



THE
CHESTER HOUSE
ESTATE



OUR IMPACT

A STORY OF HERITAGE, COMMUNITY AND FUTURE

HISTORY IN THE MAKING: WELCOME TO THE CHESTER HOUSE ESTATE

The Chester House Estate is a story of transformation. What began as a challenging and complex heritage project has become one of the UK's most celebrated cultural success stories, a nationally award-winning attraction delivering real, lasting impact through heritage, education, tourism and community engagement.

From a fire-damaged farmhouse and half-completed restoration, we've built a site that is thriving. Today, Chester House stands on a strong and sustainable financial footing, driven by a bold commercial model, and underpinned by a mission to make 10,000 years of history meaningful and accessible to all.

Our learning programme is inclusive and dynamic, welcoming over 30,000 learners since opening and achieving the highest national quality accreditations. At the same time, our Archaeological Resource Centre has grown into one of the most engaged and respected public archaeological archives in the UK, referenced in national guidance and supported by a passionate, international community of researchers, students and volunteers.

This progress, from uncertainty to excellence, has only been possible because of the extraordinary people and organisations who believe in this place. In particular, we want to pay tribute to our key partners whose skills, experience, and resource bring so much to the Estate. Whether it's delivering expert archaeology, developing pioneering wellbeing programmes, hosting

extraordinary public events, or co-producing hands-on learning, our partners are vital to everything we do.

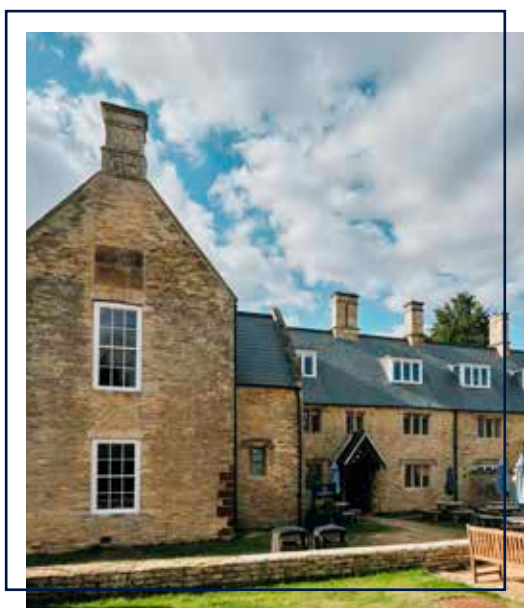
I also want to sincerely thank our volunteers, staff, funders, stakeholders, community groups, and thousands of visitors who have supported us every step of the way. Together, you've helped turn an ambitious vision into a living, breathing success and a place that truly belongs to the people of Northamptonshire.

Looking ahead, we remain ambitious. Our plans for future investment and the potential transition to an independent charitable trust will allow Chester House Estate to grow with greater flexibility, sustainability and impact. We will continue to strengthen partnerships, develop new learning opportunities and protect this nationally important site for future generations.

I hope you enjoy reading this report and gaining a deeper understanding of the real and wide-ranging impact the Chester House Estate is having - for our residents, our learners, our tourism economy and for heritage itself. This is more than a historic site; it is a living, evolving space that continues to inspire, educate and connect. We're incredibly proud of what's been achieved so far and even more excited about what's still to come.

Jane Bethea

Director of Public Health,
Communities and Leisure



Our Journey So Far



2004: A Vision Takes Root

Northamptonshire County Council acquires the significant Chester Farm site.



May 2010: Rising from the Ashes

Despite a devastating fire, the resolve to restore the iconic farmhouse only strengthened.



February 2025: Inspiring Minds: Educational Excellence

The Learning Department awarded an accredited quality education badge.



June 2025: MJ National Award

Innovation in Public Private Partnership Winner



November 2024: Award-Winning Success!

The Chester House Estate proudly wins the prestigious Northamptonshire Small Business Award.



October 2024: Securing Our Future: A Sustainable Vision

Awarded £210,000 to strategically plan for the estate's long-term sustainability.



July 2022: Royal Seal of Approval

HRH Princess Anne officially opens The Chester House Estate.



February 2022: New Ventures Bloom

The Estate begins operating as a popular wedding and conference venue, boosting sustainability.



February 2023: Unearthing 10,000 Years of History

New interpretive displays installed, inviting visitors to journey through an incredible 10,000 years.



October 2021: Doors Open! A New Chapter Begins

The Chester House Estate proudly welcomes its first visitors, marking a new era for this cherished heritage site.



May 2021: Archaeology Hub Unveiled

The state-of-the-art Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) officially opens.



July 2013: Funding Dreams, Building Reality

Pivotal £4 million funding secured, transforming ambitious plans into a tangible commitment to the estate's future.



WHAT WE DO:



Maintaining a welcoming, free-to-enter estate that is open to everyone.



Protecting and enhancing our natural and historic landscapes for future generations.



Connecting Northamptonshire's residents and visitors with over 10,000 years of our local history and heritage.



Promoting health, happiness and wellbeing across the local community.



Placing the community at the core of every decision and action we take.



Safeguarding publicly accessible archaeological archives as a lasting public resource.



Delivering an inspiring, inclusive education programme for all ages and backgrounds.



Establish and foster partnerships both local and national which make a positive impact on the local community.



Supporting and growing local businesses, showcase regional produce and champion sustainable tourism.



Ensuring long-term financial sustainability through creative and dynamic commercial ventures.



THE CHESTER HOUSE ESTATE



PRESERVING OUR PRECIOUS HERITAGE

Beneath the landscape of the Chester House Estate, there is evidence of over 10,000 years of human activity. This includes everything from scatters of flint tools left behind by Mesolithic hunter gatherers to the earthwork remains of the medieval hamlet of Chester-by-the-Water. The most prominent historical monument is the Roman town of Irchester which is located beneath the entire estate.

Over 95% of the land the Chester House Estate lies upon has been designated as a Scheduled Monument by Historic England which is a legal status for highest level of protection for archaeological sites within the United Kingdom. This offers the site the same level of protection as other archaeological sites such as Stonehenge and Hadrian's Wall.

The built heritage at the Chester House Estate is also equally significant. The farmhouse was built in 1670 and is a Grade II* listed building and the majority of the walls, barns and other farm buildings on the estate are Grade II listed

buildings. Listed buildings are buildings of special architectural or historical interest that are given legal protections by Historic England. In 2022, following the conservation work on the buildings, they were removed from the 'Heritage at Risk' register, which highlights sites at risk of being lost due to neglect and decay.

One of our core responsibilities at the Chester House Estate is to care for these important historical assets. With the level of legal protection on the buildings and land, there comes significant restrictions on what we are able to do on the estate. We have developed a strong working relationship with Historic England; working with them regularly on applications that balance the requirement to protect buildings and landscape at Chester House for future generations whilst allowing current visitors to enjoy and explore the site.



THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCE CENTRE (ARC)

The Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC), located at the Chester House Estate, is a state-of-the-art, climate-controlled facility. It functions as the publicly accessible archaeological archive store for both North and West Northamptonshire Councils, providing free and open access to the county's archaeological collections for all.

What We Do:

Connect Communities & Research: Ensuring Northamptonshire's archaeological collections are free and accessible to all, linking people to their local history and advancing national research.

Preserve & Display: Providing long-term care for invaluable collections for future generations and supporting archaeological displays for museums and heritage organisations.

Hands-on Engagement: Offering opportunities for public participation through volunteering, tours, and interactive events.

Archive & Collaboration: Fulfilling vital public archive requirements for archaeological fieldwork projects and fostering engagement between heritage professionals, universities, and community groups.

The ARC's comprehensive approach underpins its role as a leading archaeological centre.



The ARC is an inspirational exemplar for all those working professionally or otherwise with archaeological archives. It leads from the front in terms of best practice, and especially in the management of, and engagement with, the primary archaeological record for Northamptonshire. It is no coincidence therefore that it is directly referenced as such in the Society for Museum Archaeology's new Standards and Guidance in the Care of Archaeological Collections.

Gail Boyle, Chair of the Council of British Archaeology



Northamptonshire's Archaeological Resource Centre plays a vital role in preserving the county's rich archaeological archives, ensuring that invaluable material is properly cared for and remains accessible to all. By providing a dedicated space for the long-term curation and study of these resources, the centre enhances our ability to understand, protect, and celebrate Northamptonshire's historic environment. It is an example of how archaeological heritage can be managed and made available for research, education, and public engagement and an asset to the county."

Claire Tsang, Archaeological Archives Principal at Historic England



Archive Volume: Stores over 25,000 boxes of archaeological objects from Northamptonshire.

Visitor Engagement: Over 20,000 visitors since opening, making it one of the UK's top 5 most accessed archaeological collections.

ARCHIVE VOLUME
**25,000+
BOXES**

VISITOR ENGAGEMENT
**20,000+
VISITORS**



ARC: ENGAGEMENT, RESEARCH & COLLABORATION



Building on its role as a vital archive, the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) is leading in archaeological engagement, research, and collaboration.

Engaging Our Community

Engaging local people with their archaeology is central to everything the ARC does. As one of the UK's leading organisations for archaeological engagement, the ARC offers exciting opportunities for local people to visit, learn about, and enjoy their local archaeology. Our award-winning volunteering programme allows individuals to support the care of invaluable collections while learning new skills, truly welcoming everyone regardless of prior experience, such as our young archaeologist club.

YAC MEMBERS

50

AGED 8-16

WEEKLY VOLUNTEERS

40+

LOCAL VOLUNTEERS

Young Archaeologist Club (YAC) Members:
50 (aged 8-16, meet monthly).

Weekly Volunteers: Over 40 local volunteers work with the collections every week.

“

I love working at The ARC because the jobs required are so varied. It gives me physical exercise and keeps my brain working! Add the friends I have made and I would recommend it to anyone willing to commit some of their time in exchange for a very satisfying and enjoyable activity.

Frances, ARC Volunteer from Wellingborough

”

“

YAC is a great learning opportunity to find out more about archaeology. We do lots of fun activities, including digging on site where one year I found half a Roman pot. It made me really excited!

Polly, Northamptonshire Young Archaeology Club member

”



Pioneering Research

The ARC stands at the forefront of archaeological research, supporting a wide spectrum of users from local residents investigating their village history to academics at leading universities researching past populations. The ARC's rich collections are extensively used by local researchers, as well as by specialists and students from 34 universities across the UK, Ireland, France, Portugal, Canada, Australia, and the United States, demonstrating its international scholarly reach.

Research Activity Growth: More researchers used Northamptonshire's archaeology in the ARC's first 6 months than the previous 12 years combined.

“

The ARC has been an outstanding research collaborator in facilitating our work charting the genetic history of Britain and understanding the evolution of disease and human immunity.

Dr Thomas Booth, Senior Research Scientist, The Francis Crick Institute

”



Collaboration

The ARC serves as a dynamic hub for archaeological collaboration across Northamptonshire, effectively linking communities, professionals, volunteers, and universities to maximise the impact of their collective work. A key initiative has been the establishment of the Northamptonshire Community Archaeology Forum, which enables 12 volunteer-led community groups within the county to interact and work together. The ARC has also cultivated long-term partnerships with universities, including our pioneering collaboration with the University of Leicester.

“

The ARC is a great source of support for those involved in community archaeology. As a group that runs an annual excavation, we have been able to get advice and guidance and have been able to prepare finds for archiving in the correct way.

Andrew, Chair, Middle Nene Archaeology Group

”



NORTHAMPTONSHIRE
THE ARC

ARCHAEOLOGICAL
RESOURCE CENTRE

Collaborative Funding Success:

The ARC is a collaborator in successful university funding bids worth over £1 million and has independently secured over £120,000 in grant funding.

Heritage Loans: Objects loaned to 22 museums and other heritage organisations for display.

FUNDING SUCCESS

**OVER
£1 MILLION**

HERITAGE LOANS

**22
ORGANISATIONS**



OUR IMPACT IN NUMBERS: A SUMMARY OF ACHIEVEMENTS

Social Impacts

Inclusion: Creating Tomorrow College graduates have a 100% employment success rate, significantly surpassing North Northamptonshire's average of 2.1% for SEN employment.

Accessibility: As a free-to-visit site with free parking, the museum has welcomed over 75,000 visitors since opening, making heritage accessible to all.

Wellbeing: Operation Phoenix participants' wellbeing improved from 3.75 to 7.75 out of 10 over one year.

Community: The Irchester Field School provides valuable hands-on archaeological experience for participants from all over the world.

Community Events: RomanFest is the largest free heritage event in Northamptonshire, providing a vibrant, accessible experience for the local community.

Education: Over 450 school classes (more than 15,000 children) have visited the estate since opening, with 100% of teachers indicating the programme engages children with their local heritage. The Learning Department was also awarded the prestigious Learning Outside the Classroom quality badge.

Economic Impacts

Employment: We sustain 24 full-time, 74 part-time/casual roles, and 2 full-time paid apprenticeships, contributing to the local job market.

Income Growth: The estate has seen a remarkable 288% increase in income over the last three years, with a plan to double current income by 2028.

Local Economy: Last year, 65.5% of our total expenditure was with Northamptonshire businesses, a figure we aim to increase to 85% by 2025/26.

Sustainability: Income generated from our commercial activity directly supports the estate's heritage and engagement work, ensuring long-term sustainability.

Investment: The estate was awarded £210,000 to secure its long-term sustainability and strategic growth.

Partnership Funding: The University of Leicester partnership secured £216,600 for pilot programmes and events, alongside £45,054 for locally relevant PhD research and community engagement.

Job Creation: Our partnerships provide a direct pathway to paid employment, as highlighted by Zec's permanent position within the catering team.

Environmental / Ecological Impacts

Conservation: The estate's work includes the careful management and conservation of the surrounding natural landscape, ensuring its long-term health and biodiversity.

Heritage Impacts

Research: The state-of-the-art Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) has become one of the most successful in the country, attracting international researchers and solidifying the site's role as a centre for academic excellence.

Protection: The site protects and promotes 10,000 years of history, from the Mesolithic to the Roman period.

Accessibility: The museum's new interpretive displays and a rotating programme of pop-up exhibits give the public access to incredible archaeological objects.

Recognition: The pioneering University of Leicester partnership, which represents a significant investment of research and expertise, won a national Innovation in Public-Private Partnership award at the MJ Awards in 2025.

Award-Winning Partnership: The pioneering University of Leicester collaboration won a national Innovation in Public-Private Partnership award at the MJ Awards in 2025. This partnership also provides academic and professional support for over £5 million of North Northamptonshire Council heritage and cultural projects.

Grand Opening: The estate's grand opening was celebrated with a Royal Seal of Approval from HRH Princess Anne in 2022.

NATIONAL AWARD WINNING UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER PARTNERSHIP

Our partnership with the University of Leicester brings heritage to life at The Chester House Estate. This collaboration creates fantastic hands-on learning for all ages and enriches our community events, from lively Roman festivals to in-depth archaeological research. With the University's renowned expertise in archaeology, ancient history, and heritage, this partnership provides incredible academic and professional support, truly unlocking the site's unique potential. Together, we're transforming Chester House Estate into a vibrant hub for community-led research, learning, and public engagement, actively strengthening local communities.

The partnership directly supports Northamptonshire's Visitor Economy Strategy 2023–2030 by boosting visitor numbers, developing local skills, and showcasing inspirational places. It also helps the University strengthen its public engagement and inspire research that's genuinely relevant to our local heritage. Winning multiple national awards, this partnership delivers clear social, cultural, and economic benefits across the region, attracting both national and international attention.

“

This project has really stood out for the way it deepens public connection with place, making history and archaeology relevant for all sections of the community. It is a project that develops year on year, and is showing impressive results, not only in engagement, but also in non-educational outcomes such as public health and wellbeing.

The MJ Awards 2025 Judges commend the project

”

Pilot Programmes & Events Funding:
£216,600 secured.

PhD Research Funding: £45,054 for locally relevant research and community engagement.

Council Project Support: Academic and professional support provided for over £5 million of North Northamptonshire Council heritage and cultural projects.

PILOT PROGRAMMES
& EVENTS FUNDING
£216,600

PHD RESEARCH
FUNDING
£45,054

PROJECT SUPPORT
**OVER
£5 MILLION**



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER



THE IRCHESTER FIELD SCHOOL: UNCOVERING HISTORY TOGETHER

The Irchester Field School is our flagship partnership project, truly inspiring and empowering people of all ages through archaeological excavation and research, with a focus on Roman archaeology. All our activities are co-created, ensuring every team member can shape and lead, fostering a welcoming and accessible environment. We offer a wealth of programmes for volunteers, staff, students, schools, and young people, all built around local needs and interests, as we explore and celebrate the rich archaeological heritage of the Nene Valley and wider region.

The Irchester Field School is much more than just digging! We provide year-round learning programmes and events, including vital training in osteology (the study of human bones), Roman coins, pottery analysis, and environmental archaeology. Volunteers and students get involved in all aspects of research, investigating daily life in the past, from diet to the impact of diseases. Our research helps us understand the

challenges people faced and how they coped, uncovering amazing stories of resilience, ingenuity, and creativity from the Nene Valley and beyond. We also offer a dedicated learning programme for ages 7-18, allowing children to witness live excavations, handle real artefacts in our archaeology lab, and discover the stories told through human skeletons.

“

Thank you so much for letting our group become part of something that is truly extraordinary.

International Field School participant

”

“

This project clearly touched the lives of many different people from school children to volunteers to professionals. There was clear evidence of inspiring and empowering people focussed on the small Roman town of Irchester. Thousands of people benefitted from this project, exemplifying and promoting the role and value of archaeology. Well done!

*Council for British Archaeology,
Archaeological Achievement Awards
2024 Judges*

”





“

The hands-on experience is invaluable for me, as I do not have any digs near my home. On top of that, the University and Chester House staff are fantastic, ensuring a great learning experience. They are so accommodating to every need that I am afraid I have become quite spoiled. The Chester House experience will be hard to beat!

University of Leicester student

”

“

Loved the opportunity to take part in a range of different activities. Everyone has been so welcoming and kind and willing to answer any questions. Really wonderful.

Chester House Estate Volunteer

”

School Student Visitors (2023-2025):
4,800 students on school trips.

Volunteer Digging Hours: Over 7,000
hours contributed

SCHOOL VISITORS

**OVER
4,800**

VOLUNTEER DIGGING

**7,000+
HOURS**



ROMAN FEST: OUR FLAGSHIP HERITAGE CELEBRATION

Roman Fest is the Chester House Estate's flagship heritage event, organised in vibrant partnership with the University of Leicester. Since its launch in June 2022, this annual event has become a magnet, drawing visitors from across the UK and beyond. Roman Fest offers an exciting opportunity for people of all ages to immerse themselves in local archaeology and Roman heritage, providing a truly unique blend of hands-on activities. Local community groups,

museums, archaeological companies, living history re-enactors, craftspeople, conservators, and universities all come together to create a dynamic and immersive experience of everyday life in the Roman world. It's a fantastic chance for visitors to engage directly with both community and professional researchers as they piece together the incredible stories of our region's Roman past.

ROMAN FEST 2025 HIGHLIGHTS



Roman Legionary Demonstrations:

Witness history come alive with authentic displays.



Roman Crafts:

Try your hand at pottery, jewellery, and tile making.



Interactive Stalls:

Engage with archaeological societies, museums, and universities offering family-friendly activities.



Irchester Field School Tours:

Explore the ongoing excavation with our award-winning team.

“

The huge range of stands have been amazing. My children aged 6 and 8 have loved every minute. They enjoyed watching the re-enactment and having a go at all the different crafts and activities at the stalls. The fact it was a free event was a huge bonus.

Roman Fest 2024 Visitor

”

“

The Roman soldiers demonstration; enthusiasm of all stall holders and visitors. The doctor with the bones was especially inspirational... Just terrific all round.

Roman Fest 2024 Visitor

”



Roman-Themed Art Exhibition:

Featuring works by students
from Northampton College.



Pop-up Lab & Human Bone Workshop:

A unique learning experience
led by the University of
Leicester.



ARC Tours & Finds Washing:

Get behind the scenes at
the Archaeological
Resource Centre.



Romans Got Talent Theatre Show:

Enjoy a creative and
entertaining performance.

Attendees: Over 4,500 visitors enjoyed
the event.

Collaborating Organisations: Over 35
local and national heritage organisations
participate annually.

ATTENDEES
4,500+

COLLABORATING
ORGANISATIONS
35+



HANDS-ON HISTORY: WORKSHOPS FOR ALL

We provide interactive and inspiring ways for visitors of all ages to step back in time and connect with our rich history.

We offer unique, hands-on learning experiences that connect our community with over 10,000 years of local history.

Young Archaeology Days

Our Young Archaeology Days are an invaluable part of the Irchester Field School, a flagship partnership with the University of Leicester. These dedicated days allow young people aged 8-18 to experience hands-on archaeological excavation on our site. Such opportunities are highly sought after and typically rare in the UK. As a result, we have participants travelling from all over the country to attend. We host at least five of these dedicated days each summer, and it's fantastic to see many participants go on to study archaeology or related subjects at university.

“

I really enjoyed attending the digging day in the summer. It is an amazing experience to gain knowledge and become immersed within archaeology. I loved excavating as part of a team and made many new friends as a result.

Izzy, Young Person Digging Day Attendee

”



Heritage Craft Workshops

We also offer engaging Heritage Craft Workshops, delivered in collaboration with talented local living history and craftspeople. These popular workshops provide unique opportunities for creative, hands-on learning.

Local company Roman Trader helps participants craft their own Roman brooches and medieval-style books, while The Prehistoric Workshop guides visitors in ancient skills like knapping flint tools and weaving with flax. These workshops are a regular and much-loved feature of our events calendar



“

Both courses were extremely great. The instructors were patient and helped me make some beautiful items which I will truly treasure.

Attendee at Roman Trader workshops

”

Participant Satisfaction: Our heritage workshops consistently achieve a high rating of 4.77 out of 5.

Participants: Over 450 young people have joined our archaeology days over the past three years.

SATISFACTION
4.77
OUT OF 5

PARTICIPANTS
OVER
450+

INSPIRING LEARNING AT THE CHESTER HOUSE ESTATE

Inspiring Minds: Our Learning Offer for Schools

Our learning and education offer is central to the Chester House Estate mission: to deliver a quality, unique, and sustainable educational offering that champions accessible learning for all ages and communities, ensuring everyone can engage with our past, present, and future.

We offer an extensive learning programme with 17 diverse trips for schools, catering to students from KS1 right through to A-Levels. While primarily focused on history and archaeology, our trips are also highly relevant to other curriculum areas including science, maths, and geography. Hands-on learning is at the heart of our offer, with young people getting the chance to handle real archaeological objects, some thousands of years old, during site visits or through our popular Roman and Prehistory loan boxes. Our dedicated learning team also provides engaging outreach visits directly to schools.

In 2024, our commitment to excellence was recognised with both the Learning Outside the Classroom quality badge and the Great British School Trip accreditation. We are proud to be one of only two educational and outdoor venues in Northamptonshire to hold both prestigious accreditations.

School Visits: Over 450 school classes (more than 15,000 children) have visited Chester House Estate since opening.

Teacher Satisfaction: 100% of teachers have indicated they thought the programme engages children with their local heritage.

SCHOOL VISITS

OVER
450

SATISFACTION

100%
OF TEACHERS



“As a local Multi-Academy Trust, we've collaborated with Chester House Estate in many ways over the last two years. This summer marks our third visit to the Irchester Field School – over 400 of our history students, including those from our SEN Schools, have participated. Nothing has been too complex to accommodate. The team's passion and enthusiasm for engaging young people in local heritage is immense!”

Emily Oakes, Curriculum Director for History, Meridian Trust

“Thank you for teaching us about the Romans. I was really inspired to become an archaeologist. I enjoyed finding out how much Roman history there is in Irchester... I would really like to find out more about the Romans and their amazing history. I am looking forward to paying you another visit.”

Excerpt from a letter from a young visitor



Learning for All: Our Community and Inclusive Programmes

Beyond our dedicated school trips, our vibrant learning team extends educational sessions to a wide range of non-school groups, including childminder groups, home learners, and after-school clubs like the Scouts. We pride ourselves on being truly inclusive, working closely with several local adult Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) groups to offer thoughtfully adapted sessions from our regular programme. Our commitment means we regularly amend sessions to support all learners, ensuring a welcoming and accessible experience for everyone.

We also integrate engaging educational opportunities into our large-scale events, such as our popular lambing event at Easter or our lively Kids Summer Festival, where visitors might get the chance to make a Saxon brooch. It's incredibly important for us to offer diverse opportunities where people of all ages can learn more about their local history while having fun and connecting with our heritage.

“

Working with the Chester House Estate with our Scouts was a really smooth process and one that really engaged our young people. From exploring the landscape with the Squirrels, to discovering patterns in Roman art and handling real life artefacts from thousands of years ago with our Beavers and Scouts, the learning team take the time to get to know our young people and really make the sessions come alive. They really adapt the sessions to our young people and their passion for local heritage is infectious.

Mark, Northamptonshire Scout Group Leader

”

Total Learners Engaged: Over 30,000 learners of all types have engaged with our educational programme since opening.

Local Reach: 90% of learners are from within 20 miles of The Chester House Estate.

LEARNERS ENGAGED

**OVER
30,000**

LOCAL REACH

**90%
WITHIN 20 MILES**

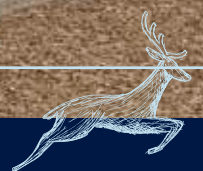


INTERPRETING OUR PAST, SUPPORTING OUR FUTURE: HERITAGE & WELLBEING AT THE CHESTER HOUSE ESTATE

The Museum: Unearthing Our history

Chester House Estate features a free-to-enter museum that expertly covers the site's vast history, spanning 10,000 years from the Mesolithic to the Roman period. Designed for all ages, it offers interactive activities and showcases incredible archaeological objects found during excavations here, from the 19th century to today. Developed in partnership with academics from the University of Leicester, the museum's content is always informed by current archaeological research. Beyond the main exhibits, the museum also hosts a rotating programme of pop-up

displays, co-created with our dedicated volunteers and local community groups. Recent popular displays include the 2024 Irchester Field School and inspiring artwork from our Wellbeing Wednesday's art therapy project. As visitors arrive from the Claudius Way car park, they are welcomed by nine captivating interpretation boards, which tell the rich 10,000-year story of human activity within the Estate and the wider Nene Valley. Further on-site interpretation is currently under development to enhance the visitor experience even more.



Nurturing Health & Happiness

The team at the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC) is deeply involved with archaeology and wellbeing projects, specifically designed to improve the mental health and wellbeing of local residents.

Operation Phoenix

Operation Phoenix is an archaeology wellbeing project dedicated to supporting the mental health of current and former Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service (NFRS) staff, a group 4.2 times more likely to report mental health disorders than the general public. Developed in partnership with NFRS's wellbeing team, the ARC, University of Leicester, Stanwick Lakes, and Breaking Ground Heritage, this project has run since November 2022. Participants are introduced to the entire archaeological process, including research, excavation, post-excavation, archiving, and experimental archaeology, meeting twice a month throughout the year. The project has been highly successful in helping NFRS participants develop a strong sense of community through engaging with Northamptonshire's rich archaeology and history.



“

This experience has been totally different. It's taken me out of my comfort zone to try new experiences which I've enjoyed.

Operation Phoenix Participant

”

“

The new skills have given me the ability to have some 'me' time and help with my wellbeing.

Operation Phoenix Participant

”





Wellbeing Wednesdays

Wellbeing Wednesdays, which took place in Spring 2025, supported participants' wellbeing through the creative process of art inspired by archaeology. This impactful project was developed as a partnership between the ARC, MOLA Northampton, Earthly Arts Studio, and Northamptonshire Healthcare Foundation Trust's Talking Therapies, who referred patients to the programme. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the project consisted of eight weekly sessions, each exploring a different time

period from the post-medieval to the Palaeolithic era (over 10,000 years ago). Sessions showcased artefacts excavated in Northamptonshire, encouraging participants to find inspiration from their shape, function, decoration, or feel when creating their own artwork. The project was a great success, demonstrating clear improvements in participants' wellbeing and confidence, with a second phase already planned for Autumn 2025.

“

You will never realise the huge part you have had in my recovery. It is like this group was custom made just for me. Coming to the group has motivated me in different areas of my life, which I didn't have before.

Wellbeing Wednesday Participant

”



Museum Visitors: Over 75,000 people have visited the Chester House Estate museum space since opening.

Wellbeing Improvement: Operation Phoenix participants' wellbeing improved from 3.75 out of 10 to 7.75 out of 10 over one year when asked "How is your Wellbeing Now?"

MUSEUM VISITORS

**OVER
75,000**

IMPROVED WELLBEING

**100%
OF PARTICIPANTS**



OUR VIBRANT VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY



Volunteers are truly the heart of everything we do at the Chester House Estate, forming an amazing team that supports every part of the site. From enriching our learning programmes and tending the beautiful landscape, to meticulously sorting archives in the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre and contributing to vital archaeological research and excavation at the Irchester Field School, our volunteers are indispensable. They are also a regular and valued part of our many events.

The Power of Volunteering

We are committed to ensuring our volunteers have the best possible experience, providing rich opportunities for them to deepen their knowledge and explore subjects they are passionate about. Many of our volunteers at the ARC, for example, have developed impressive skills in human

osteology and the conservation of metal artefacts through working alongside our expert staff and other specialists. Through these engaging experiences, we actively promote lifelong learning for every volunteer.



Inclusivity & Growth Opportunities

Our volunteering programme is designed to be accessible to all, reflecting our commitment to inclusivity. We work particularly closely with Spectrum Northamptonshire, a skills, training, and education charity supporting adults with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), to provide tailored opportunities that foster skill development and ensure a truly rewarding volunteer experience. We also proudly offer valuable work experience placements to GCSE, A-Level, and degree students, as well as young people undertaking the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Most of these placements focus on gaining hands-on archaeology experience at the ARC and supporting our popular school trips.

“

Volunteering at Chester House provides a wonderful opportunity to learn, to acquire new skills and to put something back into the community. It provides an opportunity to interact with other volunteers, staff and visitors. Our work on projects in the ARC helps to conserve archaeological finds for the future and supports research and analysis.

Alan, Chester House Volunteer

”

“

I love volunteering at Chester House, especially in the ARC. It has given me the chance to use existing skills and develop new ones. It's great to spend time with people who share the same interests as me.

Carmel, Chester House Volunteer

”

“

Chester House has welcomed and embraced Emily and Drew, two young adults with learning disabilities. As volunteers, I support them both one day a week in varied roles, championed by Natasha, who takes their skills into account with a huge variety of creative tasks within the education department and across the Estate. Emily and Drew look forward to working at CH every week; they have bonded with other volunteers and staff and are very happy to be included in such a great, hardworking team.

*Adele Andrews (Della),
CAMS Care Support worker*

”

Weekly Volunteers (2025 Average): 52 individuals supporting the site each week.

Total Hours Contributed: Over 48,000 hours of volunteer time since Chester House opened.

Unique Volunteers: 231 people have volunteered one day or more since we opened.

WEEKLY VOLUNTEERS

**52 EACH
WEEK**

HOURS CONTRIBUTED

**OVER
48,000**

UNIQUE VOLUNTEERS

231



THE CHESTER HOUSE ESTATE & CREATING TOMORROW COLLEGE: A TRANSFORMATIVE PARTNERSHIP

The partnership between The Chester House Estate and The Creating Tomorrow College, part of the Creating Tomorrow Trust, is a collaboration, deeply committed to education, heritage, and community enrichment. This unique initiative places students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) right at the heart of an amazing learning environment.

Students get invaluable hands-on experience within Chester House's varied facilities, including a functioning café. They actively get stuck into diverse roles like customer service, education delivery, archaeology, events, and food preparation. This immersive learning doesn't just boost their academic knowledge; it offers an ideal space for real-world experience, truly bridging the gap between education and the workforce.

Mentorship is a huge focus. The dedicated Chester House team guides and nurtures students, helping them build responsibility and teamwork. This commitment to excellence was

recently recognised as Creating Tomorrow College achieved an Outstanding rating in all areas from its first full Ofsted inspection. Notably, the college is the only Further Education (FE) provider in the county to achieve this top grading.

The impact of this approach is clear. While the national average for people with additional needs entering paid employment is 4.8% (and just 2.1% in North Northamptonshire), Creating Tomorrow College boasts a 100% success rate of learners entering paid employment after leaving college. Their graduates have gone on to work in a range of sectors, including catering, logistics, childcare, and retail.

Following the success of the college's work at Chester House, it has now expanded with campuses in a variety of locations, including Lutterworth Campus and the Daventry Campus, with plans for further expansion in Kettering opening in September 2025 due to demand for places, and Rugby in the near future.

Employment Success: Creating Tomorrow College boasts a 100% success rate for learners entering paid employment.

Regional Impact: This significantly surpasses North Northamptonshire's average of 1.9% SEND employment.

Expansion: The college has already expanded to 2 new campuses, with more planned.

EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS

100%

REGIONAL IMPACT

SURPASSES
1.9%

EXPANSION

2
NEW CAMPUSES



CASE STUDY: MEET ZEC

Zec's journey perfectly illustrates the life-changing power of the partnership between The Chester House Estate and the Creating Tomorrow College. With a keen interest in catering, the Creating Tomorrow College secured Zec a placement at the Estate's Farmhouse cafe.

Initially, Zec's role involved essential tasks like cleaning tables and serving cakes. However, his passion for catering quickly shone through. Supported by his job coaches from the College, he progressed to a supported internship, spending his second and third years diligently shadowing the chefs. This hands-on experience

at The Chester House Estate proved invaluable for his development.

Throughout his journey, Zec has demonstrated incredible determination and growth, building confidence, developing key work skills, and staying true to his dream of becoming a chef. That dream has now become a reality! After successfully completing his supported internship at Chester House, Zec has been offered a permanent paid position as part of their fantastic catering team. Zec's story highlights the direct pathway to meaningful employment fostered by this unique collaboration.

“

Working alongside the Chester House team and becoming part of their DNA has been a truly transformative journey — not just for our students, but for our entire community. When we began this partnership in 2021, we could only dream of the possibilities. Today, it stands as a powerful model of what inclusive, experiential education can and should look like. Chester House offers not just a place to learn, but a place to belong, where students with special educational needs are empowered through real-world roles, personal mentorship, and life-changing opportunities — from archaeology digs to royal visits. Their support has helped challenge outdated stereotypes and shown that inclusion is not only the right thing to do but makes sense socially and economically. Stories like Zec's shouldn't be rare — and thanks to this partnership, we're proving they don't have to be. We are incredibly proud to call Chester House our partners in shaping a brighter, more inclusive future.

Stacey Morris, Community and Employer Engagement Business Partner, Creating Tomorrow Partnership.

”



COMMERCE, COMMUNITY, CONNECTION



The food at the cafe was exceptional, very fresh, well cooked and great value. Staff were very helpful and friendly and the surroundings were beautiful. Can't recommend enough, will be back soon for sure.

Operation Phoenix Participant



Commerce

At Chester House Estate, our diverse offerings extend beyond heritage to provide welcoming spaces and vital support, all contributing to a rich visitor experience and our long-term sustainability.

The Farmhouse Café stands as a bustling hub, offering a warm and inviting space for visitors to relax and refuel. As an integral part of our food and beverage services, it often plays host to events, serving delicious local produce. We're proud to offer a dog-friendly room and menu, ensuring all members of the family, including our

four-legged friends, can enjoy their visit and enhance the overall visitor experience.

For those seeking a unique stay, our luxury farmhouse apartment provides exceptional accommodation. This distinctive offering is now home to the newly launched 'Trapp'd Overnight' immersive experience, allowing guests to truly embed themselves in the Estate's historic atmosphere. This boosts our profile as a versatile leisure destination and contributes to our commercial success.

2024 FARMHOUSE DELIGHTS BY NUMBERS

HOT DRINKS
SERVED

76,682

ICE CREAM SCOOPS
ENJOYED

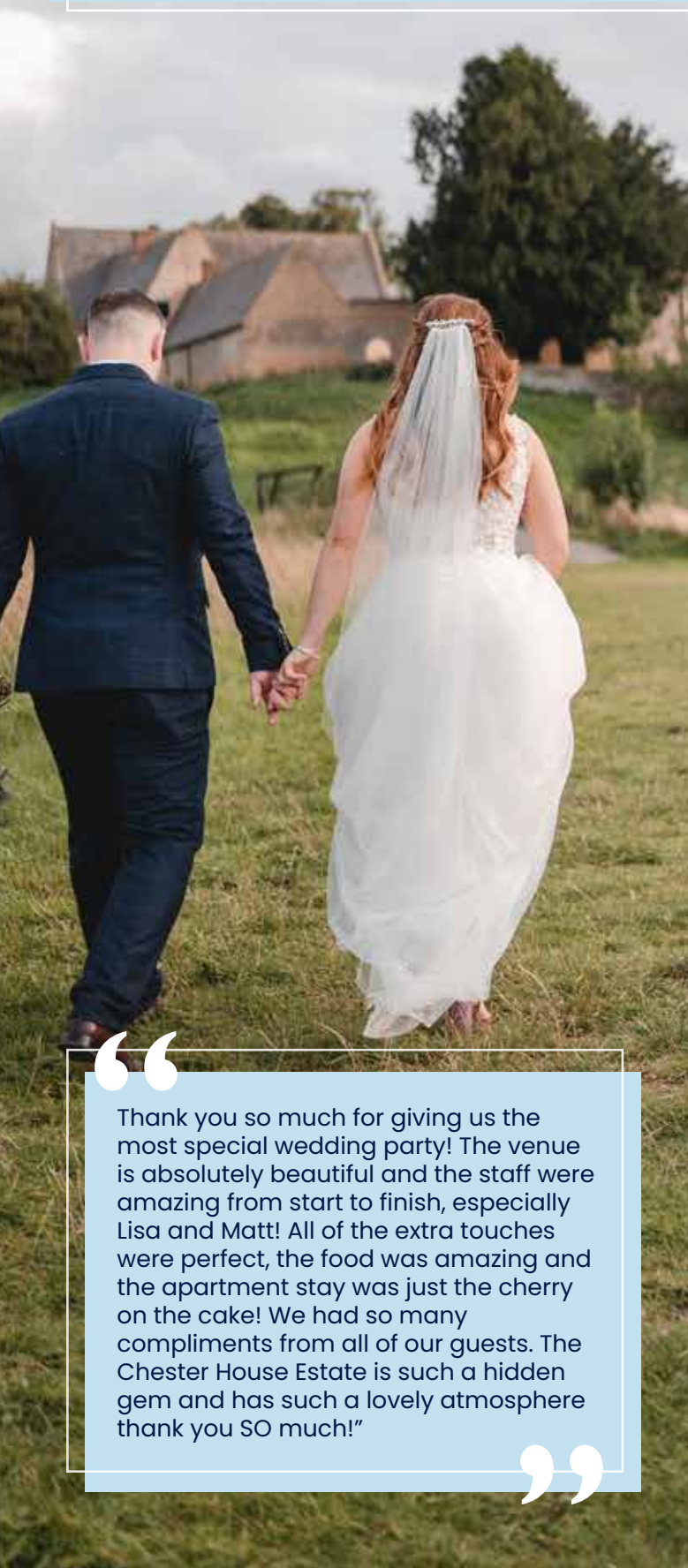
27,415

AFTERNOON TEA
PACKAGES SAVOURED

1,206



HOSTING YOUR SPECIAL OCCASION: WEDDINGS AND CONFERENCES AT THE CHESTER HOUSE ESTATE



The Chester House Estate offers a truly unique and memorable setting for both weddings and corporate events, seamlessly blending historic charm with modern facilities. Our picturesque landscape and beautifully restored buildings provide an exceptional backdrop for any occasion, ensuring every event is distinctly special.

For weddings, the Estate provides a romantic and elegant venue where couples can create their dream day amidst 10,000 years of history. Our dedicated team works tirelessly to ensure every detail, from the ceremony to the reception, is flawlessly executed, promising a cherished experience for the couple and their guests.

As a premier conference and events venue, Chester House Estate boasts versatile spaces suitable for a wide range of corporate gatherings, meetings, and functions. We offer a professional and inspiring environment, equipped to host everything from intimate business discussions to larger conferences. Our commercial team is dedicated to supporting the high demand for these services, demonstrated by the recruitment of a new Venue Officer. This addition will further enhance our capabilities and support our focus on increasing mid-week and winter bookings.

By providing these sought-after services, Chester House Estate not only serves as a vibrant community hub but also significantly contributes to our financial sustainability, allowing us to continue our vital work in heritage preservation and education. Our commitment is to deliver exceptional experiences, ensuring every event held here is a resounding success.

“Thank you so much for giving us the most special wedding party! The venue is absolutely beautiful and the staff were amazing from start to finish, especially Lisa and Matt! All of the extra touches were perfect, the food was amazing and the apartment stay was just the cherry on the cake! We had so many compliments from all of our guests. The Chester House Estate is such a hidden gem and has such a lovely atmosphere thank you SO much!”

Wedding Guests: 2,008 guests attended weddings in the Threshing Barn in 2024.

Conferences Hosted: 185 events chose us as their conference venue

WEDDING GUESTS

2,008

CONFERENCES HOSTED

185



EVENTS PROGRAMME: SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!



“

Visited Chester House Estate today, for The Great Spring Adventure. The event was extremely well organised and my little one absolutely loved searching for the eggs and the Easter crafts. The lamb feeding was amazing, and the guys were very friendly and informative!! I hope this runs again next year.”

”

Easter Excitement: We sent over 10,000 on egg-cellent Easter Hunts.

Lambing Joy: Almost 7,500 eager hands helped feed our adorable lambs.

Pumpkin Perfection: 4070 pumpkins found their perfect patch

Santa's Magic: More than 7,000 children's wishes were heard by Santa

Inclusive Adventures: We ran 316 dedicated activities for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

The Chester House Estate runs a fantastic, year-round events programme, making sure there's always something exciting for everyone to enjoy. These aren't just fun days out; they're a brilliant way to celebrate our region's rich cultural heritage, helping people really connect with local history and boosting the area's economy.

Our programme is incredibly diverse, from heartwarming lambing experiences where you can bottle-feed lambs, to magical Father Christmas visits during the festive season. We also host popular events like the Woof-festival for dog lovers, Roman Fest and our much-loved Giant Pumpkin Patch.

On top of our own events, we team up with various partners to bring you specialist experiences, including awesome outdoor concerts and captivating theatre productions. It's all about offering a wide variety of engaging activities that bring the community together and showcase the best of our heritage!

“

We visited this afternoon to meet Santa. It was AMAZING value for money! Santa himself was brilliant, the elves were super friendly and great with the children. We loved that there were so many activities for the children to do before and after meeting Santa. We also really appreciated the opportunity to choose our son a gift from Santa so that it was actually something he could use and play with! We will be back next year for sure!

”

316 SEND ACTIVITIES

EASTER HUNTS

**10,000+
VISITORS**

FEEDING LAMBS

**7,500
VISITORS**

**4070
PUMPKINS**

CHRISTMAS WISHES

**7,000+
HEARD**

Connection



At The Chester House Estate, fostering meaningful connections is at the heart of everything we do. We believe in building strong relationships that benefit our community, businesses, and visitors, ensuring our heritage site is a vibrant hub for everyone. This commitment extends to our operations, where we proudly champion local excellence.

Our Farmhouse Café exemplifies this by prioritising the use of local produce wherever possible. This not only supports Northamptonshire's fantastic growers and suppliers but also ensures the freshest, highest-quality ingredients for our visitors, strengthening our local economic connections. The Farmhouse recently showcased this commitment with a special 'Northamptonshire Ploughmans' Feature for Food and Drink Week, highlighting local ingredients like Brixworth pâté, cheese, homemade scotch eggs, and local meats. This initiative also involved collaborations with Discover Northamptonshire, Friars Farm, and Adams Apple. The Farmhouse continually fine-tunes its menu and supports local suppliers, with plans for refurbishment, expanded offerings, and the establishment of a full 'field to fork' experience, directly connecting the Estate's farming activities with its culinary offerings.

NNBN AND THE CHESTER HOUSE ESTATE: A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP FOR BUSINESS NETWORKING

Launched in March 2022, NNBN has found an invaluable venue in The Chester House Estate, utilising its Threshing Barn and Courtyard for its highly popular events. This partnership addresses a clear need amongst local businesses for more relaxed, inclusive, and accessible networking.

“

Running our NNBN events at Chester House Estate is seamless – the team always has everything perfectly set up. But it's the relaxed and inclusive atmosphere that truly makes the difference; our members love coming here, which is why we consistently host the area's biggest networking meetings.

Simon Cox, NNBN

”

The Estate's comfortable setting fosters confident speakers and positive engagement, standing out as "different, not a hotel." The Estate's disability and family-friendly amenities further ensure everyone feels welcome, making NNBN events here a firm favourite.



“

Being a member of NNBN has been a fantastic experience, from attending the inspiring meetings at Chester House to now having the privilege of working with them as a client, it's been a brilliant example of how local connections lead to real opportunities.

Michelle, Lime Design Studio

”

NNBN
Supporting BUSINESS GROWTH



CASE STUDY: TRAPP'D AT THE CHESTER HOUSE – UNLOCKING NEW AUDIENCES

The exciting partnership with Trapp'd, a leading escape room company, began when they immediately "fell in love with" Chester House Estate's potential to host unique leisure experiences.

Trapp'd launched its first escape room at Chester House in October 2023, with a second following in May 2024, both proving hugely popular. Beyond indoor challenges, they ingeniously use the Estate's grounds for outdoor, AR-enhanced adventures. They also recently launched Trapp'd Overnight, a unique experience hosted in the luxury farmhouse apartment, where the mission begins the moment teams check in for an immersive, high-tech challenge.

This collaboration has been a game-changer. Trapp'd wanted to share this "hidden gem," and they've seen huge success, engaging over 10,000 visitors between April 2024 and March 2025. Their revenue soars during Chester House's big events,

“

We absolutely fell in love with Chester House Estate; it's a hidden gem we felt compelled to help share with the world. The unique setting has allowed us to create incredible, immersive experiences like Trapp'd Overnight, and the synergy is clear – it truly is a partnership that works.

David Laird, Director of Trapp'd

”

showing a powerful synergy that diversifies the Estate's visitors by attracting younger audiences and corporate groups. By daring to be different, "Trapp'd at Chester House" brings fresh life to historic spaces, connecting with visitors imaginatively while supporting the Estate's preservation.

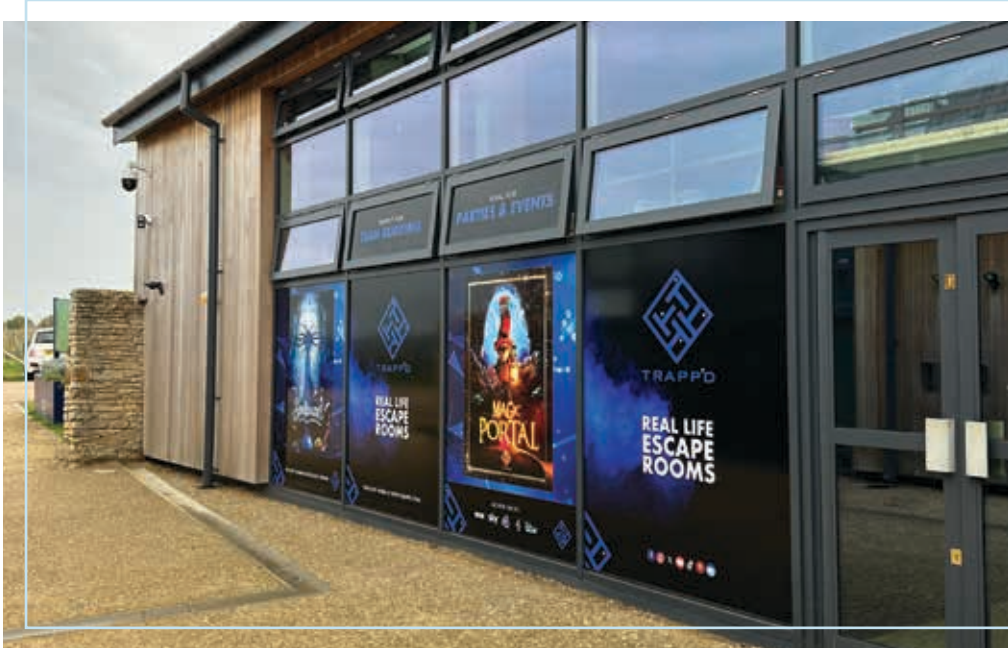
Visitor Volume: Engaged over 10,000 visitors between April 2024 and March 2025.

Innovation: Launched Trapp'd Overnight, a unique immersive experience.

Synergy: Trapp'd's revenue soars during Chester House's big events, highlighting strong partnership synergy.

VISITORS
**OVER
10,000**

**GREAT
INNOVATION
& SYNERGY**



CASE STUDY: NORTHANTS LIFE AWARDS – CELEBRATING LOCAL EXCELLENCE

The Chester House Estate proudly partners with the Northants Life Awards, a prestigious annual event celebrating the best Northamptonshire businesses. Unlike typical ceremonies, these awards embrace a unique "festival vibe" outdoor format, making the Estate the perfect, distinctive backdrop.

For the very first awards, Chester House Estate offered the venue in kind, demonstrating a clear commitment to supporting this fantastic celebration of local businesses. The event is now a commercial booking for the Estate, showcasing the success of the partnership and its contribution to our financial sustainability.

The event's unique public nomination process, ensuring it's community-driven with a 50/50 public/judging panel vote split, gets people highly engaged.

Hosting these high-profile awards brings many local business leaders and community members to the Estate, boosting its profile as a top event

“

Our partnership with Chester House Estate is invaluable. Their unique setting brings a truly special atmosphere to the awards, making them unforgettable for our winners and guests.

Dave Williams, Managing Director

”

spot. It's also super accessible, with a "live stream" extending its reach beyond the physical venue.

This collaboration fosters further opportunities and highlights a shared commitment: both Chester House and Northants Life want to give back and actively support local communities and businesses, exemplifying Chester House's dynamic role in boosting the local business community.

On-Site Impact: 300 guests celebrated at Chester House Estate's unique outdoor awards ceremony.

Digital Reach: The 2024 awards generated over 500,000 social media impressions, showcasing broad visibility.

Expanded Access: Over 400 people streamed the awards live, extending reach beyond the physical venue.

GUESTS
300
CELEBRATED

SOCIAL MEDIA
500,000+
IMPRESSIONS



WATERMEADOW PARK: EXTENDING OUR NATURAL REACH



A new venture in the making, Watermeadow Park is situated on the River Nene, adjacent to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This valued natural area directly extends the Estate's visitor experience due to its close proximity to Chester House, and its appeal is greatly enhanced by dedicated partners like Clark, whose contributions are deeply rooted in his genuine passion for the site.

Clark's involvement brings unique attractions and significant community benefits. He runs the popular Dancing Queen boat, offering delightful river trips that provide unique perspectives of the local natural surroundings. This has proven highly successful, bringing new footfall to Chester House Estate, with over 1,000 people taking a trip aboard the Dancing Queen during her first season.

A major highlight of this partnership is the highly successful annual lamb feeding experience. Clark expertly sources and supplies the lambs and runs these joyful events which are incredibly popular with both schools and families, including tailored sessions for SEND groups. Chester House's "The Great Spring Adventure" saw a remarkable 9,000 people participate, offering invaluable educational insights into farming and animal care. Building on this success, the lambs from the spring event are now being carefully fed and

nurtured at Watermeadow Park. This initiative is a cornerstone of Watermeadow's vision for a full 'field to fork' experience, with plans for these lambs to eventually be available on the menu at the Farmhouse, directly connecting the visitor experience with sustainable, local produce and animal welfare. Clark is working closely with Chester House's food and beverage team to bring this unique offering to fruition, further integrating farming education and sustainable practices.

Beyond these engaging activities, Clark also runs corporate events at Chester House, leveraging his expertise to enhance business gatherings. The alpacas, which are a huge hit at the Estate's events, also come from Watermeadow Park. Looking to the future, there are also plans to establish a mental health therapy offer within this countryside setting, leveraging nature and animal interaction for wellbeing.

Clark's involvement perfectly illustrates how passionate individuals, even when operating successful businesses, can deeply enrich the Estate's offerings. This synergy provides accessible outdoor activities, memorable event experiences, and truly showcases the broader impact of Chester House Estate within the community.

SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest, determined by Natural England, providing legal protection to important wildlife and geological sites.

Dancing Queen Boat: Over 1,000 people took a trip aboard the Dancing Queen boat during her first season.

SSSI
SITE OF SPECIAL
SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

DANCING QUEEN BOAT
OVER
1,000 PEOPLE



Community

At The Chester House Estate, community is at the very core of our mission. We are dedicated to fostering a vibrant hub where history, learning, and engagement flourish for everyone. This commitment is evident in our diverse and accessible offerings, from a packed calendar of free and ticketed events designed for all ages, to

our strong local partnerships and initiatives that enrich the lives of residents and visitors alike. We believe in providing spaces and opportunities that genuinely place the local community at our heart, building lasting connections and ensuring the Estate serves as a vital resource for Northamptonshire.



CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING LOCAL CHARITIES FOR COMMUNITY IMPACT

Enhancing connection across Northamptonshire, the active support of vital local charities is a cornerstone of The Chester House Estate's mission. This dedication is exemplified through its strong relationships with organisations such as Cransley Hospice and Northamptonshire Health Charity, providing essential platforms and resources for their crucial work.

Cransley Hospice, a charity enabling a better end of life experience for those with a life-limiting illness throughout North Northamptonshire, finds significant support from the Estate. A key initiative is the "We Remember" installation, launched in early 2024. This heartfelt project allows families to commemorate loved ones with individually engraved plaques within the Estate's peaceful grounds, serving as a tranquil space for remembrance, complemented by an annual service. This builds on past successes like the 2023 "Anniversary Robin Appeal," where handcrafted robins offered a unique way for the community to remember loved ones.

“

We are immeasurably grateful for the special partnership we have with the Chester House Estate. Their support is a lifeline, consistently providing crucial assistance that is invaluable in bringing some of our most poignant projects and events to life.

Louise Gurney, Community Fundraising and Events Development Manager at Cransley Hospice

”

Similarly, Chester House Estate provides invaluable assistance to the Northamptonshire Health Charity, which enhances care across local hospitals and health sites. The relationship began at a local networking event, where Nick Hayton, Corporate and Community Fundraiser, recognised the Estate's community ethos. Chester House consistently acts as a dynamic platform for the charity's initiatives. This has included active participation in the Mowerman Tractor Run and collaboration in support of the charity's Christmas campaign allowed the sale of Christmas raffle tickets during the Chester House business network event. The money raised went towards ensuring every patient received a Christmas present. More recently, the Estate facilitated Easter egg distribution to the children's ward at Kettering General Hospital. Furthermore, a particularly impactful event was Esme Day, supporting the Twinkling Stars Appeal for a new maternity bereavement suite at Kettering General Hospital. Last year, the Estate also provided the unique opportunity for children and staff from the Skylark ward to enjoy a Beauty and The Beast play on site. Nick Hayton praises Chester House Estate as "a breath of fresh air" for their enthusiastic willingness to embrace new ideas.

Through these varied and impactful collaborations, The Chester House Estate solidifies its role as a proactive community partner. By providing venues, facilitating initiatives, and championing local causes, the Estate significantly enhances the reach and impact of these charities, directly contributing to the well-being of individuals and families across the county.



Unique Remembrances: From 500 handcrafted pottery robins to individually engraved plaques, the Estate provides unique ways to remember loved ones.

Diverse Charity Events: Supported initiatives range from the roar of the Mowerman Tractor Run to enchanting Christmas ice rink campaigns.

Heartfelt Hospital Connections: Facilitated special Easter egg deliveries and VIP theatre trips, bringing joy directly to children in local hospitals.

"Breath of Fresh Air" Approach: Praised by partners for an enthusiastic, proactive approach to supporting vital local causes.

500
HANDCRAFTED
POTTERY ROBINS

DIVERSE
CHARITY
EVENTS

HEARTFELT
HOSPITAL
CONNECTIONS

SUPPORTING
LOCAL
CAUSES



GROWING LOCAL OPPORTUNITY: JOBS AND APPRENTICESHIPS AT CHESTER HOUSE ESTATE

At The Chester House Estate, we're a dynamic force for local economic growth and talent development in Northamptonshire. Our deep community commitment shapes every opportunity and partnership we forge.

Since opening in 2021, our team has tripled in size. From just 6 full-time employees, we now proudly sustain 24 full-time and 74 part-time/casual positions, including two full-time paid apprenticeships. We nurture talent, with strong staff training and progression, seeing many grow from interns and assistants into managerial roles through experience and guidance.

Our impact on the local economy is profound. Last year, 65.5% of our expenditure was spent with Northamptonshire businesses, a figure we aim to increase to 85% by 2025/26. Placing the local community at our heart, we collaborate with

businesses on initiatives like our community garden and host free networking events. Partnerships with local colleges and universities provide invaluable work experience, equipping students with essential employability skills. Our broad client base, including families, tourists, schools, and businesses, showcases wide appeal. This extends from national names like G4S, Booker Group, Northamptonshire Police, and Specsavers, to many valued local businesses and community organisations.

This approach led to a remarkable 288% increase in income over the last three years. We plan to double our current income by 2028, solidifying our role as a leading heritage, education, and commercial destination significantly contributing to Northamptonshire's job market and tourism sector.

Local Investment: Last year, 65.5% of our expenditure was spent with Northamptonshire businesses, aiming for 85% by 2025/26.

Job Creation: We sustain 24 full-time, 74 part-time/casual roles, and 2 full-time paid apprenticeships.

Income Growth: Achieved a 288% increase in income over the last three years.

Future Vision: Aim to double our current income by 2028.

65.5%
LOCAL
INVESTMENT

288%
INCOME
GROWTH

JOB CREATION
24 FULL TIME
74 PART TIME

**FUTURE
VISION**
DOUBLE INCOME



BUILDING A VIBRANT FUTURE: OUR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Northamptonshire Heritage Forum

Our collaboration with the Northamptonshire Heritage Forum is a vital part of our commitment to actively supporting the development and growth of over 110 member organisations across the county. As a key player in the heritage sector, The Chester House Estate provides meaningful, practical support that strengthens the Forum's impact. In 2023, we hosted the Northamptonshire Heritage Forum Awards, celebrating local achievements, and our in-house PR team delivers free marketing and communications training to members, boosting their reach and visibility.

Our Head of Service offers hands-on support with funding applications, helping voluntary groups access vital financial resources. Additionally, several Chester House staff are active members of the Forum's committee, helping shape its direction. We also proudly host the annual Northamptonshire Heritage Fair on our estate, a vibrant showcase that welcomed over 40 participating groups and hundreds of attendees in 2025. Through this comprehensive partnership, we help build a more connected, collaborative, and sustainable heritage community for Northamptonshire.



Discover Northamptonshire

We work in close partnership with Discover Northamptonshire to promote our region as a vibrant and diverse cultural destination. Together, we actively cross-promote local visitor attractions, driving awareness, boosting footfall, and encouraging longer, more meaningful stays across the county.

Our collaboration includes hosting essential tourism-focused networking events, bringing together sector professionals to share best practices and explore new opportunities. We also regularly provide space and support for strategic

workshops dedicated to the development and delivery of the Northamptonshire Visitor Economy Strategy 2023–2030, playing a central role in shaping the future of regional tourism.

This partnership ensures that The Chester House Estate is not only a destination in its own right, but also a dynamic hub for collaboration, innovation, and sector-wide growth, significantly enhancing regional identity and unlocking the full potential of Northamptonshire's cultural and heritage offer.



CELEBRATING SUCCESS: OUR AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

The Chester House Estate is incredibly proud to be consistently recognised for its dedication to heritage preservation, educational excellence, community engagement, and business innovation. These awards are a testament to the hard work of our team, the strength of our partnerships, and the invaluable support of our community.

Each of these accolades reflects our unwavering commitment to our mission and our positive impact across various sectors. We are honoured by this recognition and remain dedicated to setting high standards in all that we do.

Our achievements include:



Council for British Archaeology, Archaeological Achievement Awards – Winner 2024



2022 Northants Life Awards, Best Day out in Northamptonshire, Winner



MJ Awards – Innovation in Public Private Partnership – Winner 2025



Wellingborough Civic Society, Best Heritage Regeneration Project, Winner



LGC Awards – Innovation – Finalist 2025



Northants Chamber of Commerce: Business of the Year, 2024
Business Person of the Year, Jack Pishhorn, 2024



Learning Out the Classroom Quality Badge – 2024



Project of the year 2021



2023 Society for Museum Archaeology Volunteering Award, Winner



2022 – People Choice Winner
2022 – Best Special Project
2025 – Best Event



2023 Wellingborough and East Northants Chamber – Innovation in Business, Winner

LOOKING AHEAD: SECURING OUR FUTURE AND EXPANDING OUR IMPACT

The Chester House Estate is constantly evolving, with clear key objectives designed to secure our long-term future and deepen our impact as a leading heritage, education, and visitor destination.

A major aspiration for our future is the successful transition to charitable trust status. This move will enable us to become an independent entity, rather than being managed by the council, allowing for greater agility and sustainability. We are already commissioning a new website to support this transition and plan to increase our team by 20% over the next three years to meet growing demands and expand opportunities. Our financial sustainability to date is a point of pride, supporting this transition at an accelerated rate compared to competitors.

For the Northamptonshire Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC), our ambitions are significant. We aim to become the go-to heritage

archaeological site in the Southeast Midlands. To achieve this, we will increase promotion for the ARC, expand its opening hours, and invest in a new promotional film showcasing its collections, volunteers, and tours. We also plan to strengthen our partnership with the University of Leicester for more excavations and collaborative working. Engaging future generations is crucial, so we will actively involve more small children in archaeology, increasing school visits year on year, and introduce more donation points with clear calls-to-action for the ARC and excavations. We will also produce more historical interpretation boards along our walking routes to enhance visitor engagement with our Roman history.

Through these planned developments, The Chester House Estate is committed to continuous growth, ensuring we remain a vibrant community hub and a guardian of 10,000 years of history for generations to come.





THE CHESTER HOUSE ESTATE



North
Northamptonshire
Council



CULTURE
TOURISM
HERITAGE

Made possible with



Heritage
Fund

Claudius Way, Little Irchester, Wellingborough, Northamptonshire, NN8 2DH

info@chesterhouseestate.org

01933 594400

