



Impact Report

2025/26

2025/26 Highlights

Welcomed our
1 millionth
Visitor
331,675
Total footfall

First venue
to host a royal
photography
exhibition
outside historic royal palaces

Shortlisted
Kids in museums award 2025
best medium museum



Official
**warm
welcome
space**



**7th most visited
free attraction**
in the south east
outside london (visit england data)

4,857
Attendees at
rhyme time



10,567
School children
engaged with



1 Dolls house
illuminated



Brand new
visitor
and family
guides
launched

Over £250,000
grant funding secured



3,665
Discovery days
engagements

2,331

New library members

103,666
Books issued



118,183
Calls handled



**Young
creatives**
programme launched



First yarn fair
held in Royal Tunbridge Wells



**First ever
open call
exhibition**



**10
Park
safaris**

Introduction

I am delighted to introduce the 2025/26 impact report for The Amelia Scott. Since its opening four years ago, The Amelia has stood as a powerful expression of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's ambitions to deliver exceptional public services, celebrate our distinctive heritage, support a vibrant local economy, and to create opportunities for residents and visitors to connect, learn and flourish. In 2025/26, The Amelia has continued to embody these priorities - bringing together culture, learning, wellbeing and enterprise under one roof, while strengthening the borough's reputation as a compelling destination within Kent and beyond.

Through its dynamic programme, partnerships with local organisations and businesses, and its commitment to accessibility and inclusion, The Amelia has played a pivotal role in helping residents in need, nurturing creativity across all ages, driving footfall into the Royal Tunbridge Wells town centre, and helping us all to live longer, better, richer lives. This report demonstrates not only the scale of its activity, but also its deeper impact: fostering civic pride, widening participation, and contributing meaningfully to a resilient and forward-looking borough.



Cllr Justine Rutland
Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Deputy Leader



From the team

As we step into a new financial year at The Amelia Scott, we reflect on what has been an exceptional 2025/26 and share a little about what projects we will be working on in the year ahead.

What makes The Amelia Scott special isn't just its extraordinary collections and beautiful spaces, but the people who walk through the door with curiosity, creativity, and a desire to connect. It is a privilege to work alongside the colleagues, partners, volunteers, and community groups who bring this building to life every day.

2025/26 Highlights

Welcoming our one millionth visitor in May was a particular highlight but one of our proudest moments this year was securing over £72,000 from the Health and Wellbeing in Museums Fund, which supports the next phase of creative health work. This funding will allow us to expand crucial programmes for men experiencing housing challenges and people facing bereavement, strengthening The Amelia's role as a place for community support and resilience. These initiatives continue to show how cultural spaces can be more than places to visit - they can be a lifeline.

The Youth Programme got into full swing this year and following an extensive youth survey, in October we hosted our first Young Creatives documentary making intensive course, giving local young people the chance to develop skills, confidence, and bold new ideas. We also continued our Home Educators careers taster

sessions, inviting young learners to explore heritage, arts, and public service careers in a hands-on, and inspirational way.

The Amelia Scott once again became a Warm Welcome Space for winter 2025/26, offering warmth, safety, and companionship to residents through the colder months, a scheme which we are proud to continue.

One of the most joyful moments of the year was watching Kirsty, a young fundraiser, light our community-created Christmas tree, made from hundreds of donated granny squares - truly a project stitched together by local hands and local heart.

And we welcomed a rare George Smart collage, "Old Bright the Postman," into our collection - an exciting addition celebrating one of the region's celebrated 19th-century folk artists with celebrity auctioneer Mark Hill.

Looking Ahead

Our public programme continues to grow, deepening our creative health work, and strengthening our commitment to making The Amelia Scott a place where heritage, learning, creativity, and community all thrive together.

The exhibition calendar continues to develop into new places, whilst keeping true to what the people like most, chances to learn, play and grow together. New partnerships and relationships both across the region and wider country help to keep this programme engaging, cost effective and free for everyone at entry.

To everyone who has visited, volunteered, donated, taken part, or simply shared a moment here - thank you. This past year has shown what's possible when a community believes in a shared cultural home.

We're excited for everything 2026/27 will bring, and look forward to welcoming you back through our doors soon.



Council Services

4239

Webchats received

118,183

Call Centre
Customers Served

That's equal to 467 Calls per
day or 63 calls per hour

Kent County Council
Births & Deaths
Registrar

3223

appointments
including inquests



We are the first point of
contact for individuals seeking
help, guidance, or simply a
safe and welcoming space.

On a typical day, we engage with hundreds of individuals across multiple channels, including telephone, website, social media, email, and face-to-face interactions. Many of these interactions involve people who are experiencing crisis or are in urgent need of support. The conversations we facilitate, the assistance we provide, and the environment we foster all contribute to a place where people feel valued, welcomed, and supported.



Contact Centre Highlights

Staff have made excellent progress strengthening council service delivery through process development and innovation.

- **A new customer accounts database** to support customer interactions for council tax is improving accuracy and efficiency in handling enquiries.
- **Digital channels** continue to expand, Webchat now supports key services including Parking and Refuse and Recycling, providing customers with more convenient ways to engage.
- **Onboarding of new starters** is increasing capacity and capability, enabling the team to confidently deliver across seven services, driving a more responsive, efficient, and customer-focused experience for borough residents.

Front of House Highlights

Development training strengthened both skills and confidence.

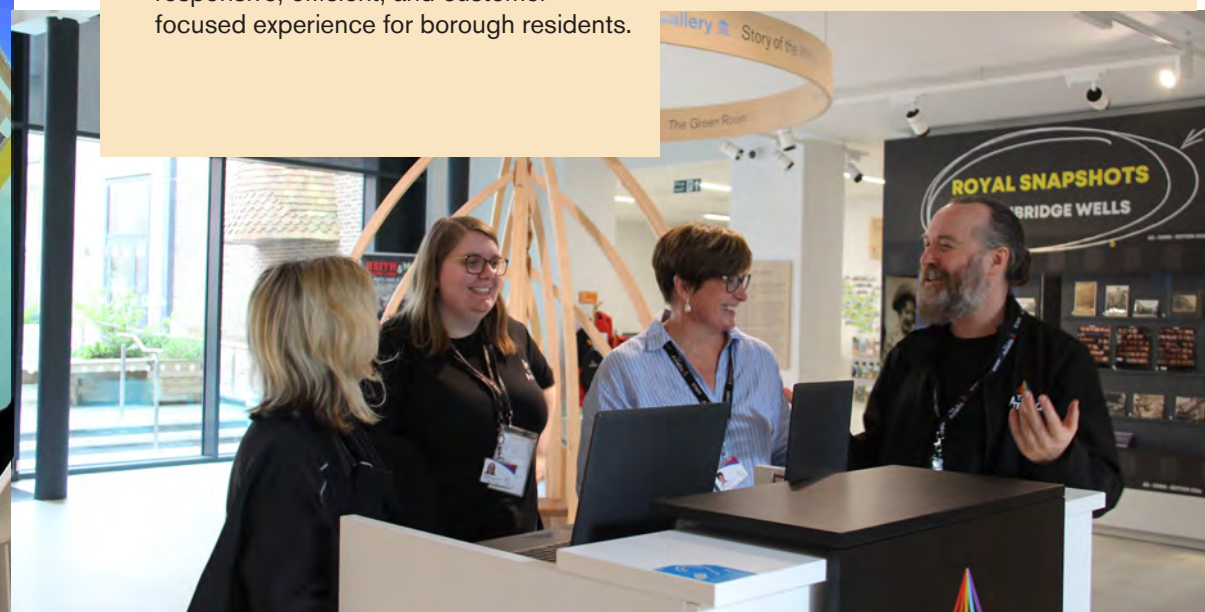
- **Staff learning of Makaton** has enhanced Rhyme Time, Sensory Story Time, and Discovery Days in our improved children's space, making sessions more inclusive and engaging.
- **Training the team in mental health first aid** has been a valuable addition to the team's support offer.
- **Tourist Information improvements and training** has been given to all staff, boosting local knowledge, and created a fantastic multilingual guide in English, French, German, and Spanish!

“

Thank you so much for pursuing this issue and getting this result, I am very grateful. Probably some of the best customer service I've received this year.

So helpful and friendly: I left feeling listened to, valued, and helped. Please pass my regards I can't thank you enough for the help you gave me.

”



Creative Health

Creative Health refers to creative approaches and activities that deliver benefits for health and wellbeing (National Centre for Creative Health).

Cultural experiences enhance quality of life, supporting both mental and physical wellbeing.

Our Creative Health programmes harness the power of culture, creativity and heritage to help people lead healthier and happier lives. We have developed a comprehensive creative health offer that improves wellbeing while fostering a strong sense of place and community.

Throughout this year, significant progress has been made in embedding our Creative Health offer across local areas, strengthening partnerships and increasing engagement. These achievements provide a strong foundation for further growth and development in the next financial year.



Highlights

Hosting a Creative Health festive gathering, bringing past participants together in a warm, social setting; highlighting the strong connections formed through our programmes.



Development of relationship with University of Plymouth and creation of a role play 'toolkit' to be accessed by other similar organisations.

Our original DnD group continues to meet at their own leisure onsite every week, now also providing room hire income.

Looking Ahead

- Expand and develop the Creative Health offer, formation of new bereavement and housing support groups
- Deliver a consistent programme of interventions to support community wellbeing
- Successfully complete Year 1 of the Museum Accelerator-funded Creative Health project
- Delivery of new mental health-focused sessions



“

It was a big step for me to try and join a group and you were both so welcoming and understanding

The course was a tremendous help in activating my "little grey cells" again...I hadn't realised quite how debilitated mentally I was at the time so the course helped me even though I hadn't identified with "needing" that sort of input. It was very restorative...

The visit has a very positive affect on everyone and we are looking forward to the next

What a gift to us that the Amelia Scott is reaching out to the community

”

11
courses delivered

25
outreach sessions

897
total interactions*
(*includes repeat individuals)



We bring the community together through culture and creativity



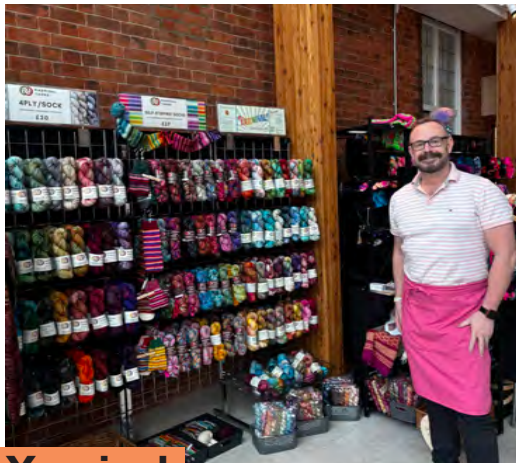
Community Crochet Christmas Tree

A vast creative effort by volunteers and staff to bring this beautiful project to life. Well over 800 crochet granny squares were made and donated to create our spectacular 8 foot tree.



Knit & Stitch Club

The club was launched on Worldwide Knit in public day and has been a feature of Wednesdays every week ever since. Open to all it's a brilliant space to be creative and find community connection.



Yarnival

Our first yarn festival was a phenomenal success, generating both an incredible upturn in footfall and income. This event supported economic development, bringing an audience from outside the Borough to the town. Feedback was incredibly positive, next year we plan a two day event.



Christmas Concert

An evening of festive music with Debbie Perolls and her choirs. The Atrium was full of beautiful singing and merry cheer.



Notes at The Amelia

The first Notes at The Amelia was a wonderful evening celebrating local musical talent. An open call was made for local amateur musicians to showcase their talent on our baby grand piano.



Holocaust Memorial Day

Always very popular in the community we had another superb Holocaust Memorial Day. Led by a talk from friend of The Amelia, Anne Goldstein, about the remarkable history of The Beacon Hotel in Rusthall, we then had an author talk from Edward Abel Smith, presenting his inspirational book Angels of Prague. Finally we had an exclusive showing of Survivor, a film by Zoom Rockman, which tells the story of Ivor Perl, a survivor of Auschwitz.



Learning

10,567

school children engaged with

53

outreach sessions
(including digital sessions)

12

special library-linked Summer
Reading Challenge assemblies

179

onsite school sessions

Relaxed
Discovery Days

Launched in October 25

We bring history to life for local school children

The Learning team has continued to expand its reach and impact, delivering a total of **234 sessions** to schools over the year. Home Education sessions remain particularly popular with primary-aged learners, while a new **work experience programme** for secondary students has been successfully introduced, broadening engagement across age groups.

Our school readiness programme, **Millie's Journey**, has continued to grow in both scale and impact. Delivered during the summer holidays, the course supports children and parents in developing essential skills to ensure a confident and successful transition into education.



“

We had a wonderful visit. The session brought the topic to life and was pitched perfectly for the children. They thoroughly enjoyed handling the artefacts and are already looking forward to returning with their families.

Stone to Iron, Bishop's Down Primary School

Claire and Miriam were fantastic educators, delivering the sessions with enthusiasm, knowledge and creativity. The children particularly enjoyed the museum and library trails, the use of drama to bring stories to life, and the opportunity to handle artefacts while learning about local history and inspirational people.

Inspirational People & Exploring the Story of TW, Hilden Oaks Prep

Thank you for providing such an engaging and accessible work experience programme for our Oakley pupils. The activities were thoughtfully planned and gave students valuable insight into working in a library, while helping them build useful skills and confidence.

Work Experience Day, Oakley SEND Secondary

What you're doing here is brilliant — thank you.

Discovery Days participant

We always enjoy your holiday activities. You can spend money on days out, but this is the kind of experience the children really value most.

Discovery Days participant

”

Highlights

▪ Kids in Museums Takeover Day

Year 6 pupils from The Wells Free School participated in a hands-on development opportunity, training as museum education facilitators. They planned and delivered an adapted session for Year 1 pupils, strengthening their communication, confidence, and leadership skills.

▪ Virtual Reality Enhanced Learning Pilot

Successfully piloted the first **VR enhanced education session**. Pupils from St James's Primary experienced the Stone Age through immersive technology, engaging with artefacts from the handling collection within a digitally recreated environment. Rooted in local geography and history, the session deepened understanding through contextualised learning.

▪ Section 106 Funded Partnership with Temple Grove Academy

Pupils from Temple Grove Academy attended a **pantomime performance**, complemented by puppet theatre-making workshops. This engagement was extended through follow-up outreach sessions for Years 1-4.

▪ Arts Award and Community Mural Project

Further S106 funding enabled pupils from St Barnabas Primary School to participate in a creative workshop led by artist **Hugh Whitaker (Humor)**. Pupils contributed to the design of a school mural, delivered by the artist, while also achieving their **Arts Award Discover**. The project fostered creativity, collaboration, and a lasting sense of pride in their school environment.

▪ Unlocking Collections – Education Pilot

Aiming to engage young people with themes of democracy, social justice, and local heritage. Sixth form students explored archival materials to uncover the contributions of individuals from the area who championed equality.

The programme included a council chamber tour, object-based learning focused on suffrage, and opportunities for students to contribute to the development of a **digital resource library**.

Youth Programme



2,113

young people
engaged with

3

Amelia Young
Creatives courses

2

brilliant documentary
films

3

schools author talks

Empowering young people

We want to inspire and open doors for young people interested in the cultural and creative industries through the creation of opportunities to discover new skills, explore creativity, and gain real insight into careers.

2025 brought a renewed focus on Youth Programming with a new Creative Learning Coordinator in place to manage a new Youth Programme.

Crucial to making any planning for a youth programme meaningful was engaging with young people in the community

A four month youth consultation was created and rolled out across the entire Borough.

554 responses were received, the best response to a youth survey to date. A toolkit for the survey has been created to share publicly for other youth organisations to use and adapt to their needs as a best practice guide.

The key finding from the survey was that young people in the Borough want more activities available to them in the creative fields, namely photography, fashion and film.



Highlights

- **Youth consultation**
- **Young Company War of the Worlds theatre programme**
- **Portrait photography course and exhibition**

Looking Ahead

- Development of youth offer into distinctive sections: Young Creatives, Young Company, Emerging Professionals
- Embed more strategic work experience programme
- Develop young professional networking opportunities in collaboration with local partners

“

I love to act and will take any opportunity to do it. I had never done voice acting before and I wanted to try.

I want to work in TV and film, and I thought it would be fun to have experience in voice acting.

Everything! I really enjoyed meeting new people and learning how to make different sounds.

I did the Summer course last year and knew Bethan would make sure the course was fun and we would learn something new and maybe meet new people.

”



The library at The Amelia Scott

Delivering Kent County Council library services through fostering a love for reading.

A modern library blends the traditional and the electronic, feeds people's curiosity and is a space to relax, be social or just take time for themselves.

We support visitors to access the information and knowledge that they need. We engage with children and young people on site and through schools, encouraging a love of reading



Highlights

- **2,331 new library members**
an increase in sign-ups that bucks the county-wide trend.
- **Summer Reading Challenge**
The Amelia's most successful yet, achieving the highest participation and completion numbers in Kent.
Library staff spoke to over 4,000 children in school assemblies prior to The Amelia's most successful Summer Reading Challenge yet,
- **Increased borrowing**
from the Young People's Collection (2,229 issues)
- **5 author events throughout the year:**
children's storytelling streamed to schools around Tunbridge Wells (Chitra Soundar); natural history (Dave Goulson); adventure & photography (Quintin Lake); history (Edward Abel Smith); children's writing and illustration (Chloe Lake)
- **Excellent school links.**
Young Librarian sessions delivered; 33 entries to a National Year of Reading drawing competition.
- **4,857 children**
at Baby Rhyme Time
- **The start of exciting partnership working with The British Library**

Looking ahead to 2026/27

- Getty Images photographer author event (Chris Jackson)
- 850 children in the Assembly Hall Theatre to see Jamie Smart (author and illustrator) – June 2026
- Further collaboration with the British Library
- Raising the profile of Local Studies and electronic historical resources



“

What people said

I loved looking around the library and so did the little boy who I was looking after.

Thank you so much for once again for facilitating such a wonderful learning experience for our school; I have had very enthusiastic feedback from both the children and the staff (relates to an Summer Reading Challenge author event)

”

Exhibitions



Across the year, our
exhibitions welcomed

50,173
visitors

Making art and heritage accessible for all

This year, our temporary exhibitions programme invited people of all ages to explore local heritage through creativity, conversation and shared experiences. Across three major exhibitions, community voices, contemporary artists and our collections came together to reveal new perspectives on the stories of our place. From hands-on creative participation and intergenerational learning to memorable experiences for families and friends, the programme encouraged people to discover, reflect and create together.



Your Work Here – Celebrating creativity in our community

14 February – 1 June 2025

13,713 visitors

Our first open-submission exhibition celebrated local creativity, showcasing **396 artworks by artists from across the region**. Open to all with no selection panel, *Your Work Here* supported accessible participation and community pride, inviting visitors to engage directly through a public People's Choice Award.



“ I loved that the exhibition was open to everyone with no specific theme and no judgement for entry. This produced a fascinating and varied show of talent. I enjoyed seeing my work hanging amongst them. I really felt part of the creative community. ” - *Participating artist*

Magic Place – An Interactive Playspace by Genetic Moo

27 June – 1 September 2025

24,989 visitors

A vibrant, interactive digital playspace for families, *Magic Place* was our **second busiest exhibition since opening in 2022**. Inspired by early computer graphics, it offered repeat, playful engagement for audiences of all ages and became a highlight of our summer programme.



“ Brilliant interactive fun! ”

Commons – A Film by David Blandy

26 September 2025 – 11 January 2026

11,471 visitors

Commons was a newly commissioned moving-image work by Brighton based artist David Blandy, exploring shared land, memory and local histories. An expansive and thought-provoking film, blending archive, local history, nature, and storytelling. *Commons* invited audiences on a journey through the ancient woodlands and shared spaces of Tunbridge Wells Commons.



“ Very mindful, soothing and thought-provoking experience, that highlighted objects with fascinating stories to tell, that otherwise might never be heard. ” - *Exhibition visitor*

Bringing collections to life, connecting the past with today's communities

It's been a year of strong growth, innovation and engagement. Through targeted investment, new acquisitions, and significant advances in collections care and digitisation, the collection has been strengthened and made more accessible than ever before.

A dynamic programme of public activity, alongside sector leadership and growing consultancy work, has further extended impact beyond the organisation, demonstrating a commitment not only to preserving heritage, but to making it relevant, inclusive and inspiring for diverse audiences now and in the future.

Highlights

Funding & Investment

Secured £8,587 in grant funding, including £4,198 from Museum Development South East (MDSE) and £4,389 from Elizabeth Hammond Grant (via The Costume Society). Enabling targeted improvements to collections care, conservation, and public access.

Collections Development

66 new acquisitions - strengthening the breadth and significance of the collection. Purchase of a folk artwork by George Smart,

Made possible through contributions from The Friends at The Amelia Scott and Arts4Kent

Collections Care & Access

New museum-grade display case was installed in the foyer, creating a flexible and prominent space for school and community-curated exhibitions.

Conservation of a hand-painted Georgian dress, and a blue Georgian wedding dress, enabling them to return to public display and ensuring their long-term preservation.

Purchase of a folk artwork by

George Smart

66

new acquisitions

1,950

volunteer hours donated

Digital Innovation

Digitisation actively significantly expanded access to the collection during the year. 1,245 two-dimensional and archival objects were digitised, alongside 43 three-dimensional object scans, supporting preservation and new interpretive opportunities.

Undertook 6 site visits to advise and assess external projects, alongside 2 conference demonstrations and participation in a digital symposium speaker panel.

1,950 volunteer hours and 120 student placement hours make this a stand out figure – swap with grant funding

Public Engagement

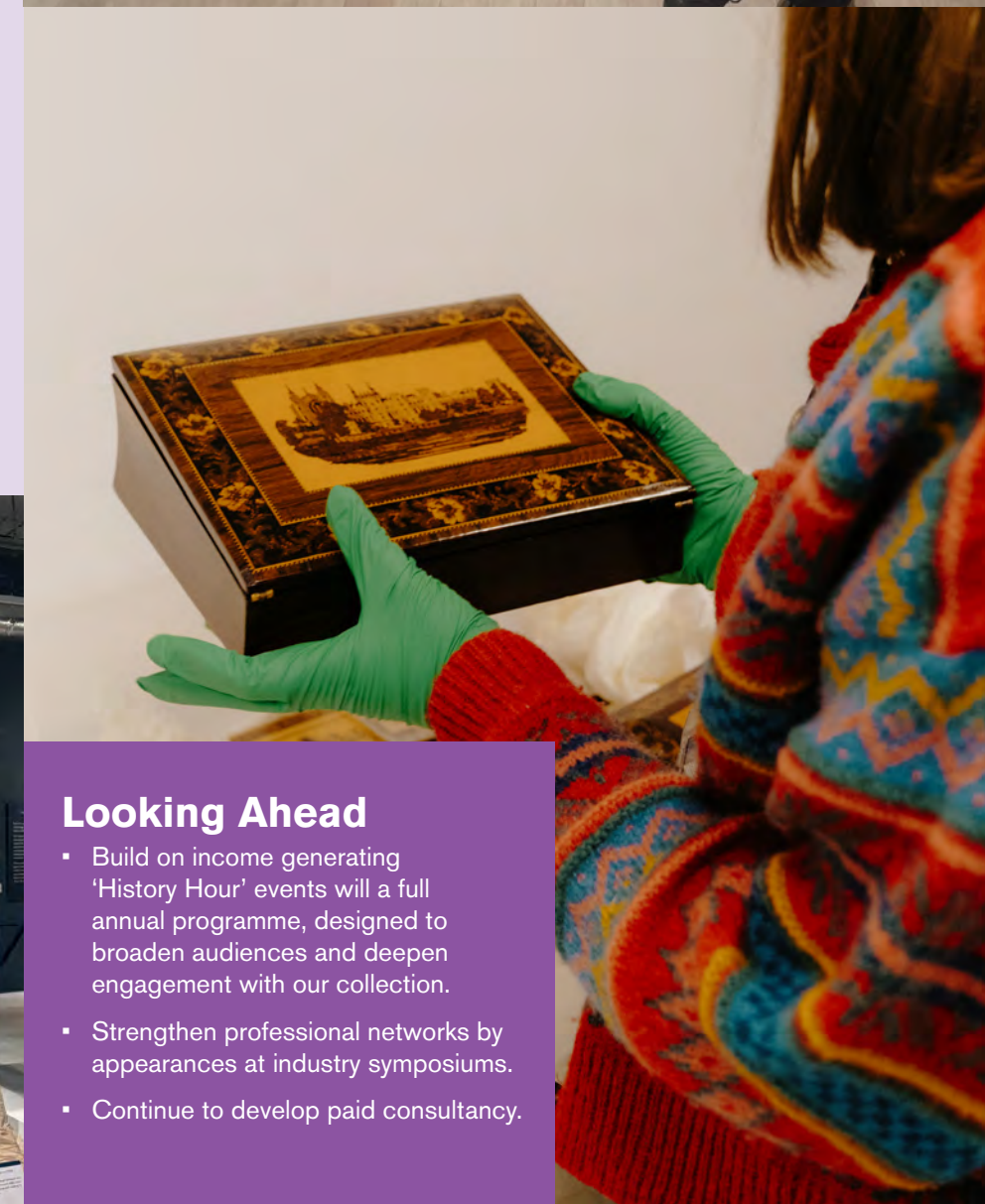
A varied programme of activities broadened access and encouraged engagement with the collections. This included 7 talks, 2 Moth Morning sessions, 1 Human Library event, and 1 object handling session, and 2 History Detectives sessions, reaching a wide range of audiences.

Sector Support & Leadership

Supported the wider museum sector, guiding two museums to successfully renew their Accreditation status.

Provided paid consultancy service to other museums, delivering expert support to identify and address collections care issues within their organisation.

Provided (paid) expert knowledge, interpretation and content development for new interpretation panels installed at Kings Standing Woodlands, North Farm, ensuring accurate and engaging historical interpretation for public-facing displays.



Looking Ahead

- Build on income generating 'History Hour' events will a full annual programme, designed to broaden audiences and deepen engagement with our collection.
- Strengthen professional networks by appearances at industry symposiums.
- Continue to develop paid consultancy.

Volunteers

Volunteers are vital to The Amelia Scott

Supporting everything from free family activities and learning support, digitising the collection, caring for the garden, weekly story time and IT Buddies.

Their contribution represents an annual estimated value of **£68,880*** (* National Heritage Lottery Fund recommended figures) - demonstrating the significant added value volunteers bring to our work and communities.

Volunteers donated a total of 3,444 hours of time, the equivalent of 459 days!

Thank you to all our amazing volunteers!

“
When asked in a survey what they enjoy about volunteering at The Amelia, volunteers replied:

It builds collaborative experience among staff and co-volunteers. I love helping kids and families in Discovery Days

The variety of tasks. The atmosphere. The friendly staff.

Learning new things, surrounded by and supported by tribe

The social aspect and learning more of local history

”

3,444
hours of time
equivalent of
459 days
Value of
£68,880



The Rural Heritage Placemaking Project was funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The programme invested in local communities to strengthen 'pride in place' while supporting local businesses, people, and skills development.

Background

The communities of Sandhurst and Hawkhurst were the initial focus of the project due to their rich historic environments and distinctive heritage stories. In Sandhurst, projects included a seasonal guide and a series of events celebrating the villages heritage, local community, and natural environment in collaboration with artist Beccy McCray. In Hawkhurst four heritage plaques were installed commemorating notable people and places, alongside a new heritage map and an audio trail highlighting some of the villages listed buildings. These were chosen by the community.



2025-26

Five former nursery nurses shared their memories of working at the Dr Barnardo's Babies Home in Hawkhurst, known as Babies Castle, during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Their stories inspired a series of community workshops led by ceramic artist Emma Harding. Local residents and community groups decorated clay tiles in response to these memories, which Emma subsequently brought together to create a collaborative ceramic artwork. The completed piece has been displayed at Hawkhurst House Care Home, located on the site of the former children's home.

The artwork connects today's community with the experiences and memories of those who once lived and worked here. In addition the recorded oral histories of the nursery nurses have been preserved within The Amelia's archive, ensuring they remain accessible for future generations.



“

The children have not only discovered more about their local history but have learnt how the process of lino cutting and printing works. They have really loved the experience

Teacher, Hawkhurst Primary School

The activities helped draw the community closer together

Sandhurst Almanac participant

”



**Thank you to our
community for continuing
to make this possible**

