

Tamworth Castle

Sense of Place programme

Tamworth Castle is a well-preserved Norman motte-and-bailey fortress in Staffordshire, originally built in the 11th century and later developed into a medieval stone castle. It has a long history as a royal and noble residence and is now a museum, offering insights into local history and heritage.

Overview

Museum Development Midlands' Sense of Place programme has played a significant role in strengthening Tamworth Castle's approach to community engagement, partnership working and external fundraising. The support came at a time when the museum was developing ambitious heritage projects that sought to connect local people with Tamworth's history through creativity and participation. The aim was not simply to deliver individual projects, but to build long-term capacity, develop stronger funding applications and create more inclusive opportunities for local communities to engage with their heritage. This support directly contributed to the development of a successful MDM-funded consultation project exploring the town's industrial heritage, while also influencing wider projects across the museum's programme.

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“The Sense of Place programme has challenged and inspired us to think differently about how we engage communities with heritage”.

MDM Support

Museum Development Midlands provided support in a variety of ways:

- One-to-one funding advice and project development support.
- Peer learning sessions and networking opportunities with museums across the Midlands.
- Workshops exploring creative engagement, partnership working and community participation.
- Opportunities to share practice and learn from others.
- The Power of Place Conference, where Tamworth Castle was invited to present its work and where the museum received a Highly Commended award for its African Caribbean Glass Art Project.

The support extended beyond funding advice, helping build confidence, strengthen project planning and encourage more ambitious approaches to community-led heritage.

Case Study

Key Activities

Funding from Museum Development Midlands enabled Tamworth Castle to deliver a community consultation and audience development project exploring the industrial heritage of Gibbs & Canning, one of the town's most significant historic manufacturers.

Through workshops, discussions and engagement activities, the project gathered valuable feedback from local residents and community groups about their connections to Tamworth's industrial heritage and how they would like to engage with it in the future. The consultation produced a strong evidence base, identifying audience interests, barriers to engagement and opportunities for future programming.

The findings were collated into a comprehensive report, which has been used to shape and support a larger Arts Council England funding application submitted in April 2026.

The project also strengthened local partnerships and provided the museum with valuable audience insight that will inform future heritage and community engagement work, regardless of the outcome of the funding application.

What's Next

The Sense of Place programme has provided a strong foundation for Tamworth Castle's future ambitions. The learning, networks and confidence gained through the programme will continue to influence how the museum develops community-led heritage projects and external funding opportunities. The audience development work funded by MDM has already informed a larger Arts Council funding application, and the museum is awaiting the outcome. Alongside this, Tamworth Castle intends to build on the evidence gathered through the consultation to pursue further strategic funding opportunities, including capital investment that will strengthen the museum's ability to deliver creative, inclusive and sustainable heritage programmes for local communities.

The museum also looks forward to continuing its relationship with Museum Development Midlands by participating in future training sessions, peer learning opportunities and collaborative programmes, ensuring that the learning and momentum generated through Sense of Place continues to benefit both the organisation and the communities it serves.

"The combination of funding, professional development and peer support has strengthened our practice and helped us turn local ideas into future opportunities."

