



Chew Valley Hoard Project

Introduction

The South West Heritage Trust (the Trust) is seeking funding from Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council to support the delivery of a major project that will create a permanent home for the Chew Valley Hoard at the Museum of Somerset in Taunton and deliver an ambitious programme of events and activities that will engage and inspire audiences in new and diverse ways.

About the Hoard

Discovered in 2019, the Chew Valley Hoard consists of over 2,500 coins mostly from the reigns of Harold II, the last Anglo-Saxon king, and his Norman successor William the Conqueror. It is the largest such hoard found in Britain since 1833, and the largest ever found that relates to the immediate aftermath of the Norman Conquest. It is important both nationally and locally because of the light it can shed on a time of great turmoil and transformative change. This significant archaeological find will contribute greatly to the cultural and historical heritage of our region and attract visitors from across the country and beyond to Taunton.

Project Overview

The Trust has already raised over £4.3 million to acquire the hoard and is now embarking on a major project to engage audiences and to create a permanent home for the hoard at the Museum of Somerset. The project will:

Deliver a high quality year-long temporary exhibition at the Museum of Somerset in 2027, telling the story of the Norman Conquest and life before, during and after the Conquest. The timing of the exhibition will coincide with the 1000th anniversary of the birth of William the Conqueror, an event that is being commemorated internationally with celebrations and cultural programmes taking place across various countries.

- Deliver an ambitious two-year community engagement programme offering a diverse and innovative range of activities in which over 4,500 people will actively participate and which will reach nearly 450,000 attendees. Target audiences include families, schools and young people, 16-25 year olds, over 55s, local residents at risk of rural isolation, refugees & asylum seekers/ people seeking sanctuary, local people with English as a second language, day-trippers and national & international tourists.
- Engage and collaborate with local, regional and national partners to create opportunities and deliver activities that reach new audiences, develop skills and build organisational resilience. Partners will include CHARIS, Somerset Art Works, Taunton's Turning Point, Taunton Brewhouse, Bridgwater and Taunton College, Go Create Taunton,

Chew Valley Arts and Woodland Tribe. There will also be activities delivered as part of the Taunton Together Festival in 2027.

- Create a dedicated new gallery at the Museum of Somerset for the permanent display of the Hoard. Opening in 2028, this will enable audiences to continue to access and enjoy the hoard for the long term, ensuring that there is a lasting legacy from the project.
- Improve and update visitor facilities at the museum including the visitor welcome space and retail offer.

The Museum of Somerset is already one of the county's most popular heritage visitor attractions, regularly attracting nearly 100,000 visitors annually, and with a growing national reputation for excellence. It makes a significant contribution to Taunton's cultural and heritage visitor offer.

This project will enable us to re-launch the museum offer to new and a wider range of audiences; increase our audience engagement and impact; attract new visitors and drive additional footfall to the museum and to Taunton; promote local tourism and economic development through cultural heritage; and reinforce the value of heritage and culture to the local and national economy. The project will provide an important opportunity to make Taunton an even more popular destination for culture and heritage and a place that people will gravitate towards.

It will also help us to build relationships with corporate and commercial audiences to improve the commercial and income generating potential of the museum, thus supporting the museum's long-term sustainability.

Funding Request

The total project costs will be around **£1.45 million** (a detailed breakdown of project costs is available on request).

We have successfully secured a First Round pass from the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NLHF) for a grant of £807,000. The final 'Delivery Phase' application was submitted on 22 May, with a decision expected in September.

The Trust has committed £100,000 from its own reserves towards the project's costs and is now actively seeking additional match funding from a range of organisations, including the Wolfson Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation and Taunton Town Council.

A grant of around £1,000 from Bishops Lydeard and Cothelstone Parish Council would provide invaluable help towards meeting this shortfall and provide crucial assurance to other funders, notably NLHF, that the project has local support.

Dylan Edgar

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South West Heritage Trust

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