



Heritage Places

Leicester's Inclusive Heritage Project

Community Heritage Champion Grant

Invitation to apply

January 2026

Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund

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Introduction

The National Lottery Heritage Fund's Heritage Places programme is a targeted initiative designed to support heritage-led regeneration and community development across the UK. Focusing on areas with rich but often under-recognised heritage, the programme aims to unlock the social, cultural, and economic value of local historic places. By directing funding and support to specific locations, the Heritage Places programme helps communities reconnect with their heritage, fosters local pride, and encourages inclusive participation in heritage-related activities. It forms part of the Fund's wider commitment to ensuring that heritage is accessible to everyone and that its benefits are felt across all parts of society.

How you can get involved

Are you and your organisation curious about the hidden stories that make Leicester special? Would you like to explore your neighbourhood, take part in a research project and help share the voices of people from diverse backgrounds? Join the Leicester *Inclusive Heritage Project* with a **Community Heritage Champion** grant and help make Leicester's heritage more accessible. Please see [Appendix](#) to get a feel for the opportunity.

Organisations applying for the grant can nominate individuals who bring a passion for people, history, and their neighbourhood. Nominated participants will meet new people, learn valuable skills, and help ensure unheard stories are told. Through this programme, we aim to support emerging community leaders by offering opportunities to develop storytelling skills, work collaboratively, and represent the city's diverse neighbourhoods.

While grants must be held and administered by an organisation, they are created with individuals in mind. The funding will be used to deliver tailored support and development to an individual Community Heritage Champion working within that organisation.

Funding is limited and there are **10 grants of £11,000 available** on this programme which will run from **May 2026 to December 2026**. The total amount per Community

Heritage Champion grant is a maximum of £11,000 to include all expenses. This will be paid in instalments during the project with an initial payment upfront. We anticipate making 10 grant awards through this open call – this is the maximum that can be funded with our National Lottery Heritage Fund grant. We expect to make future funding bids to The National Lottery Heritage Fund which could provide additional opportunities to get involved.

Initial funding is limited, therefore applications will be assessed and scored by a panel including representatives from Leicester City Council, The Audience Agency and the project's Interim Steering Group.

What is the Leicester Inclusive Heritage Project?

The project celebrates Leicester's heritage by ensuring that the voices and stories of underrepresented groups are heard, celebrated and valued. It is managed by Leicester City Council in partnership with The Audience Agency. The project is overseen by an Interim Steering Group of community partners from city organisations. The project is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and supports the Leicester Leading: 2025-2030 strategy. This is the city's creative and cultural strategy aimed at growing the creative economy, increasing public participation, and making Leicester a national leader in inclusive cultural work. The *Inclusive Heritage* programme, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, plays a vital role in delivering this part of the strategy. It provides funding and support to uncover underrepresented stories, involve neighbourhoods, and build local pride in place through heritage. By supporting research and new heritage activity, Heritage Places helps ensure the Leicester Leading 2025 strategy is not only ambitious but also equitable, inclusive, and deeply rooted in the lived experiences of Leicester's people.

Community Heritage Champions will play a key role in shaping the project-ensuring that diverse voices, histories and perspectives are represented. The project will provide opportunities for participants to connect stories, places, and traditions to make heritage accessible and inclusive.

What does Inclusive Heritage mean?

Inclusive heritage values the stories and traditions of Leicester neighbourhoods, helping people connect through shared culture.

- **Celebrating Our Diversity:** Recognising unique cultures, traditions, and histories — and shared experiences.
- **Removing Barriers:** Ensuring everyone, regardless of age, ability, or background, can access and enjoy heritage activities.
- **Encouraging Participation:** Involving people in shaping and contributing to the project and long-term plans.
- **Being Proud of Our Place:** Creating a shared pride in the city's heritage that reflects its people.

The Heritage Fund defines heritage as *anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations*. This broad and inclusive definition covers both tangible and intangible forms of heritage — from historic buildings, landscapes, and archives to traditions, memories, languages, and cultural practices. The Heritage Fund recognises that heritage can be deeply personal, local, or national, and that it plays a vital role in shaping identity, community pride, and a sense of place.

How will applications be assessed?

Applicants can choose to apply either by completing the [online application form or by submitting a video application](#).

Once the deadline has passed, all submissions will be reviewed and scored against the published criteria. **The deadline for applications is 2 March 2026.**

A shortlisting panel from Leicester City Council, the project Interim Steering Group and The Audience Agency will assess each application to confirm eligibility criteria (such as commitment level, availability). Submissions will then be shortlisted against applicant responses to the questions in the application form.

Shortlisted applicants will then be invited to an interview with representatives from Leicester City Council, The Audience Agency, and the project's Interim Steering Group where we will explore their ideas, motivations, and suitability for the Community Heritage Champion role in more detail. Final decisions will be based on a combination of the application and interview process.

Community Heritage Champion Grant overview

(See the [Appendix](#) for more information)

Help uncover and share Leicester's diverse local heritage through:

- Attending and completing a Community Heritage Champion training and development programme, which covers audience research, consultation, evaluation, and project creation.
- Building trust and acting as ambassadors within neighbourhoods.
- Gathering data via conversations, surveys, and activities across different neighbourhoods.
- Sharing findings to highlight barriers and opportunities.
- Sharing perspectives that can be considered for future funding applications to The National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- Collaborating with other Community Heritage Champions to share ideas and approaches.
- Supporting the creation of a toolkit for evaluation and consultation.
- Representing the project at events throughout 2026.

Training and support

Community Heritage Champions will receive access to a **training programme** covering:

- Evaluation basics: why and how we evaluate.
- Data collection tools: tips for gathering useful information.
- Code of conduct: research industry standards.
- Practice sessions: hands-on activities to build confidence.
- A Community Research Toolkit: guides and tools for future projects.

- Mentoring and ongoing support. We'll offer light-touch mentoring and guidance to help participants feel confident in their roles.

This support will be flexible and responsive while still encouraging independent exploration and ownership of the work.

Eligibility

Named individual members of the Inclusive Heritage Interim Steering Group are not eligible to apply – this ensures that there isn't a Conflict of Interest. Other members of staff from those organisations who are represented on the Interim Steering group are still eligible to apply.

If your application is successful, you will be required to provide evidence of Employer and Public Liability insurance, Professional Indemnity insurance, and—where relevant—your Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, and Safeguarding policies. **Our formal grant agreement will set out the required insurance amounts.** We may also seek references if we have not worked with you before.

Application requirements

The time commitment required is for 3-5 days per month on average. The exact breakdown of days per month is to be agreed. We may require some flexibility for occasional weekend or evening events, this will be discussed in further detail at interview.

- All applications must be submitted by the organisation which is applying.
- Organisations must indicate whether the participant is already salaried or requires funding. If the participant is already salaried, backfill costs can be covered by the CHC grant
- The budget must clearly show:
 1. Any core costs for the organisation
 2. Funding allocated for the participant (either project delivery, or salary + project costs)

Suggested payment structure:

Option A: Participant is already salaried by the organisation

- **Community engagement activity (fixed): £1,000 (10%)**
Events, materials, travel, and engagement costs
 - **Core costs / organisational overheads: £500–£1,000 (5–10%)**
Programme management, administration, reporting, and support
 - **Backfill costs for participant: remainder of total** *Covers staff time released to undertake the Community Heritage Champion role. Approximate range: £9,000–£9,500 (80–85%)*
-

Option B: Participant is not salaried / requires funding for their time

- **Community engagement activity (fixed): £1,000 (10%)**
Events, materials, travel, and engagement costs
 - **Core costs / organisational overheads: £1,000–£1,650 (10–15%)**
Programme management, administration, reporting, and support
 - **Ringfenced participant support: remainder of total**
Covers recruitment, fees, salary, training, materials, and delivery time
Approximate range: £8,350–£8,800 (75–80%)
-

Community Heritage Champion specification

The Project Lead within the organisation will be required to meet the following criteria:

Criteria	Essential	Desirable	Assessment method
Interest in heritage	Genuine enthusiasm for local history and culture	Previous involvement in community heritage projects or similar	Application/interview

Connection to and knowledge of Leicester	<p>Knowledge of the city, local heritage sites or groups</p> <p>Personal or community ties to at least one of Leicester's diverse neighbourhoods</p>		Application
Communication skills	<p>Ability to express ideas clearly, listen actively; good standard of written and spoken English</p>	<p>Experience in storytelling, interviewing, or group work.</p> <p>Multilingual skills</p>	Application/interview
Commitment to inclusion	<p>Awareness of the importance of diverse voices in heritage</p>	<p>Experience working with diverse or underrepresented groups</p>	Application/interview
Teamwork	<p>Willingness to work with others and learn</p>	<p>Experience working in collaborative/community groups or teams</p>	Application/interview
Availability	<p>Able to commit to 3-5 days per month between May-Dec 2026 including flexibility for occasional weekend or evening activities</p> <p>Please note: some additional days on the project will be required in Mar/April 2027 for sharing findings</p>		Application
Lived experience and perspective	<p>Brings unique cultural knowledge or life experience</p>	<p>Previous community engagement experience</p>	Application/interview
Engagement Experience	<p>Some experience (paid or voluntary) working at community events/activities</p>	<p>Experience (paid/voluntary) planning events for the public or carrying out visitor consultation or research</p>	Application/interview

FAQs for Community Heritage Champion grant applicants

Q1: Who funds the Leicester Inclusive Heritage Project?

A: The project is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Q2: Can I apply as an individual?

A: Our grants are awarded to organisations, which provide the governance and administration. Although individuals cannot apply directly, the funding is specifically designed to support the individuals within those organisations and help them thrive.

- The grant is awarded to the organisation, which will act as the grant holder and administrator, providing governance for the project.
- The nominated individual is responsible for delivering the project on behalf of the organisation.
- If you are applying as an organisation, you will need to ensure that your organisation can receive and manage the funds appropriately. You will also be responsible for fulfilling any reporting or legal obligations associated with the funding.

Q3: Who will I be working with?

A: Both the organisation and Community Heritage Champion will collaborate closely with the Heritage Places Programme Manager, The Audience Agency (TAA), other Community Heritage Champions, and other partner organisations involved in delivering the project.

There is an Interim Steering Group for the project which includes representatives from Leicester City Council, The Audience Agency, the University of Leicester, De Montfort University and diverse heritage organisations from Leicester. Some members of the Interim Steering Group will be involved in this recruitment process.

Q4: What will I be doing? (programme outline)

A: The Community Heritage Champion will be:

- Attending workshops and training on community research and evaluation.

- Engaging with local neighbourhoods to gather stories, memories, and feedback.
- Conducting surveys, interviews, and engagement activities.
- Sharing findings to help shape inclusive heritage events and projects.
- Helping to develop tools and resources for consultation.

Q5: What do we mean by community research?

A: We are looking for this project to bring to the surface stories and voices which have been hidden, by working directly within Leicester's neighbourhoods.

How to apply

Applications can be submitted via our [online application form](#). You can also upload a video if you prefer to apply this way.

The deadline for applications is **2 March 2026 at 5pm***.

Timeline of activities*

**Subject to change dependent upon volume of applications received*

Phase	Timeline	Activities
Recruitment	Jan 2025 to April 2026	Advertising, applications, interviews, selection
Onboarding	May 2026	Welcome pack, skills audit
Initial programme delivery	June to August 2026	Introductory sessions Training and mentoring. Identifying gaps in engagement Participation in public events
Creation of research projects	August to Nov 2026	Sharing findings and analysing what does and doesn't work to engage people Creating a consultation toolkit
Programme completion	Dec 2026	Support with next steps
Sharing findings	March 2027	Project legacy

Further information

For any queries or an informal chat about the opportunity please email Helen Sharp, Programme Manager - Heritage Places: HeritagePlaces@leicester.gov.uk

Community Heritage Champion Schedule



Thank you for your interest in the Community Heritage Champion grant programme. As part of the role, you will be working with us (The Audience Agency).

This document explains a bit more about the activity and what types of outcomes we are looking to create.

What will we be doing?

- ✓ Building research and evaluation skills.
- ✓ Understanding Leicester, from public and personal viewpoints.
- ✓ Learning from each other.
- ✓ Discovering and documenting opportunities for heritage and the representation of local people and individuals from the city.

The Audience Agency will then introduce the fundamentals of research and evaluation. The programme has been designed to work alongside each Champion's own knowledge of Leicester, their personal lived experience and curiosity. You don't have to be an expert, just willing to take part and to support each other as a team.

We plan to visit:

- ✓ Local heritage sites.
- ✓ Community spaces.
- ✓ Events happening across the city.

You will:

- ✓ Take part in a training and development programme led by The Audience Agency.
- ✓ Receive light touch mentoring support.
- ✓ Carry out community engagement activity.
- ✓ Design and deliver your own community heritage gathering ideas within neighbourhoods.
- ✓ Learn to analyse your findings and create a final presentation.
- ✓ Contribute to future ideas to share and celebrate Leicester's heritage.

There is space for exploration in and around Leicester, and the recruited Champions have opportunities to design, try out, and report back on their own community heritage-gathering ideas. There is a £1000 budget per organisation for the Champion to turn their ideas into action (included in the overall grant amount). Champions will be supported through this process by The Audience Agency team and the Leicester City Council Programme Manager.

The £1,000 budget may be used as part of your own project (to be delivered within the programme) for:

- Room hire or community space hire.
- Materials and resources for engagement activities.
- Refreshments for participants.
- Access support (such as childcare to enable participation).
- Access bursary payments or vouchers for participants (where appropriate and agreed).

Working with the Community Heritage Champion cohort, we want to:

- Explore ways of working with local neighbourhoods to get their feedback on current heritage and events.
- Get a better understanding of what types of future activity and initiatives could be developed for Leicester to celebrate its heritage.
- Create better connections across Leicester neighbourhoods, and networks.
- Deliver final presentations to the Council, Interim Steering Group local neighbourhoods, and participants.

What do the sessions look like?

Below is an outline schedule of what the sessions may look like. Please note these may be adapted based on the final makeup of the successful grant recipients.

Session	Activity
1	Getting to know each other, The Audience Agency and the Leicester Council team Roles and responsibilities. The purpose and vision of Champions. Introduction to Evaluation and Monitoring Mapping 'Our' Leicester
2	Introduction to Community Engagement Practice What is inclusivity in the context of this project- brainstorm with Champions Ethical Evaluation Robust evaluation Evaluation methodologies
3	Developing research projects Inclusive/socially engaged community evaluation. Creating an Evaluation and Analysis Toolkit for Leicester Community Heritage Champions
4	Introduction to Data Analysis. Using Data for storytelling and project development. Creative methods for reporting evaluation/data

	<p>Research Question parameters</p> <p>Given the 'brief' for the independent project to create for the following session</p>
5	<p>Champions present their research questions and circumstances (such as event, community group) to the rest of the group</p> <p>Peer learning and question refinement</p>
6	<p>Executing a community research project of their own</p> <p>Come together to reflect on any questions and what Champions have tried</p> <p>Testing and consulting around ideas for evaluation (not programming them)</p> <p>Identify areas to test and understand the gaps</p>
7	<p>Analysis of a community research project of their own. Sharing their findings, analysing together in person. What works, what doesn't?</p>
8	<p>Evaluation in Leadership: from reflective practice to influencing and advocacy</p> <p>Presenting and sharing your findings within your organisation, area or neighbourhood</p> <p>The Learning Organisation: how to use evaluation for organisational and personal development</p> <p>Embedding learning into practice</p>
9	<p>Refining Evaluation & Community Engagement Tools and Toolkit</p>
10	<p>Project check-in, Q&A, reflection, and peer learning</p>
11	<p>Project check-in, Q&A, reflection, and peer learning</p>
12	<p>Analysis and sharing with Champion input</p> <p>Sharing back with council, Interim Steering Group, communities, and participants</p>
Trips	<p>To local and relevant events, local spaces and forums (To be identified)</p>

What support is available?

You don't have to be an expert. You just need to have passion for storytelling, heritage, and Leicester.

All Community Heritage Champions will be supported throughout the programme via:

- Facilitated workshops and peer learning sessions.
- One-to-one guidance from The Audience Agency and the Leicester City Council team.
- Practical advice on research design, engagement and reflection.

Clear contact details and ways of working will be shared at the start of the programme.

What will you gain from it?

At the end of the programme, we want Champions to have:

- ✓ Built skills in community-led research and evaluation.
- ✓ Gained more confidence in shaping heritage narratives.
- ✓ Developed practical skills in community engagement and inclusive practices.
- ✓ Become part of a growing network of Leicester place organisers and arts, culture, and heritage organisations.



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