

The museum’s new layout and interpretation will engage people in the trade’s key themes

The Pen Museum in Birmingham will be officially reopened by the Lord Mayor today following an exciting HLF-supported renovation.

A HLF grant of £90,000, along with funding from the Arts Council England, the Association of Independent Museums and the Foyle Foundation, enabled the museum to transform their visitor experience, launching a new introductory exhibition and remodelling the museum entrance, retail and activity areas.

The opening event will also pay tribute to museum volunteers as they are awarded the Prestigious Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service by Stephen Goldstein CBE, Deputy Lieutenant for the West Midlands, recognising their outstanding contribution to their community.

Showcasing pen makers’ skill and craftsmanship

Based in the Argent Centre, a Grade II listed former Victorian pen factory, the museum’s new layout and interpretation will engage people in the trade’s key themes and improve access for visitors with disabilities.

Interactive displays, audio histories and ‘have a go’ calligraphy tables will form a new exhibition showcasing the skill and craftsmanship of the pen makers and their employees.

[quote=Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF West Midlands]"Thanks to National Lottery players, the museum has transformed their visitor experience, allowing everyone to explore this important part of the city's industrial heritage."[/quote]

Anthony Hayes, Volunteer and Operations Manager said: "The museum's new exhibition has been such an incredible project to be involved with. Our visitor facilities and expanded space now mean that we can offer a much better presentation of the fascinating stories behind one of Birmingham's core industries. I look forward to welcoming both new and returning visitors and encourage everyone to come along and discover a fascinating chapter in this city's history."

The museum houses a collection of over 5,000 artefacts and pieces of writing ephemera, the most comprehensive collection of its kind in the country, which will now be stored in improved environmental conditions.

The project has also given volunteers the chance to learn new skills in archive research and oral history recording.

Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: "We're delighted that with HLF support the Pen Museum has been able to better preserve and promote the story of the steel pen trade in Birmingham. Thanks to National Lottery players, the museum has transformed their visitor experience, allowing everyone to explore this important part of the city's industrial heritage and its profound impact, both locally and across the world."