

Corby Pole Fair 1982. Credit: Glyn Dobbs

The famous Corby Pole Fair – which takes place only once every 20 years – has received National Lottery funding for an extra special Queen's Jubilee event.

The former-industrial town of Corby in North Northamptonshire is home to rich and varied heritage, and has seen a lot of regeneration over the years.

As one of our Areas of Focus, we have been investing in its local heritage, from the Corby Heritage Trail to sharing the 50-year history of Shape Dance – the council's dance scheme for over 300 local children.

One unusual tradition, that has received National Lottery funding, dates back to the 16th century, and has given generations of local people a sense of pride and wellbeing: the Corby Pole Fair.

> The Corby Pole Fair is a really significant event that only happens every 20 years.
>
> *Denise Westwood, Chair of the Pole Fair steering group*

Royal beginnings

The fair has ties to Corby's beginnings as a small Viking settlement and the town receiving the right to hold fairs and markets by Henry III in 1226. But it is thought that it was formerly started as a celebration of Corby's Royal Charter in 1585.

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How the town got its charter is still disputed to this day, but legend has it that Queen Elizabeth I fell into a bog while hunting in Rockingham Forest before being rescued by villagers from Corby. As a thank you, she granted the charter, which contained six valuable rights – including taxes and jury service

> Three people at a busy fair dressed like Queen Elizabeth I, with ruffles, dresses and crowns
>
> People dressing as Queen Elizabeth I at Corby Pole Fair 1982. Credit: North Northamptonshire Council Archive

A special day for the Jubilee weekend

The upcoming fair takes place on 3 June over the Queen's Platinum Jubilee weekend. Thanks to National Lottery players, it has received a £158,000 grant for an extra special community-led celebration, packed with old customs alongside a few new ones for 2022. These include:

- a dawn parade with a reading of the town's charter
- storytellers sharing tales of fugitive slaves, local nobles and rebellions
- a large Viking encampment and performances by local acts
- a traditional greasy pole climbing competition
- an ox roast feast
- traditional floral gateways to the old village area of Corby – decorated by local groups

> A dated image from 1982, with a Corby town square full of people and bunting overhead
>
> A community-wide event

Denise Westwood, Chair of the Pole Fair steering group, said: "The Corby Pole Fair is a really significant event that only happens every 20 years. We'd love the whole community to get involved to help create a spectacular event and fantastic memories to pass on to the next generation."

Inspiring places

Corby is one of our Areas of Focus, and we will continue to seek opportunities to invest in and celebrate its heritage.





Engagement Manager Dawn Bainbridge (centre) on the job – visiting a jazz archive project



itage identity

A seashore scavenger hunt at Tendring, one of our Areas of Focus

Areas of Focus