



Annual Review

for the year ending 31 December 2024

BLACK COUNTRY
LIVING
MUSEUM

Steve Langer, son of Herbert Langer (owner of Langer's Army & Navy Stores) with his family in the Museum's recreation of his father's Stourbridge shop.



“ My dad would be so emotional... that somebody thought that much of him to do something like this and recreate something that was his life, that he loved. He would be amazed... he'd just sit down and cry. For me, it feels like coming home, it already feels like my dad's shop, it feels like I should be here every day – amazing. I can't put it into words. ”

Chair's Welcome

I write this review as the Museum's interim Chair, following the retirement of Dr Paul Belford in April 2025, and ahead of undertaking an open search for a new Chair of the Board of Trustees. Therefore, my first duty and pleasure are to thank Paul for his commitment to the Museum and the knowledge and expertise he brought to the role these last four and a half years, and for a total of nine years as a Trustee. Paul has been at the helm during the Museum's strong recovery after the pandemic, increases in visitor attendance and impact, and the successful completion of Forging Ahead, our £30m development. The Board, staff, volunteers and beneficiaries of the Museum have a great deal to thank Paul for.

Our Trading Results

Success for the Museum is measured in two ways. Firstly, the achievements of our charitable objects, and secondly by our long-term sustainability without recourse to high levels of public sector funding to meet our everyday costs. The Museum is proud to be an independent heritage business. Alongside preserving the Museum's positive reputation, the most significant business risk is maintaining a strong and resilient trading performance.

Visitor attendance reached 377,024 (Budget: 415,000), 2% lower than the prior year. This was the first year (outside the pandemic) that attendance has shrunk since 2013. That said, we were pleased to see school attendance – always an important audience for museums – grow by 5% to over 55,000. Within the overall results, venue hire and location fees for filming performed strongly.



The results for visitor attendance are reflected in the trading results set out in this report, including for the Museum's subsidiary trading company.

The downturn in visitor attendance, alongside greater use of our UnChained Annual Pass (providing free returns) and the concomitant financial impact was largely neutralised by the tight control of costs and holding open several vacancies, to arrive at a manageable year-end position. However, the Museum recognised the need to establish a more structured and sustainable cost base, and in the early part of 2025 entered a period of consultation with staff to reduce the headcount, including at the Leadership Team level.

Trading at the Museum is subject to significant seasonal variations, with the summer school holidays being especially important to the annual results. In this context,

the relatively poor weather of the summer certainly had a marked and negative impact on the financial performance of the Museum.

To further address this the Museum is reviewing its marketing strategy, as well as ensuring on-site trading maximises its potential. The welcome growth of certain non-visitor driven revenues, not least hire & hospitality, also presents an opportunity to improve results going forward, as well as diversifying revenue. The Museum also retains a strategic objective to return to achieving annual financial surpluses, as an essential part of its long-term viability.

At times like these the continued and significant financial support of Arts Council England, as part of their National Portfolio, is important to the Museum.

Our Bostin' Promise

In the autumn of 2024, we introduced our 'Bostin' Promise' – a new framework to guide and improve our engagement and behaviours towards visitors and with our colleagues, under the themes of: (1) Welcome, (2) Know Our Stuff, (3) Own Our Part, and (4) Care. 'Bostin' being a familiar term of the Black Country meaning something is exceptionally good, top-notch or simply brilliant. It was an important piece of work.

So, for example, under Welcome, we will set the stage and we're ready to invite people in, we give a nod, a friendly smile or an 'alright bab! Under Know Our Stuff, we're curious, we share what we know, with thought, and we look for opportunities to learn from each other. Under Own Our Part, we notice the detail, and put things right, we value, give and act on feedback, and we seek alternatives to saying 'no'. Under Care, we take the time to listen and understand, we consider others' perspectives, with empathy, we're respectful and responsive to everyone's needs, and we show patience and are generous.

I would like to think it is positive initiatives like the Bostin' Promise that sustain and strengthen our position as a leading visitor attraction in the UK, even when trading headwinds are strong. In this context, I cannot write this review without mentioning the Museum's supreme win at the 2025 Visit England Awards, for Large Visitor Attraction of the year. An amazing accomplishment against competition across the whole of England, and a wonderful reflection of the professionalism, welcome and dedication of all staff and volunteers.



New Stories Being Told

During the year we continued to reveal and tell new stories as we opened the latest developments of Forging Ahead, our £30m capital project. New highlights include an Industrial Area featuring Joe H. Smith & Sons (Oldbury) Ltd; J. H. Lavender Aluminium Foundry, and Cricket Field Brickworks. Langer's Arm & Navy Stores, Halesowen & Hasbury Co-op, and Spring Hill Post Office.

Our approach to telling stories pushes the boundaries and definition of what it means to be a museum.

Ajay Pall (museum historic character), Murad Khan (director and creative consultant), Ismail Miah (son of Mohammad Abdul Hakim, who inspired the character creation) and Amit Persaud (museum historic character), pictured inside the Museum's recreation of J.H. Lavender Aluminium Foundry.



“It's really pleasing and emotional for all the family that my father's story, which was a major part of his life was spent at J H Lavenders, to be told is quite brilliant for us all... it keeps the memory of my father alive and the company that helped our family so much.

I would encourage a lot of the families from the Bangladeshi community to come here and look at the story that JH Lavender and BCLM are showing, because this is where a lot of the people, the history, relates to; and it's very important to understand how our our ancestors came here and started to settle here.”

Ismail Miah, son of Mohammad Abdul Hakim, whose story inspired the creation of a new historic character. He worked for J.H. Lavender from 1957 – 1991.

Reflecting on the Independent Museum Sector

As 2024 ended, Andrew Lovett OBE, our Chief Executive stood down as Chair of the Association of Independent Museums, a position he held since 2019. AIM is a hugely important organisation for museums with over one thousand members across the UK. On Andrew's retirement from that Board, he gave an interview to Matt Smith, Editor of the AIM Bulletin, and a short extract is provided here by way of Andrew's reflections on the current state of the independent museum sector in the United Kingdom.

Q. What's the most notable change that you've seen across the independent museum sector since you joined AIM Board?

I think they have become ever more sophisticated, in all aspects. Whether it's operations, governance structures, leadership, marketing, storytelling, wherever you look they've become more attuned to visitors and less insular. They recognise that they are just one of many ways in which people can spend their time or money. And a greater awareness of their good in society, and the role we've got to play.

Q. How do you feel AIM has changed?

I think it has continued to grow more self-assured in its voice. We've taken a seat at the top table with others; that you might think of as serious players such as Heritage Lottery or Arts Council England or the Museums Association, or Art Fund. I think in the same breath people would now talk about AIM. And I'd like to think that our listening is better attuned to members.

Q. What makes you optimistic about the future of the independent sector?

Independents are good at not feeling they've got a right to exist. We don't lose sight of the cause and the purpose. That gives me optimism about the future, alongside the people that are running them. One of the wonderful things about museums is they show how far we've come. And, therefore, surely it gives us optimism about how far we can continue to go.

The Museum continues to be a proud member of AIM, and is delighted that Rhiannon Goddard, Head of Public Engagement & Business Management at Historic Royal Palaces, was elected Chair in January 2025.





A group of schoolchildren visit Langer's Army and Navy Stores during an educational workshop.



All Change in the West Midlands

2024 was a year of significant political change across the UK, and of course in our hometown of Dudley and the West Midlands. So, I want to thank Sir Andy Street CBE, who served as WM Mayor 2017-2024, for his much valued and frequent support of the Museum, and to Marco Longhi (MP for Dudley North, 2019-2024) and Mike Wood (MP for Dudley South, 2015-2024).

We welcome Richard Parker, newly elected Mayor of the West Midlands, and are delighted that he has quickly sought to support the Museum and become a frequent visitor in his capacity as Mayor. We also welcome Sonia Kumar, our new MP for Dudley, who likewise has quickly established her support for the Museum with regular visits to the Museum, including accompanying members of the new Labour Government.

As I write this review, we also welcome Balvinder Heran as the new Chief Executive of Dudley Council, replacing Kevin O'Keefe, and Diana Martin, new Chief Executive at Dudley College. Diana takes over from Neil Thomas with whom the Museum enjoyed a warm and very positive relationship.

I mention these changes by way of demonstrating how important our local and regional networks are, and the support they bring to the Museum.

Further Strengthening the Board of Trustees

Although they will not be taking office until mid-2025, I want to take this opportunity to welcome and thank six new Trustees to the Board, and the strength of expertise and new perspectives they will bring to our strategic leadership of the Museum. They are Hasan Afzal, Janet Chapman, Dr Nicola Guy, Dileep Singh Marway, Emma Norris and Caroline Southall.

It was heartening that we attracted such a strong new cohort, reflecting the reputation and impact of the Museum and the warmth felt towards it.



With Thanks

Once again, I want to pay tribute to the Museum's staff. Without our staff we wouldn't be able to serve the public. Special thanks to Craig Edmondson, Sukhi Baden, Claire Packer, Glenis Williams and Elizabeth Peters who left the Museum during the early part of 2025, and to Paul Crofts who left in 2024.

I am extremely grateful to my fellow Trustees on the Board, and the independent members of our subsidiary trading company. During the year, Trustees Chris Ansell and Parminder Dosanjh retired from the Board, and I thank Chris and Parminder for their commitment, expertise and strategic voice.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support of all our many donors, volunteers and

funders and to express my very grateful thanks for their commitment and generosity to the Museum. Without them the Museum could not reach as many people as it does or achieve all the things that it wants to achieve. Our local authority, Dudley Council, continues to be very supportive, recognising the importance of the Museum to the Borough. Special thanks go to public-sector investors, National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England, Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, The Mayor & West Midlands Combined Authority, and the Department of Culture, Media & Sport.

Very sadly, there were staff and volunteers who died during 2024 and 2025. Amongst these were Dan Robinson (Historic Character) and Margaret Carrington (Volunteer Historic Character). My condolences to their families and friends, and deep thanks for everything they did in support of the Museum they loved so dearly. We also lost Les Millington in May 2025, dearest husband of Margaret. Les and Margaret have been volunteering at the Museum for over 30 years and were some of the first members of the Friends of the Museum.

I am proud of our achievements at the Museum and inspired by the thoughts of what we can yet achieve, including the final phase of Forging Ahead openings and new storytelling in 2025.



The Year in Numbers



We welcomed our
11 millionth
visitor in April 2024



2,167
bars of Roundoak's
Chocolate sold at
Spring Hill Post Office



638
metal casting demonstrations
at J.H Lavender Aluminium
Foundry



55,342
school visitors

5,000

books collected to populate the shelves of Woodside Library, donated from the community and local organisations



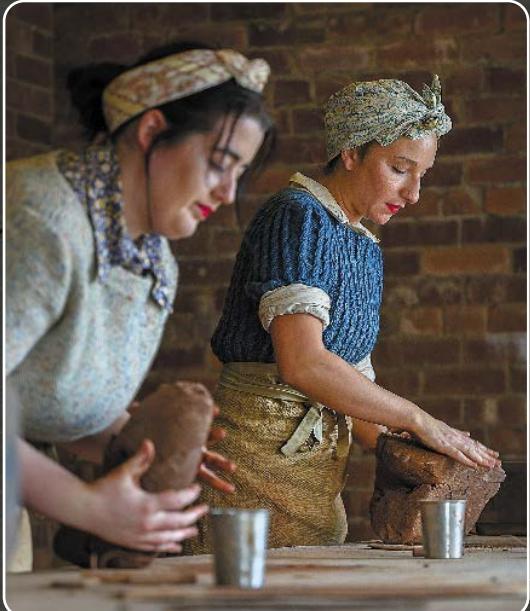
169,105

Transport passengers



298

Attendees at BSL and Audio Descriptive tours



1,524,895

followers on social media

Over

100

individual lines of reproduced packaging in Hasbury & Halesowen Co-op



Support

Significant Grants & Donations

The Museum wishes to acknowledge and thank all of the organisations and individuals which have pledged or given generous financial and in-kind support during the period of this review, in particular:

Arts Council England
Department for Culture, Media & Sport (UK Government)
FCC Communities Fund
The Late Mr. M Hessey
The Late Mr. J Hughes
The Inland Waterways Association
The Late Mr M Jennings
Mr. M Manners
National Lottery Heritage Fund
Mr. S Nuttall
The Patrick Foundation
Mr. C Walker
West Midlands Combined Authority

Enhancing the Museum's Collections

The Museum's entire collections are Designated by Arts Council England, recognising their quality and national significance. The Museum now holds a resource of considerable value for authenticating the sense of regional identity and for placing the full historical and cultural significance of the Black Country in a national context. Buildings, machines and other objects hold stories which attest to the national and international significance of the Black Country, chiefly spanning the years 1800-1950.

The Museum develops its collections through purchases, gifts, bequests, or occasionally with time limited loans, and when doing so considers several criteria, including an item's provenance, subject matter and date. In 2024, **6,809 objects were collected**. During 2024, the Museum continued to develop its collection by acquiring several significant objects, including:

- Over 5,000 books donated for display and use in Woodside Library, and 95% of these have been donated by the local community.
- Kieft K50 moped – Badged and sold by Kieft Cars Ltd in Wolverhampton as a form of low-cost motoring during the mid-1950s. This rare machine is currently on display inside Bradburn & Wedge awaiting restoration.
- A collection of bricks produced by various Black Country manufacturers has been donated by Martyn Fretwell. Martyn's previous donations make up a significant part of the current display in the Brickworks.



Alongside acquiring a range of new objects, particular care and attention has been paid to a significant monument that has been under the Museum's care for 15 years. The Springfield Brewery War Memorial was originally erected in 1923 at William Butler's Springfield Brewery, Wolverhampton, to commemorate not only those who had fallen in the First World War but also those who had served and survived. For many years it stood in the brewery yard close to the entrance. In 1949, the firm added a Second World War roll of honour.

Following a handful of further moves, it was finally acquired by the Museum and moved here in 2009. When significant works began to construct the new Visitor Centre, the opportunity was taken to carefully move "Tommy" and his plinth into the Museum's stores to await conservation. Working in partnership with Pieta Graves from Drakon Heritage, the war memorial was carefully restored.

A brand-new memorial garden was constructed by the Museum team next to the new Hasbury and Halesowen Co-operative, and in the autumn of 2024 the memorial was painstakingly repositioned into its new home. To mark the occasion, as part of Remembrance Day services, a rededication ceremony was held. Attendees included Deputy Lieutenant Nick Venning as well as representatives from several organisations – 4th Battalion the Mercian Regiment, the Royal British



The restored War Memorial in pride of place at the rededication ceremony in November 2024.

Legion, and notable representatives of local councils. We were also joined by several former employees of Springfield Brewery and their descendants whose family members are named on the memorial.

A special thanks for his service – Danny the Horse

Following eight years here at the Museum, in July 2024 we said a fond farewell to Danny the horse as he took his well-deserved retirement. Danny, who is around 23 years old, has been an important part of our storytelling, helping to share with visitors the contribution that horses made to Black Country industry.

While most often found pulling a carriage through our historic streets, over the years Danny has had various starring roles, including portraying a British cavalry horse at Remembrance Sundays.

He also took part in wedding, funeral and May Queen processions, the Museum's Jubilee and Coronation celebrations, and the baton relay for the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Danny has also been a popular fixture in our Access Tours, where visitors were invited to learn more about a day in his life, feel different tack, hold his horse brasses and help give him a groom.

He is now enjoying his retirement under the continued care of Michelle in his new home.



Future Plans

During the prior year the Museum undertook a review of its existing strategic direction, including consultation with visitors and organisational stakeholders, to develop a new strategic plan for 2024-2028. It developed six strategic themes under which future plans will be grouped:

History

Improve tangible and virtual contact with our Designated Collection.

Continue to invest in and prioritise developments (and associated stories) and site improvements.

Ensure that the Black Country is broadly represented. Support more people to connect with history.

Community

Develop a greater understanding of communities in the Black Country.

Provide more opportunities for communities to use our unique site and its facilities.

Create more events that celebrate the culture, modern traditions, and diversity of the Black Country.

Develop projects and activities that enrich and give more meaning and purpose to peoples' lives.

Learning

Expand and diversify our learning offer across different audiences.

Deepen and build longer term relationships with schools, colleges, and universities.

Provide training and career progression opportunities for our people.

Evaluate everything we do.

Develop a set of organisational values to codify the very best behaviours towards our visitors.

Stage

We will always put on a good show.

Provide an unbroken and expansive visitor experience.

Create an authentic community feel that provides opportunities for audiences to get involved.

Showcase the best of the Black Country through our visitor offer.

Write and commission original content with high editorial standards to engage people in history.

Develop visitor accommodation on site.

Complete a new Master Plan of the 32-acre site.

Business

Grow and diversify our income across visitor and non-visitor sources, being aware that financial surpluses support our independence.

Embed an organisation-wide data-led approach to support our decision-making.

Increase the visibility and reach of our brand to deliver the Museum to the world.

Establish ourselves as an employer of choice.

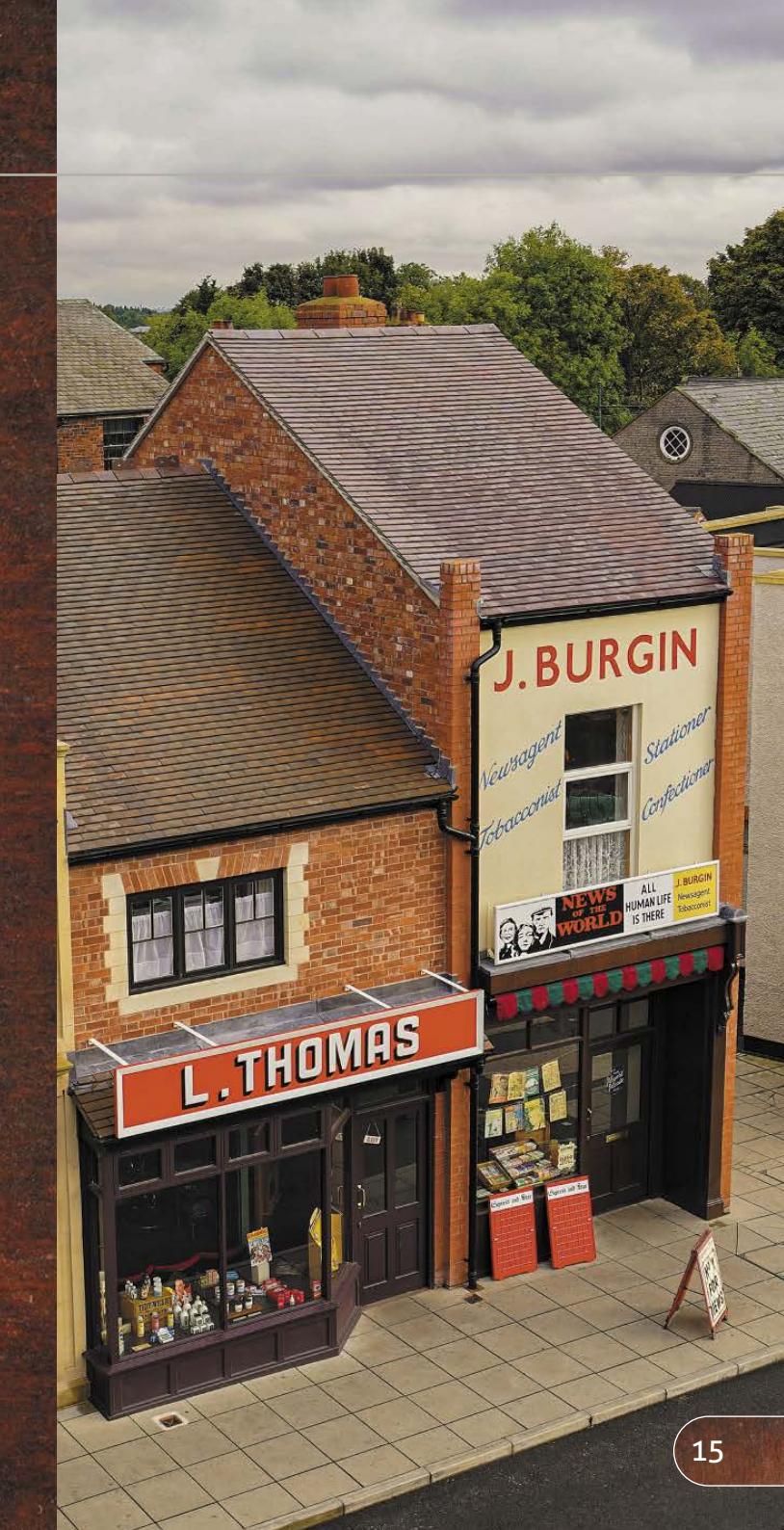
Future

Enhance learning opportunities, skills and aspirations in the Black Country.

Use our 32-acre site, outdoor space and natural environment to benefit peoples' health and wellbeing.

Showcase and promote the best of the Black Country today, making the link to today's successes.

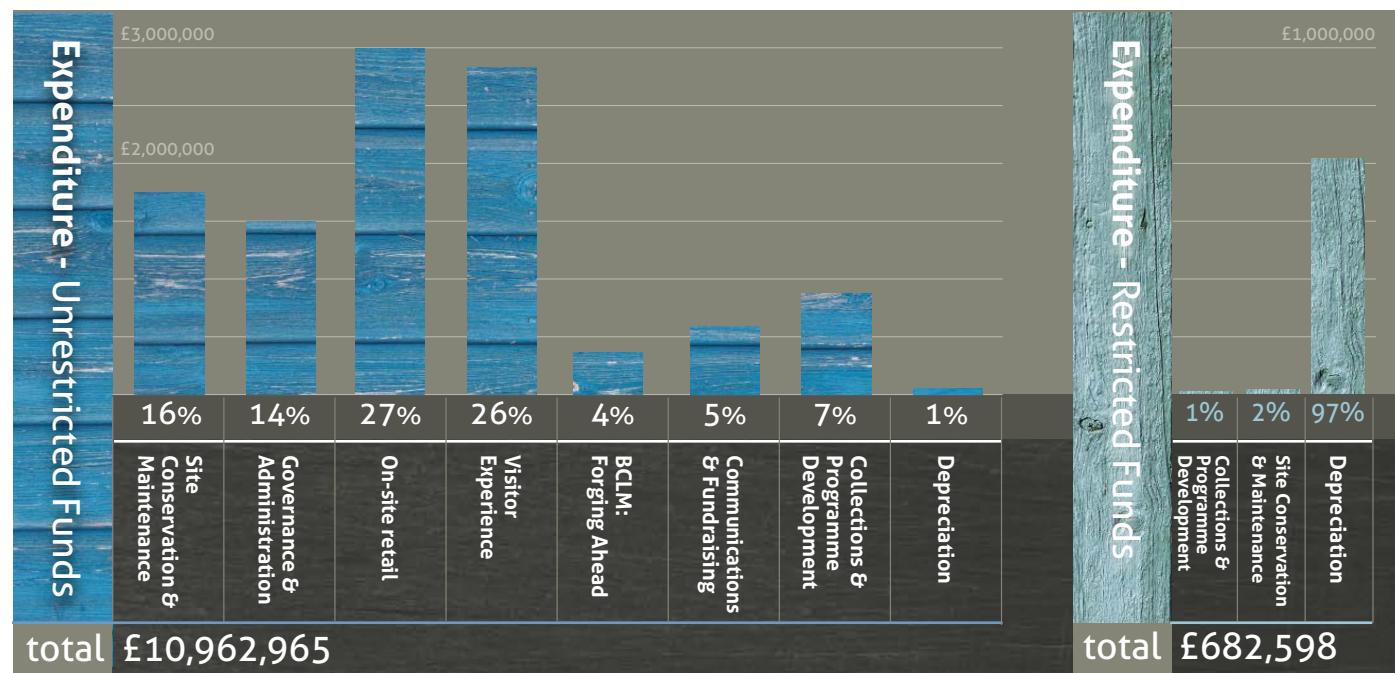
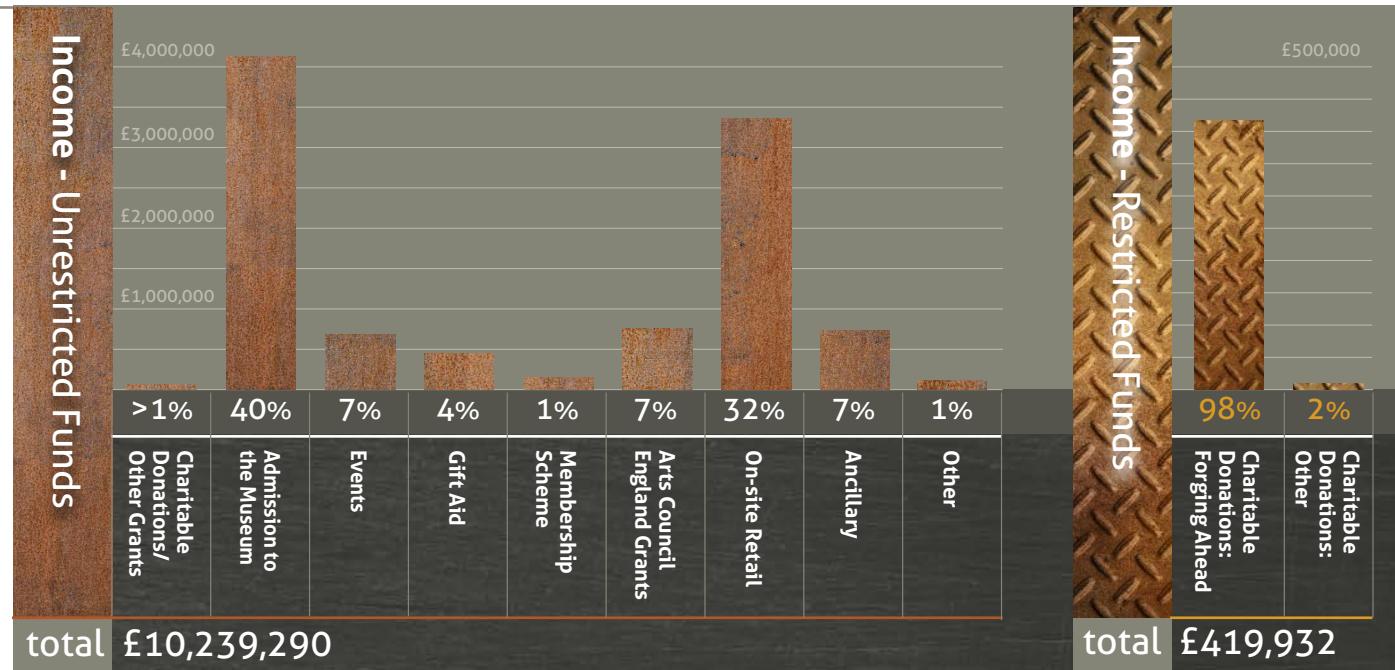
Reduce our environmental impact and educate and encourage audiences to take steps to do the same.



Financial Review

The summary financial statements set out in this review may not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of the Museum. The financial statements are a consolidation of the financial statements of the Museum and its subsidiary trading company. For further information, the full annual accounts, the auditors' report on those accounts, and the Trustees' report should be consulted; copies of these can be obtained from the Museum or downloaded from www.bclm.com or the Charity Commission. The full financial statements, together with the report of the Trustees of the Museum, for the year ended 31 December 2024, were approved by the Board of Trustees and signed on its behalf by the Chair on 26th June 2025.

Statutory accounts for the year ended 31 December 2024 have been delivered to the Register of Companies and the Charity Commission. The Museum's auditor, Crowe UK LLP, has reported those accounts and their report was unqualified.



Annual Accounts

	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2024 £	Total 2023 £
Group Statement of Financial Activities				
Income				
Donations and Legacies:				
Charitable Donations	32,981	419,932	452,913	3,113,747
Charitable Activities:				
Admission to the Museum	5,385,238	-	5,385,238	5,171,124
Grants (Arts Council England)	760,120	-	760,120	710,120
Other Trading Activities:				
Retail income (Subsidiary trading company)	3,251,043	-	3,251,043	3,313,019
Ancillary enterprises	727,256	-	727,256	480,709
Investment Income	25,199	-	25,199	10,289
Other Income	57,453	-	57,453	56,692
Total Income	10,239,290	419,932	10,659,222	12,855,700
Expenditure				
Raising Funds:				
Retail (Subsidiary trading company)	3,382,236	-	3,382,236	3,213,060
Development and fundraising costs	147,531	-	147,531	237,068
Charitable Activities:				
Opening and operating the Museum	7,015,359	682,598	7,697,957	7,002,904
Developing the Museum	417,839	-	417,839	787,994
Total Expenditure	10,962,965	682,598	11,645,563	11,241,026
Net Income/(Expenditure) before taxation	(723,675)	(262,666)	(986,341)	1,614,674
Tax receivable	-	-	-	80,000
Net Income/(Expenditure) after taxation	(723,675)	(262,666)	(986,341)	1,694,674
Transfers	-	-	-	-
Net Income/(Expenditure) after transfers	(723,675)	(262,666)	(986,341)	1,694,674
Other recognised gains and losses:				
Actuarial gain / (loss) on defined benefit pension	(22,000)	-	(22,000)	(37,000)
Net Movement in Funds	(745,675)	(262,666)	(1,008,341)	1,657,674
Reconciliation of Funds:				
Total Funds brought forward 1 January 2024	5,184,898	32,431,182	37,616,080	35,958,406
Total Funds carried forward at 31 December 2024	4,439,223	32,168,516	36,607,739	37,616,080

	2024 £	2023 £
Group (Consolidated) Balance Sheet		
Fixed Assets		
Tangible assets	28,267,571	28,275,506
Heritage assets	6,779,286	6,861,616
Total Fixed Assets	35,046,857	35,137,122
Current Assets		
Stocks of goods for resale	149,503	142,945
Debtors	721,659	926,906
Cash at bank and in hand	1,881,018	3,013,683
Total Current Assets	2,752,180	4,083,534
Creditors: amounts falling due within 1 year	(1,191,298)	(1,593,494)
Net Current Assets	1,560,882	2,490,040
Total assets less Current Liabilities	36,607,739	37,627,162
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than 1 year	-	(11,082)
Net Assets (excluding pension liability)	36,607,739	37,616,080
Defined benefit pension asset/ liability	-	-
Total Net Assets	36,607,739	37,616,080
The funds of the charity:		
Restricted funds	32,168,516	32,431,180
Unrestricted funds:		
Designated funds	2,328,990	2,785,377
General funds	2,110,233	2,399,523
Pension reserve	-	-
	4,439,223	5,184,900
	36,607,739	37,616,080



Accounts (continued)

	Year ended December 2024 £	Year ended December 2023 £
Consolidated Cash Flow Statement		
Cash flows from operating activities:		
Net cash inflow from operating activities	(452,253)	1,547,303
Cash flows from investing activities:		
Interest from investments	25,199	10,289
Proceeds from the sale of tangible fixed assets		1,000
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(651,380)	(1,977,690)
Net cash used in investing activities	(626,181)	(1,966,401)
Cash flows from financing activities:		
Repayment of borrowing	(54,231)	(38,807)
Net cash used in financing activities	(38,807)	(38,807)
Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year	(1,132,667)	(457,905)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	3,013,683	3,471,588
Total cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year	1,881,018	3,013,683



Reference & Administrative Information

Museum Trust Established	15 September 1975
Patron	HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO
Trustees (Directors)	Jonathan Badyal (Deputy Chair) Katy Baker Duncan Bedhall (Interim Chair) Sally Bourner Cllr. Matthew Follows ¹ Victoria Jessop (Deputy Chair) Louise Jones Ruth Levesley Tarlok Singh Mander Catherine Murphy



Chief Executive	Andrew Lovett OBE
Charity Number	504481
Museum Accreditation Reference Numbers:	761 and 829
Company Number	1226321
VAT Registration Number (Group):	765321138
Principal Address & Registered Office	Black Country Living Museum Tipton Road, Dudley West Midlands DY1 4SQ
Independent Auditors:	Crowe U.K. LLP Black Country House Oldbury, West Midlands B69 2DG

¹ Nominated by Association of Black Country Authorities

Principal Bankers	Barclays Bank plc (Barclays Corporate) 1st Floor Queen Square Wolverhampton West Midlands WV1 1DS
Principal Solicitors	Gowling WLG (UK) LLP 2 Snow Hill Birmingham West Midlands B4 6WR
Other Advisors	Anthony Collins Solicitors LLP 134 Edmund Street Birmingham West Midlands B3 2ES
Company Secretary:	Diane Harvey

Black Country Living Museum

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Email	info@bclm.com
Website	www.bclm.com

All information is correct at time of publication.

For more information please visit our website: www.bclm.com



Where is the Black Country?

The map below depicts the current boundaries of the four boroughs that make up the Black Country – Dudley, Wolverhampton, Walsall and Sandwell.



The Museum is proud to be recognised and supported by



Heritage Fund
Made possible with



Supporting public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



Funded by
UK Government



Registered with
FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR



West Midlands
Combined Authority



Thank you to our Brass business partners for their support



BLACK COUNTRY LIVING MUSEUM

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