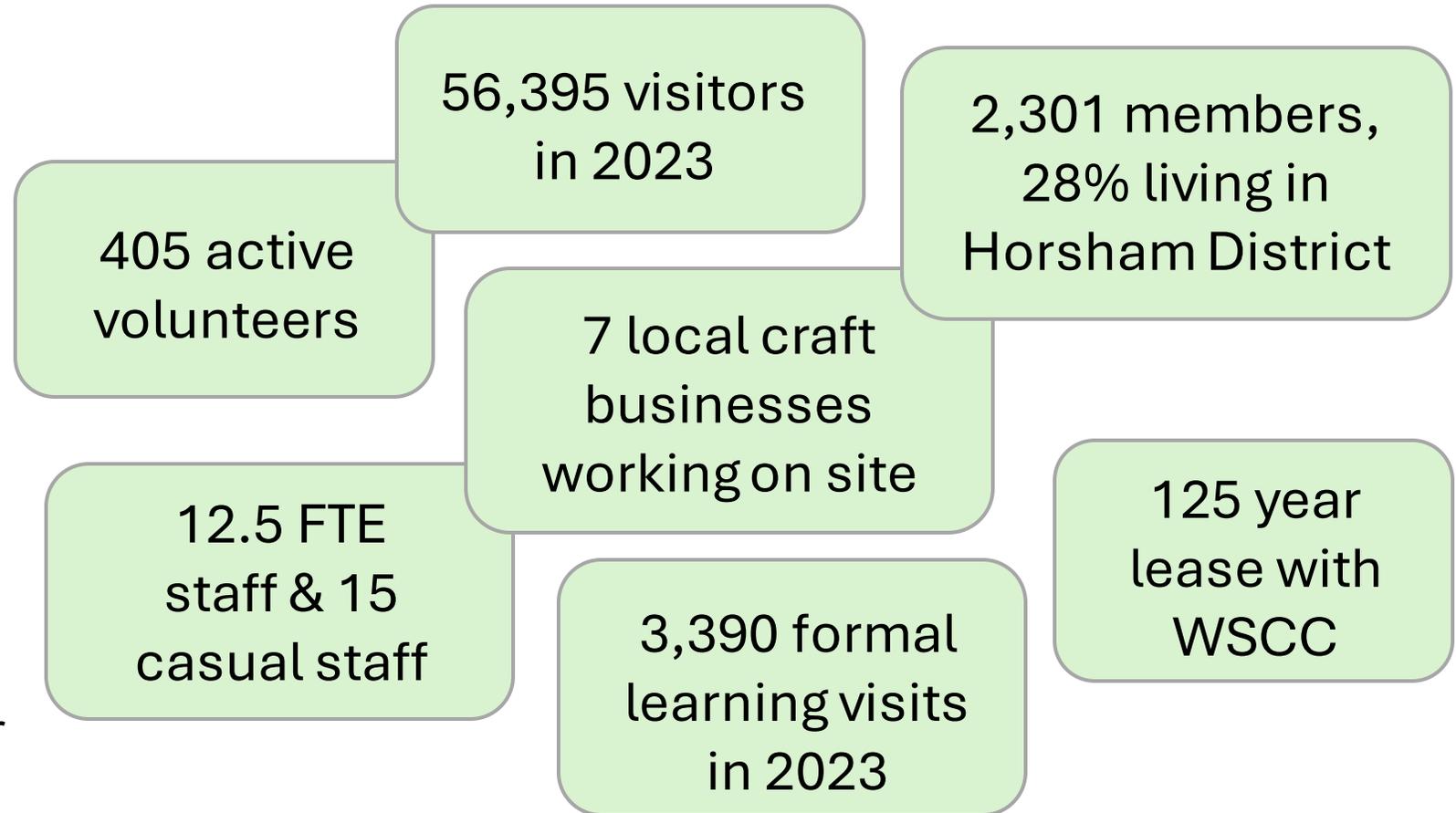
Amberley Museum is also home to a number of practising craftworkers, including our potter and blacksmith, **bringing traditional crafts to life.**



# Our Community

The influence of Amberley Museum reaches far and wide, with key Museum supporters and stakeholders including;

- Volunteers
- Members
- Visitors
- Staff
- Little Birds Nursery
- Local schools and colleges
- Local community groups
- Local residents
- Local authorities
- Local Artists & Craftspeople
- Local Retailers
- South Downs National Park
- Arts Council & the heritage sector



*"The children said how much they had enjoyed the day and how much fun it was, they thoroughly enjoyed all of the hands-on interactive exhibits and described it as one of the best trips they had been on" **Summerlea Community Primary, Oct 2023***

# Heritage: Our Collections

Artefacts (including vehicles and working machinery):

22,350

Archives and library: 23,795

**Total number of objects: 46,145**

**Chalk quarrying & lime burning** - including original buildings (many of which are Scheduled Monuments), transport routes, lime kilns, artefacts & archives.

**Industrial narrow-gauge railway** - including working locomotives & wagons.

**One of the most significant collections of electrical and communications technology in the UK** - including the Milne electrical collection, the Radio & Television and Connected Earth telecommunications collections.

**A unique collection of vintage buses** - focused on the development of local company Southdown Motor Services Ltd during the mid 20th century.

**Local trades and industries** – including a working machine shop, print shop, road-making exhibition, cycle shop, 1950s fire station and many more.

**Historic buildings rescued from across Sussex** - including the Horsham Wheelwright's shop, Billingshurst signal box & the Arundel Gin building.



# Social Impact – Our Volunteers

Active volunteering is at the heart of Amberley Museum. Providing a high-quality volunteering experience is core to our mission and we are proud of the positive impact it has on people's lives. Research shows that 75% of volunteers nationally value volunteering for the benefits it offers to their mental health and wellbeing<sup>1</sup>



- Research into volunteer motivations undertaken as part of our Men@Work project highlights that volunteering at Amberley Museum is as much about **developing social networks and reducing loneliness**, as it is about **learning new and developing existing skills**.
- We have over **400 active volunteers**, many male, over **60** with caring responsibilities, long-term health needs or experiencing isolation.
- In 2023 our volunteers gave nearly **53,000 hours**, equivalent to a contribution worth £7.8m to the Museum.
- In 2024 we were awarded the **King's Award for Voluntary Service** in recognition of the significant contribution our volunteers make.

*“Before I came here, I thought I'd be here for myself, now I'm here for the people as well as the engines and visitors”*

**Amberley Museum Volunteer, Men@Work project 2022**



[1. At a glance - Time Well Spent 2023 | News index | NCVO](#)

# Social Impact – Learning Programmes

Amberley Museum provides a wide range of formal and informal learning activities for the local community. This includes preschools, primary and secondary schools, higher education students, home-schooled children, families, care homes and adult groups. Research shows that engagement with arts and culture can boost educational attainment, as well as increase cognitive abilities by up to 17%<sup>2</sup>.

- ❑ Amberley Museum provides formal **learning opportunities for over 3,000 children** and young people from local schools each year.
- ❑ We offer small grants to support schools with 10%+ children eligible for **free school meals** with a visit.
- ❑ **Over 2,000 people take part in informal learning** activities with the Museum each year, including family events and activities for families with additional needs and uniformed groups.

*“The children loved the day and were incredibly engaged and fascinated. Their level of engagement is particularly noteworthy as many of our children struggle to focus on activities, however, they were all absorbed for all of the day. Also thank you very much for the free visit tickets – lots of our children wanted to go back!”* **Riders Infant School, Jun 2023**

2. [Assessing the direct impact of the UK arts sector | McKinsey](#)



# Social Impact – Our Wider Community

The Museum is expanding its work with the wider community, reaching out to those who may face additional barriers to engaging with arts and culture.

- In 2023, the Museum hosted two different projects which directly supported **local people facing isolation, loneliness and mental health challenges**.
- We run a successful outreach service, taking collections out to those unable to visit through delivery of talks and **object handling sessions at local care homes** and day centres.
- In 2024, we launched a new *Volunteer Partners* scheme to build capacity and **support for those with additional needs and disabilities** who are looking to volunteer with us.

*“I am so grateful for the opportunities at Amberley. It has really helped me this year. I was having a crisis of confidence and this has really rekindled some old passions. Thank you for allowing this project to happen. What a delight.”*

**Timescape project participant**

*“A wonderfully connecting experience which helped my son and I come together with others who understood. I felt heard and seen and that has not been the case for over 3 years. I'm healing as a result. Truly amazing experience.”*

**The Grow Project participant**



# Economic Impact

Amberley Museum is a significant player in the local economy, providing employment, consuming goods and services, and bringing visitors into the area. We also support skills development for local people through our learning programme and through opportunities to attend courses in traditional skills.

- Located in a rural part of Horsham district, within the heart of the South Downs National Park, the Museum **provides employment for 12.5 FTE and 15 casual staff**, as well as utilising a wide range of local suppliers, including electricians, tree-surgeons, IT contractors, signwriters and brewers.
- The Museum is **home to several thriving independent businesses**, including a working blacksmith, potter, glassmaker and Little Birds Nursery.
- We organise a wide-range of events throughout the year, popular with locals and day-trippers, who travel from across the South East. Some speciality events bring overnight visitors to the area, **supporting the local tourist economy**.

*“Amberley Museum is local and familiar, which makes it an easy visit for us and our autistic son. Lots of hands on, lots of space, not too crowded, plenty of time to stay with what he enjoys.”* **SEND family**



# Caring for the Environment

The site at Amberley Museum is carefully managed to support biodiversity, and with an ethos focused on keeping traditional crafts alive, visitors gain an insight into the value of local landscapes.

- The site encompasses **a range of habitats**, which are home to an astounding variety of flora and fauna, including brown hares, common lizards, bats, birds of prey, several species of orchid and other rare plants and fungi.
- Visitors explore the natural history of the site through our **two nature trails and annual environment and nature events**.
- Our bank of **solar panels generates over 30,000 kWh of electricity** a year. We also have an electric vehicle charging point in the car park and encourage visitors and volunteers to travel by train.

*“The goal of the Wilder Horsham District project is to work with land managers and communities at all levels right across the district to help integrate nature recovery and connectivity into the many different land uses.”*

**Horsham District Nature Recovery Network**

