



# Annual Review

for the year ending 31 December 2023

BLACK COUNTRY  
LIVING  
MUSEUM

The Black Country's past and future are brought together to celebrate the opening of Lea Road Infant Welfare Centre.



*“ You can't tell the story of the history of the NHS without Windrush. It's such an important story, and I feel as if sometimes it can be dismissed. So, I feel really proud to be doing this ”*

Temara Simpson, Historic Character,  
at the opening of Lea Road Infant Welfare Centre.

# Chair's Welcome

It has been another exciting year for the Museum, and it is a great pleasure to look back over 2023 and see how we have developed. I am very proud that we are continuing to grow as an influential voice for the Black Country and the wider region.

## A bigger stage

This year marked another stage in the development of the Museum site – and a really significant moment as we move the stories forward both in time and scope. In July we brought new experiences to life, after years of hard work by the team researching and developing some amazing places.

Stanton's Music Shop now offers toe-tapping 1950s vinyl, sounds echoing among the tubs of Brylcreem in Laurie Thomas' 1956 hairdressers – while glamorous fashion styles are on display at Minett's Ladieswear. This exciting retail journey can be fuelled by meat from Marsh & Baxter 1950s butchers, or if you prefer, a trip down sweetshop memory lane in Burgin's Newsagents. And you might have had something left over to invest in a future home in the West Bromwich Building Society. Across the road we opened the Lea Road Infant Welfare Centre in October, set in 1961, and the relocated Cast Iron Houses took visitors into the austerity of 1940s Britain, and next door to a nation gripped by football fever in the 1960s.

These buildings are the newly enlarged stage on which the Museum tells a new range of stories about the post-war Black Country. Our strand of 'Real Lives, Real Stories' features a host of new historic characters, including:

- Cicilyn Miller, a midwife from Jamaica of the Windrush generation (1961)
- Surinder Kaur, Punjabi mother and pieceworker (1967)
- Daphne Aston, housemaker (1968)

These and our many other characters make the Museum special, full of energy and creating emotional connections with our visitors.

This year we also reopened our Drift Mine to visitors after a long period out of action, due to maintenance and the delicate foundation work of the new Visitor Centre overlying part of the mine structure. Mining is so central to the story of the Black Country – at one time the South Staffordshire coalfield accounted for 10% of national production – that I am delighted that this fundamentally important element of our visitor journey is back.

A more intangible but equally important aspect of Black Country heritage is the tradition of travelling fairs, and I am delighted to say that we have also established a new long-term relationship with Alex Hyman, continuing the long tradition of fairgrounds at the Museum. The new fairground is on 'waste ground' on the edge of the historic town, as it would have been originally, and is well worth a visit.





## Trading Results – The Essential Foundation of Our Impact

We are an independent museum, and we are very proud of the fact that we stand on our own two feet financially, with only marginal reliance on revenue funding from the public sector.

Successful trading results are crucial to our ability to deliver wide public benefit as a registered charity. I am delighted to say that we had a record-breaking year in 2023 – 385,140 visitors, more even than our previous pre-Covid high in 2019. This reflects both the national recovery from Covid and the excitement of our newly expanded visitor offer.

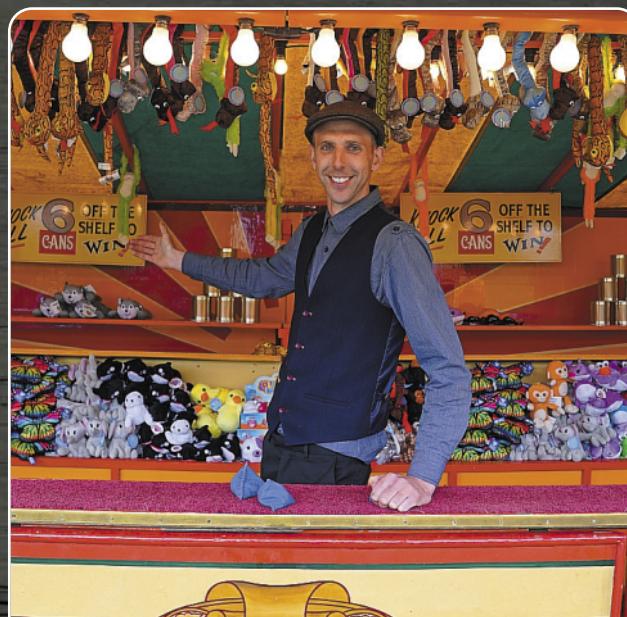
The summer holidays are very important to our overall performance, and I am pleased that we also broke records in this area in 2023. During those eight weeks we welcomed 107,619 visitors – our busiest ever, and 30% higher than 2022 – and in three of those individual weeks over 16,000 people visited the Museum each week. The Summer Lates (until 8pm) also continued to be popular, with 8,368 visitors across the four Fridays in August, an increase of 17% on last year.

This performance was made possible because of the £30m investment in new features and stories – the project we call Forging Ahead – and generating an outstanding £15m of media coverage from an excellent series of promotional campaigns.

Our latest attendance results also include a 17% increase in school attendance, to almost 53,000 students and pupils. We regard school attendance as hugely important to achieving the purpose of the Museum, and it has been heartening this year to see a strong recovery.

The financial statements and review set out elsewhere in this annual report provide a detailed analysis of this year's results, including a net trading surplus of c£100,000 on a trading turnover of approximately £10.5m. The Board would like to achieve healthier net trading results, towards £500k annually, to provide for better levels of reinvestment and free cash reserves and to maintain our independence.

This is why our work with partners – including the West Midlands Growth Company – to attract visitors from a wider catchment and to encourage them to stay longer in the region, is so vital.



## Developing Our People

The past year has seen our largest investment in staff development with over 6,500 hours of training time devoted to improving the skills, knowledge and expertise of our colleagues. This investment has not only expanded individual capabilities but has also prepared and strengthened our collaborative abilities to support the Museum in delivering our new strategy.

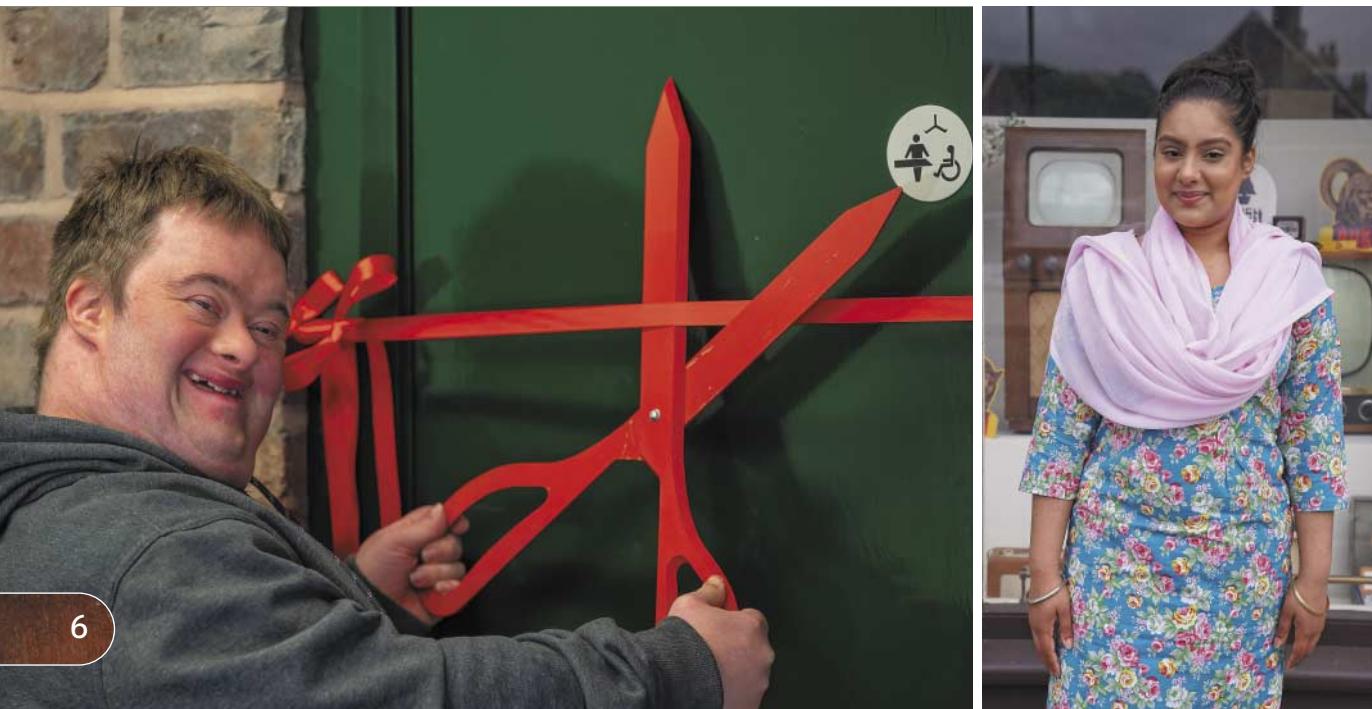
Forging Ahead presented opportunities to grow and diversify our teams and we are pleased our staff and volunteers better reflect the rich tapestry of abilities, cultures and identities of our local communities. Underlining this growth has been a very positive responses from all our colleagues towards growing a culture of inclusivity and mutual respect as we continue to invest in our staff, and see our visitors benefit from their creativity, innovation, cultures and uniqueness.



## Volunteering Support for the Museum

Volunteers have always been important to the Museum. Volunteers from The Friends of the Museum and the Black Country Society were instrumental in founding the Museum during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Volunteering continues to be a strong contributor to the Museum's performance – indeed it is fair to say that a lot of our work would not be possible without our volunteers. And it works both ways – volunteering also provides huge social growth, skills development and wellbeing benefits to individual volunteers.

We currently have 182 active volunteers providing an average of 1,500 hours each month of support across collections care, transport, gardening, maintenance, making costume, administration, and Historic Characters. We also have a Community Panel providing advice on our



programme of events, and Me, Myself & I, a support group of 90 for those caring for people living with Dementia and offering us advice about improving the visitor experience for Dementia sufferers.

All this adds up to a wonderful symbiotic relationship with volunteers and another great example of how the Museum is an active part of the Black Country community.

## In Support of Culture in Our Lives

Our status as an independent museum means that our fortunes are very much in our own hands. The same is not the case for our colleagues and counterparts in local authorities, and it is with sadness that we have seen several local authorities – including some very close to home – enter serious financial difficulties.

Inevitably this impacts on museums, culture, arts and heritage – which often struggle to make their voices heard among the many demands on local authority resources. The loss of museums and cultural heritage institutions can have serious impact on local communities, creating long-term damage for people and places. Arts, culture and heritage are not add-ons or luxuries, but should be core activities at the heart of civilised society. They bring people together, help to nurture new ideas and creative wellbeing, and also create a sense of place and pride in local communities.

I am passionate about making the best use of heritage to create a better future and believe strongly in creating the right conditions for people to live and thrive. I hope that all of our local authorities are able to find solutions to their financial problems, and safeguard museums and cultural heritage in their care.

## Little Makers – A New Arts Council England-funded Project

As well as the Museum's successful application to Arts Council England to retain investment from their National Portfolio for 2023-26, we have also been awarded an additional annual investment of £200,000 from levelling-up funds. This project will offer Black Country schools a fully funded hands-on Key Stage 1 visit to the Museum, including free transport to and from the Museum. We are targeting schools with higher levels of children from low-income families. The programme has been developed in consultation with local schools, and will offer visits on the themes of music, history, design and technology, with a focus on free-standing structures and buildings. During the three-year project we hope to reach 200 schools and 10,000 pupils across the Black Country.

Arts Council England have extended their current investment round for an additional year until 31 March 2027, and we hope the Museum's application to accept the opportunity of an extra year can include another 12 months of investment in Little Makers.

## The Crooked House

The Crooked House was an iconic Black Country pub which was well-known for its wonky appearance due to mining subsidence. As we said at the time: "Buildings leaning at crazy angles because they had sunk into old mine workings were once common across the Black Country and were called 'pit-pulled'." Sadly, the pub, which had been disused for a while, burned down on 5 August. It was subsequently demolished. The whole saga caused a great deal of local interest, and even made it into the national and international media.

Many people hoped that the building could be relocated to the Museum. However, we were not in a position to save, let alone relocate the building. Instead, we have offered support and expertise to individuals and organisations who can take the Crooked House forward on its original site. This story has some way to go yet, and the Museum will continue to monitor the situation during 2024.

## With Thanks

Once again, I want to pay tribute to the Museum's staff, for achieving such great results. Without our staff we wouldn't be able to serve the public. Covid is now a distant memory: we have thoroughly bounced back – showing resilience, skill and enthusiasm, while opening many of the new features of a major expansion of the Museum. It's been a great year.

As ever, I am extremely grateful to my fellow Trustees on the Board, and the independent members of our subsidiary trading company.

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 (from which we secured this year, as part of the National Portfolio, a further round of investment worth over £3m over the next four years), Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership, The Mayor & West Midlands Combined Authority, and the Department of Culture, Media & Sport.

I am proud of our achievements at the Museum, and inspired by the thoughts of what we can yet achieve, including the next phase of openings in 2024.

### Dr Paul Belford

Chair



# The Year in Numbers



**385,140**

Visitors



**47,484**

School visitors



**46,119**

visitors attending special events



**85**

Corporate events

**1,220**

Portions of faggots and peas sold by Marsh & Baxter





**3,447**  
Edwardian school lessons taught



**175,277**

Transport passengers



**1,520,248**

Followers on social media



**241**

BCLM Members attending  
Get Closer events

# 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  
Association for Industrial Archaeology  
Baron Davenport's Charity Trust  
Birmingham Common Good Trust  
Charles Hayward Foundation  
Department for Culture, Media & Sport (UK Government)  
IWA Lichfield Branch  
Lord Austin Trust  
National Lottery Heritage Fund  
The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust  
The Patrick Foundation  
The Roger & Douglas Turner Trust  
Wellcome Trust  
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 1800-1968.

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 2023, 8,429 objects were collected. During 2024, the Museum continued to develop its collection by acquiring several significant objects, including:

- A brick trolley donated by Ketley Bricks on display in Cricket Field Brickworks
- Period toys donated by the public and on display in Lea Road Infant Welfare Centre
- A selection of 1960s clothing transferred from Liverpool Museum



# Future Plans

**During 2023, 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. Operating under the guiding principles of being:**

- Ⓐ Welcoming and reflective of the diversity of life in the Black Country, so that everyone feels this is a place for them;
- Ⓑ Conscious of the role of the region's industrial past on the environment, and act to reduce our impact now and in the future;
- Ⓒ Collaborative and value people, their thoughts, ideas and experiences, placing human connection at our core;
- Ⓓ And forward looking and inventive, shaping and challenging the way museums are seen and interacted with.

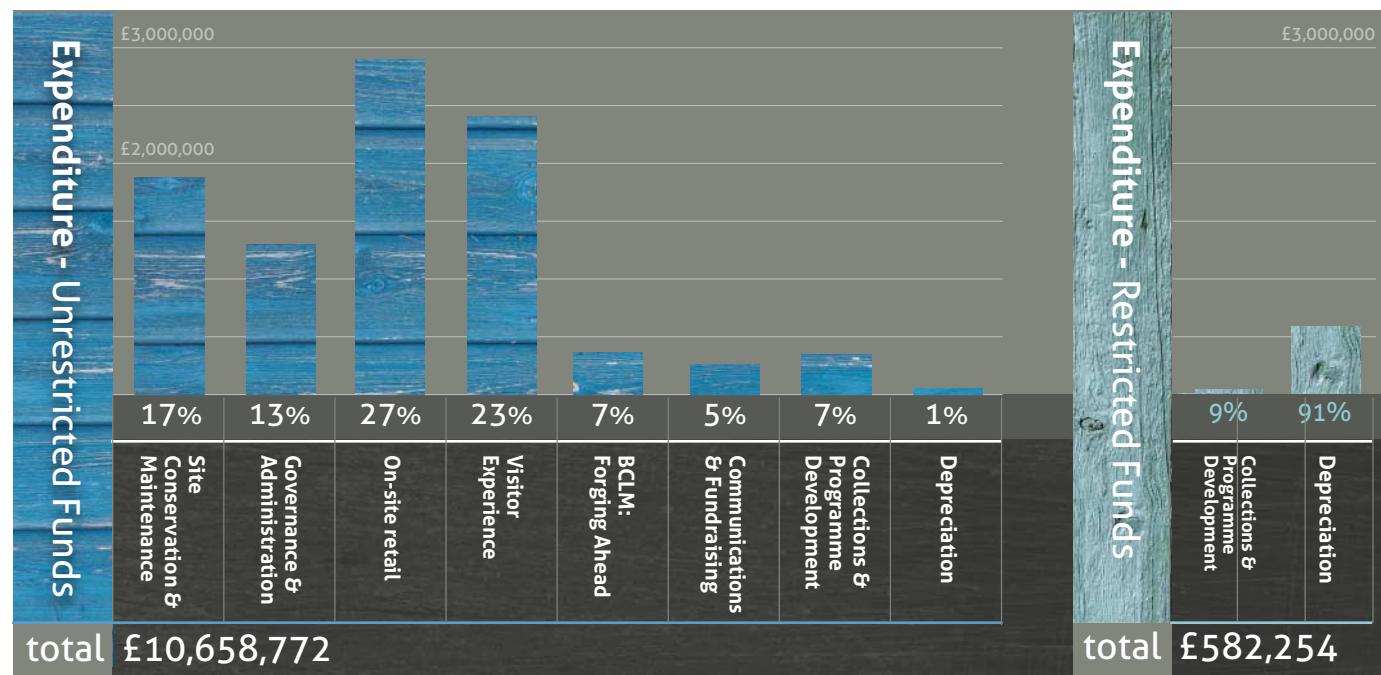
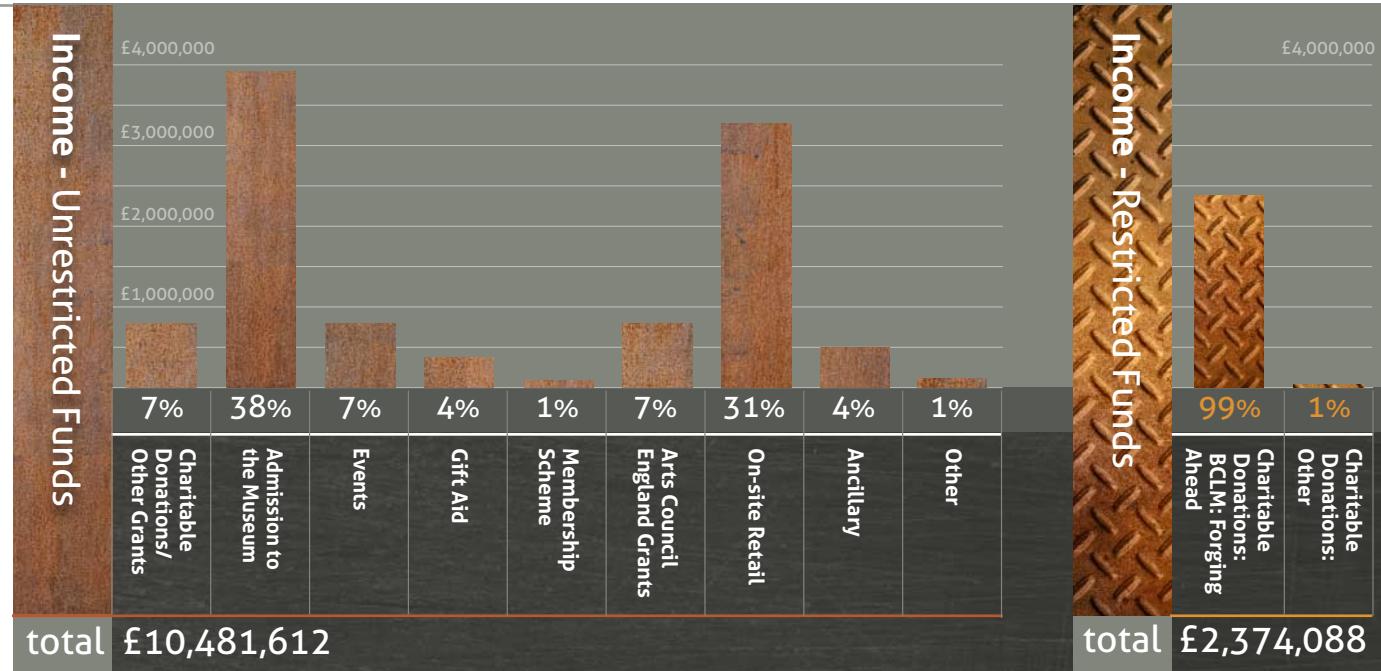
The Museum will work to deliver its vision and mission in 2024 and beyond, as well as focusing on the completion of Forging Ahead – completing the rebuild of Woodside Library, opening the remaining 1940s-1960s high street shops, and Industrial Quarter – alongside developing detailed plans to deliver on the new strategic directions.



# 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](http://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 2023, were approved by the Board of Trustees and signed on its behalf by the Chair on 19 July 2024.

Statutory accounts for the year ended 31 December 2023 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

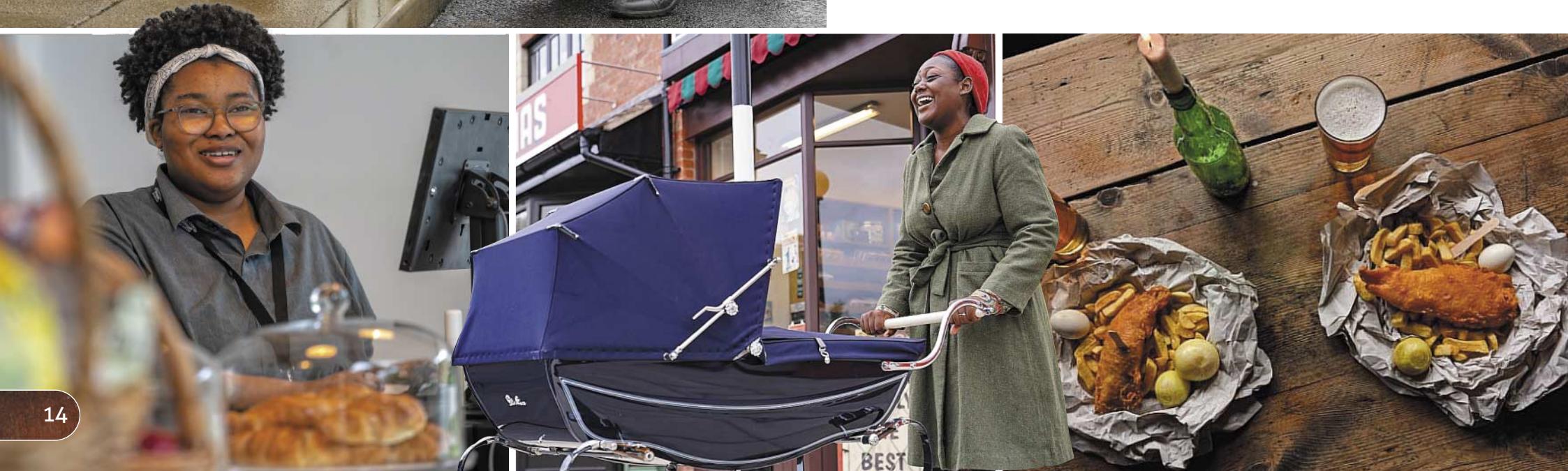
	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Total 2023 £	Total 2022 £
<b>Group Statement of Financial Activities</b>				
<b>Income</b>				
<b>Donations and Legacies:</b>				
Charitable Donations	739,659	2,374,088	<b>3,113,747</b>	7,839,601
<b>Charitable Activities:</b>				
Admission to the Museum	5,171,124	-	<b>5,171,124</b>	4,287,634
COVID-19 support funding	-	-	-	8,667
Grants (Arts Council England)	710,120	-	<b>710,120</b>	557,590
<b>Other Trading Activities:</b>				
Retail income (Subsidiary trading company)	3,313,019	-	<b>3,313,019</b>	2,659,017
Ancillary enterprises	480,709	-	<b>480,709</b>	331,776
<b>Investment Income</b>	<b>10,289</b>	-	<b>10,289</b>	2,400
<b>Other Income</b>	<b>56,692</b>	-	<b>56,692</b>	64,707
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>10,481,612</b>	<b>2,374,088</b>	<b>12,855,700</b>	<b>15,751,392</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
<b>Raising Funds:</b>				
Retail (Subsidiary trading company)	3,213,060	-	<b>3,213,060</b>	2,411,674
Development and fundraising costs	237,068	-	<b>237,068</b>	210,608
<b>Charitable Activities:</b>				
Opening and operating the Museum	6,420,650	582,254	<b>7,002,904</b>	5,506,511
Developing the Museum	787,994	-	<b>787,994</b>	1,090,523
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>10,658,772</b>	<b>582,254</b>	<b>11,241,026</b>	<b>9,219,316</b>
<b>Net Income/(Expenditure) before taxation</b>	(177,160)	1,791,834	<b>1,614,674</b>	6,532,076
Tax receivable	80,000	-	<b>80,000</b>	-
<b>Net Income/(Expenditure) after taxation</b>	(97,160)	1,791,834	<b>1,694,674</b>	6,532,076
Transfers	(4,418)	4,418	-	-
<b>Net Income/(Expenditure) after transfers</b>	(101,578)	1,796,252	<b>1,694,674</b>	6,532,076
<b>Other recognised gains and losses:</b>				
Actuarial gain / (loss) on defined benefit pension	(37,000)	-	<b>(37,000)</b>	1,610,000
<b>Net Movement in Funds</b>	<b>138,578</b>	<b>1,796,252</b>	<b>1,657,674</b>	<b>8,142,076</b>
<b>Reconciliation of Funds:</b>				
<b>Total Funds brought forward 1 January 2023</b>	5,323,476	30,634,930	<b>35,958,406</b>	27,816,330
<b>Total Funds carried forward at 31 December 2023</b>	5,184,898	32,431,182	<b>37,616,080</b>	35,958,406

	2023 £	2022 £
<b>Group (Consolidated) Balance Sheet</b>		
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
Tangible assets	28,275,506	29,200,614
Heritage assets	6,861,616	4,564,880
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>35,137,122</b>	<b>33,765,494</b>
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Stocks of goods for resale	142,945	101,015
Debtors	926,906	1,321,773
Cash at bank and in hand	3,013,683	3,471,588
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>4,083,534</b>	<b>4,894,376</b>
Creditors: amounts falling due within 1 year	(1,593,494)	(2,648,450)
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	<b>2,490,040</b>	<b>2,245,926</b>
Total assets less Current Liabilities	37,627,162	36,011,420
Creditors: amounts falling due after more than 1 year	(11,082)	(53,014)
<b>Net Assets (excluding pension liability)</b>	<b>37,616,080</b>	<b>35,958,406</b>
Defined benefit pension asset/ liability	-	-
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>37,616,080</b>	<b>35,958,406</b>
<b>The funds of the charity:</b>		
Restricted funds	32,431,180	30,634,930
Unrestricted funds:		
Designated funds	2,785,377	2,850,401
General funds	2,399,523	2,473,075
Pension reserve	-	-
	5,184,900	5,323,476
	<b>37,616,080</b>	<b>35,958,406</b>

# Accounts (continued)



	Year ended December 2023	Year ended December 2022
	£	£
<b>Consolidated Cash Flow Statement</b>		
<b>Cash flows from operating activities:</b>		
Net cash inflow from operating activities	<b>1,547,303</b>	11,641,064
<b>Cash flows from investing activities:</b>		
Interest from investments	10,289	2,400
Proceeds from the sale of tangible fixed assets	1,000	-
Purchase of tangible fixed assets	(1,977,690)	(12,980,116)
<b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>	<b>(1,966,401)</b>	(12,977,716)
<b>Cash flows from financing activities:</b>		
Repayment of borrowing	(38,807)	(42,028)
<b>Net cash used in financing activities</b>	<b>(38,807)</b>	(42,028)
<b>Change in cash and cash equivalents in the year</b>	<b>(457,905)</b>	(1,378,680)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year	<b>3,471,588</b>	4,850,268
<b>Total cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year</b>	<b>3,013,683</b>	3,471,588



# Reference & Administrative Information

Museum Trust Established	15 September 1975
Patron	HRH The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO
Trustees (Directors) As of 31 December 2023	Christopher Ansell Jonathan Badyal (Deputy Chair) Katy Baker Duncan Bedhall Dr Paul Belford (Chair) Sally Bourner Parminder Dosanjh Cllr. Matt Follows <sup>1</sup> 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
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<sup>1</sup> 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:** Craig Edmondson

## 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](http://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



Made possible with  
**Heritage Fund**

Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**



Funded by  
**UK Government**



Thank you to our Brass business partners for their support



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