

Role description

Community Engagement Lead

New Forest
Heritage
Centre



Location	New Forest Heritage Centre, Lyndhurst, Hampshire, SO43 7NY
Salary	£26,500pa
Hours	Flexible 37.5 hours/week
Contract type	Fixed term of 12 months
Responsible to	The Director
Closing date	5pm 20 th May 2024
Interview date	Week commencing 27 th May
Start Date	As soon as practicable following appointment

Role overview

The New Forest Heritage Centre is committed to promoting and engaging people in the unique heritage and culture of the New Forest, and the holder of this post will be welcomed into the existing Centre team of staff and volunteers.

The primary aim of the role is to act as the dedicated lead and co-ordinator for the Heritage Centre's '*Embroidered Tales; hidden histories, silent voices*' project, which began in 2023 and has been paused in recent months due to the departure of the previous project lead unfortunately owing to ill-health. Detailed below, this fantastic project is funded by the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, with further support from Arts Council England and Southeast Museums Development.

Duties will focus on developing new and existing relationships with community groups, co-creating and co-ordinating a programme of engagement, making the Centre's collection accessible to project participants, collecting memories and perspectives, developing content for digital applications being created by others, liaising with other projects and organisations, promoting the project, and communicating progress through social media and other channels.

The holder of this role will support and work with other staff members and volunteers to ensure that the project is integrated within the Centre's ongoing collections, learning, engagement and exhibition activities.

Key responsibilities

- To build strong relationships with local Gypsy, Romani, Traveller (GRT) communities, encouraging participants in the project from those communities.
- To coordinate, plan and organise workshops and activities which focus on developing mutual understandings of the heritage of those communities



- To work with Heritage Centre staff and volunteers to enable project participants to access, research and interpret objects and documents within the Centre's collections
- To work closely with the project's tech partners on the development of an innovative digital avatar of the iconic New Forest Embroidery as well as 3-D haptic relief panels with embedded audio sensors. This element of the role will involve facilitating input and contribution from project participants to generate sufficient quantity and quality of content for embedding in the avatar and haptic panels.
- To liaise closely with other external projects and activities working with the same communities for the benefit of all projects, and for maximising the greatest collective long-term legacy of understanding of these previously underrepresented groups.
- To provide a foundation for future activities which will support others whose histories remain hidden within traditional New Forest heritage narratives.
- To be responsible for the development and delivery of the project's social media presence and oral history collection.
- To contribute to project evaluation, reports to funders and performing other tasks necessary for the smooth running and administration of the project
- To exhibit at all times a strong commitment to the principles and practice of equality, diversity and inclusion
- To undertake any other duties reasonably directed by the line manager
- To be able to willingly travel within the New Forest (public transport routes are sparse) as necessary to meet and discuss the project, build relationships, and operate sessions with participant communities and individuals

Person specification

Essential:

- A demonstrable track record of engaging communities with cultural initiatives, ideally with heritage collections, and in successfully planning, implementing and evaluating engagement activities
- Excellent project management skills
- Demonstrable experience of high-quality oral and written communication to specialist and non-specialist audiences and in a variety of contexts
- Experience in the use of social media



- Awareness of digital heritage and digital technologies as a means of access and to broaden engagement
- Ability to plan and prioritise own workload and work to agreed deadlines
- Experience in successfully taking full responsibility and accountability for tasks while making effective use of available resources, information and feedback to improve efficiency, productivity and overall performance

Desirable:

- A graduate or postgraduate qualification in a heritage subject (e.g. museum or gallery studies, libraries, archives) or related subject (e.g., archaeology, anthropology, history, sociology, education, creative arts)
- Experience of developing and delivering digital resources for audiences

About the project

'Embroidered Tales: hidden histories, silent voices of the New Forest' is an exciting project focussed on discovering, developing and sharing new understandings and meanings in the heritage of the New Forest through community led exploration, investigation and research into the collections of the New Forest Heritage Trust (NFHT).

A key aim of the project is to help us establish stronger and enduring partnerships within local communities which will provide the foundations for long-term future partnerships and collaborations.

Central to the project's ambitions is to produce beneficial outcomes for all participants, including the development of new skills, positive learning experiences, confidence and aspiration building, and awareness of future opportunities within the heritage sector.

The project will deliver an innovative, co-created 3D digital avatar of the New Forest Embroidery. Commissioned by the New Forest Association in 1979 to commemorate the 900th anniversary of the creation of *Nova Foresta* by William the Conqueror, the embroidery is over 6m long and 70cm high and presents a narrative history of the New Forest and its changing seasons. <https://www.newforestheritage.org.uk/museum/new-forest-embroidery/>.

The 3D digital avatar will enable the embroidery to reach new audiences helping to convey stories and experiences of communities, hitherto largely obscured by conventional accepted narratives of the New Forest and sharing diverse understandings of local heritage and histories.

Reflecting the community-focused approach to making the embroidery - it was created by over sixty volunteers - the project will be an equitable collaboration in which community participants (beginning with participants from the Gypsy, Romani, Traveller communities) will work together with New Forest Heritage Trust staff and heritage experts from the academic and commercial heritage sectors. The project will use ground-breaking digital technologies to tell their stories. Using photogrammetry and Reflective Transformation Imaging, the project will provide audiences with a dynamic, multi-dimensional experience both onsite and remotely. Participants will be able to overlay the conventional historical narratives conveyed by the Embroidery, with



alternative stories and experiences using digital audio, film images and text. This will create an enduring, sustainable output which can be added to over time by further contributors.

A further key feature of the project is the production of three tactile panels produced per section of the Embroidery. The three panels will represent the same region of interest but will be reproduced with different techniques and finishes to facilitate engagement and tactile exploration. The panels will also contain built-in sensors which will be triggered by touch to activate audio information. They will replicate the texture, design and structure of the embroidery and although suitable for all audiences it is particularly valuable in allowing people with visual impairments to learn, feel and engage with the Embroidery.

About the New Forest Heritage Centre

The New Forest Heritage Centre is a free to enter museum, reference library, exhibition gallery, gift shop and café located in Lyndhurst, one of the main hub towns in the New Forest. The New Forest is one of the newest designated National Parks, and one of the smallest, but it is one of the most visited in England and has a long and important landscape history interwoven with folklores, rights of commoning, marginalised groups, rich arts and cultural pasts and presents, and much more.

The New Forest Heritage Centre aims to inspire its visitors to celebrate and conserve the New Forest. It does this by collecting, conserving and interpreting its collections and by providing educational activities and information to a broad range of audiences. In doing so, it acts in ways that are ethical, ecologically sensitive and intellectually accessible and affordable. It is owned and run by the New Forest Heritage Trust (registered charity number 1186656).