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Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Evaluation

Final Evaluation Report



Historic England

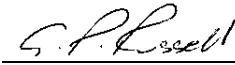
Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Evaluation

Final Evaluation Report

September 2025

Reviewed and approved by

Signature



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Date

September 2025

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

i. Background

AMION Consulting have been commissioned by Historic England to undertake an evaluation of the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings (SFM) project.

The first two buildings (Smithy and Stables) were converted in 2015 with a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant and Historic England funding as part of a Stage 1 project. The Stage 2 project restored the Grade I listed Main Mill and Grade II listed Kiln, completed in 2023. This project is the core focus for this evaluation.

This restoration was unlocked by **£20.7 million of investment from The National Lottery Heritage Fund** – one of the largest single awards ever provided. When combined with Stage 1 investment and Stage 2 match-funding contributions from Historic England, Shropshire Council, and volunteer time, the **total eligible project cost supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund amounts to circa £30.0 million**. There were additional project costs from Historic England in-kind staff time and operational costs of £3.6 million. The overall investment has transformed the site, bringing it back into productive use, and saved a unique building for the nation. The project has created an interpretation space, cafe and offices alongside enhanced outdoor area around the site.

The aim of this commission is to deliver an evaluation of the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project that assesses The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes and provides valuable learning for stakeholders. Delivering a research-based evaluation is a natural step for a Heritage Fund project of this scale and standing. The decision to invest was made based on research indicating that the project would create change and link to wider cultural programmes, thus, it is important to investigate the impact of the project.

A Phase 1 evaluation¹ has been undertaken focusing on the construction stage of the project. This document represents the Phase 2 evaluation focussing on the operational stage of the facility.

ii. Method

The evaluation aims to answer the following research questions:

1. Did the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project deliver the short and intermediate outcomes as outlined in the Logic Model? Is there any indication that longer term outcomes identified will be achieved? How have these contributed to The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes at the time of the original grant award?
2. Why were elements of the project successful or unsuccessful at delivering the intended outcomes? This includes the role of the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings.
3. How has the project benefited the public?

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/41-2024>

Our mixed-method approach has consisted of primary data collection (surveys, interviews, workshops), secondary data collection (cost and output monitoring), and Social Cost Benefit Analysis including a bespoke contingent valuation survey. A contingent valuation survey estimates the monetary value people place on specific goods or outcomes by asking them directly how much they would be willing to pay or accept under hypothetical scenarios.

Overall, our evaluation utilised the following data collection methods:

- cost and output monitoring data from SFM and HE;
- online visitor survey led by SFM with 645 responses;
- in-person visitor survey led by AMION and Spirul with 146 responses;
- detailed engagement process with over 30 stakeholders including staff from Historic England, Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings, Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID), local estate agents, and businesses on-site; and
- a bespoke contingent valuation survey led by AMION and Spirul to robustly calculate the use and non-use heritage benefits from the redevelopment.

iii. Evaluation Findings

The Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project has **delivered a nationally significant regeneration** of the Main Mill and Kiln to exemplar conservation standards, earning 18 national and international awards. This outcome has saved and safeguarded the fabric of the buildings, removing them from the Heritage at Risk register, and established the Flaxmill as a **flagship example of heritage-led regeneration**. The site now provides high-quality office space, a café, and an interpretation centre, contributing to improved perceptions of Shrewsbury and signs of wider regeneration.

In terms of output performance, the project delivered its main physical regeneration outputs but has fallen short in terms of some employment, visitor and volunteer targets as follows:

- **Physical regeneration** – Delivered its main physical regeneration outputs, with key buildings restored and additional high-quality commercial/cultural floorspace delivered to bring the site back into productive use.
- **Employment** – Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings currently supports 62 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs after two full years of operation. The target for the project was to support 197 FTE jobs by year five. It is calculated that the project will support between 86 to 136 FTEs by year five, which would be between 44 to 69% of the original target. It is considered that the original target was overly ambitious based on employment densities. It is expected that employment will be around our revised realistic target of 117 FTE jobs by year five.
- **Visitor numbers** – Based on the last year of data available, the site attracted 18,340 in-person visitors and 37,766 website visits – together reaching 67% of the 88,000 combined annual target in the Approved Purposes. Since the site re-opened, there have been a total of over 61,000 in-person visitors for visitor experience, learning activities, or events.

- **Volunteers** – The project has provided substantial volunteering opportunities with 3,323 volunteer days. This volunteering provided £588,000 of associated financial contribution. However, this represents 61% of the 5,471-day target in the Approved Purposes and 81% of the projected financial contribution. The shortfall is likely linked to the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings closing in 2022.

Despite this, the successful restoration of the site and the positive feedback from visitors has meant that **most of The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes have been achieved**, as shown below:

Table ES1: SFM – Assessment of National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes		
Objective	Evaluation timetable	Assessment
Outcomes for heritage		
Heritage will be better managed	Construction	Largely met
Heritage will be in better condition	Construction	Fully met
Heritage will be better interpreted and explained	Construction and Operation	Fully met
Heritage will be identified/recorded	Construction	Fully met
Outcomes for people		
People will have learnt about heritage	Construction and Operation	Partially met
People will have developed skills	Construction and Operation	Largely met
People will have changed their attitudes and/or behaviours	Operation	Fully met
People will have greater wellbeing	Construction and Operation	Largely met
People will have had an enjoyable experience	Operation	Fully met
People will have volunteered time	Operation	Partially met
Outcomes for communities		
With our investment, environmental impacts will be reduced	Construction	Fully met
More/wider range of people will have engaged with heritage	Operation	Partially met
Local community will be boosted	Operation	Fully met
Local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit	Construction and Operation	Fully met
Your organisation will be more resilient	Construction and Operation	Largely met

The value for money assessment has been undertaken in line with Green Book guidance, including a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR). This is a ratio of the present value of benefits over the present value of costs and represents how much benefit could be supported by £1 of public investment. BCRs are widely used in governmental appraisals and are the recommended metric in the Green Book.

Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings has a BCR of 1.36:1, indicating ‘acceptable’ value for money. Most of the benefits come from the heritage and cultural importance of the site. These are not limited to visitors but also include local residents who may never use the site directly. Our contingent valuation study shows that these ‘non-use’ benefits are substantial and extend across the wider region.

On their own, the ‘use’ benefits – those gained from visiting or directly engaging with the site – would not deliver value for money. The real added value comes from the pride, wellbeing, and sense of identity people feel from simply knowing the site exists, the option to visit in the future, and the assurance that it will be preserved for future generations.

Other monetised benefits include:

- Land value uplift of the site and regeneration of brownfield land;
- New employment opportunities;
- Environmental sustainability gains, and
- Wellbeing improvements from learning activities and volunteering.

There are also several significant non-monetised benefits such as unlocking housing, wider regeneration, and enhancements to terms of image and perceptions. These benefits were not included in the BCR calculation. Once these are considered, **the project reaches a ‘medium’ value for money assessment.**

Table ES2: SFM – Evaluation Summary Table	
	Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings
A. Present Value Benefits (£m)	£49.6
B. Present Value Costs (£m)	£36.4
C. Net Present Social Value (A-B, £m)	£13.1
D. BCR (A)/B)	1.36:1
E. Significant non-monetised impacts	Unlocking housing, Wider land value uplift and regeneration, Image and perceptions, Crime and anti-social behaviour
F. Value for money category	Medium

The delivery and management arrangements at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings were effective in achieving their central aim: the rescue and restoration of a nationally significant heritage asset. This is an achievement of national significance, given the site’s dereliction and the complexity of the works. At the same time, outcomes in community engagement and outreach have been less fully realised. The breakdown of the Friends partnership curtailed opportunities for grassroots involvement, and mobilising of the trading company was relatively late in the set up process to be able to deliver long term sustained community engagement in the remaining timelines. These challenges during delivery are likely to have played a role in the under delivery of visitor numbers and learning opportunities.

Key lessons from the project include the need for strong national leadership and governance in managing large-scale capital projects. It is also vital to set realistic expectations for community partners, and to give equal focus and clear processes to both the capital phase and the activity phase of a project. In addition, although the conservation was of very high quality, weaknesses in handover and management processes revealed less robust systems for ongoing operations. These processes should be improved for future capital projects delivered by Historic England.

Overall, the project can be judged a **qualified success**: it has safeguarded and transformed a nationally important heritage site, while also highlighting important lessons about community partnership, governance and sustainability for future regeneration projects.

A series of recommendations have been provided as part of the conclusion to this evaluation to assist future decision making and heritage projects at Historic England and National Lottery Heritage Fund, as summarised below:

- **Ability to deliver high-profile restoration schemes as a last resort solution** – Historic England should only intervene on capital projects of this scale as a last resort, with clear governance and decision-making hierarchies established from the outset, balancing exemplar schemes with operational requirements.
- **Integration of activity planning with capital delivery** – Adopt a joined-up project management approach, with clear direction from the Project Director and Executive Board, to align capital delivery with activity planning and support long-term sustainability.
- **Consistent communication and realistic expectations for community partners** – Ensure expectations placed on community partners are realistic and achievable and build resilient volunteer and community engagement structures not dependent on a single organisation.
- **Embed robust handover process** – Develop structured handover processes, both operational and staff-related, with clear documentation, training, and accountability to protect investment and ensure continuity.
- **Targeted approach required for diverse audience** – Heritage organisations should maintain and prioritise a robust Activity Plan to engage diverse audiences beyond project end. In this instance, English Heritage should proactively build on positive feedback from school engagement to increase learning activity figures and promote the site to their membership.
- **Heritage is greatly valued by society** – Continue to protect and invest in heritage assets, using robust valuation evidence to secure support, and publish evaluation results to strengthen future business cases.

Section 1

Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview and background

AMION Consulting have been commissioned by Historic England (HE) to undertake an evaluation of the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project. The redevelopment restored the world's first iron-framed building into a vibrant heritage destination with exhibition spaces, offices, and public facilities, while preserving its historic significance for future development. The purpose of this **Evaluation Report** is to assess the project's achievement of outputs and outcomes, value for money, and key lessons learned.

The core focus for this evaluation relates to the restoration of the **Grade I listed Main Mill and Grade II listed Kiln** at the Flaxmill Maltings (Stage 2 of the site's regeneration). When combined with Stage 1 investment and Stage 2 match-funding contributions from Historic England, Shropshire Council, and volunteer time, the **total eligible project cost supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund amounts to just over £30.0 million**. There were additional project costs from Historic England in-kind staff time and operational costs of £3.6 million. The overall investment has transformed the site, bringing it back into productive use, and saved a unique building for the nation, as well as creating an interpretation space, cafe and offices.

The investment by The National Lottery Heritage Fund was one of the largest allocations in the company's history to a single capital project. The HE investment also represented a significant contribution in one cultural asset. These investments reflect the importance of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings as a national as well as a regional heritage asset, as the grandparent to the modern-day skyscraper.

The aim of this commission is to deliver an evaluation of the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project that assesses The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes and provide valuable learning for stakeholders. Delivering a research-based evaluation is a natural step for a Heritage Fund project of this scale and standing. The decision to invest was made based on research indicating that the project would create change and link to wider cultural programmes, thus, it is important to investigate the impact of the project.

A Phase 1 evaluation² has been undertaken focusing on the construction stage of the project. This evaluation represents the Phase 2 evaluation stage focussing on the operational stage of the facility.

The Phase 2 evaluation stage has 4 formal outputs. This Final Evaluation report forms the fourth output of the evaluation. The following outputs have been delivered as part of the commission:

- Project Review (March 2024);
- Evaluation Methodology (June/July 2024);
- Interim Research Report (March-May 2025); and
- Final Evaluation Report (September 2025).

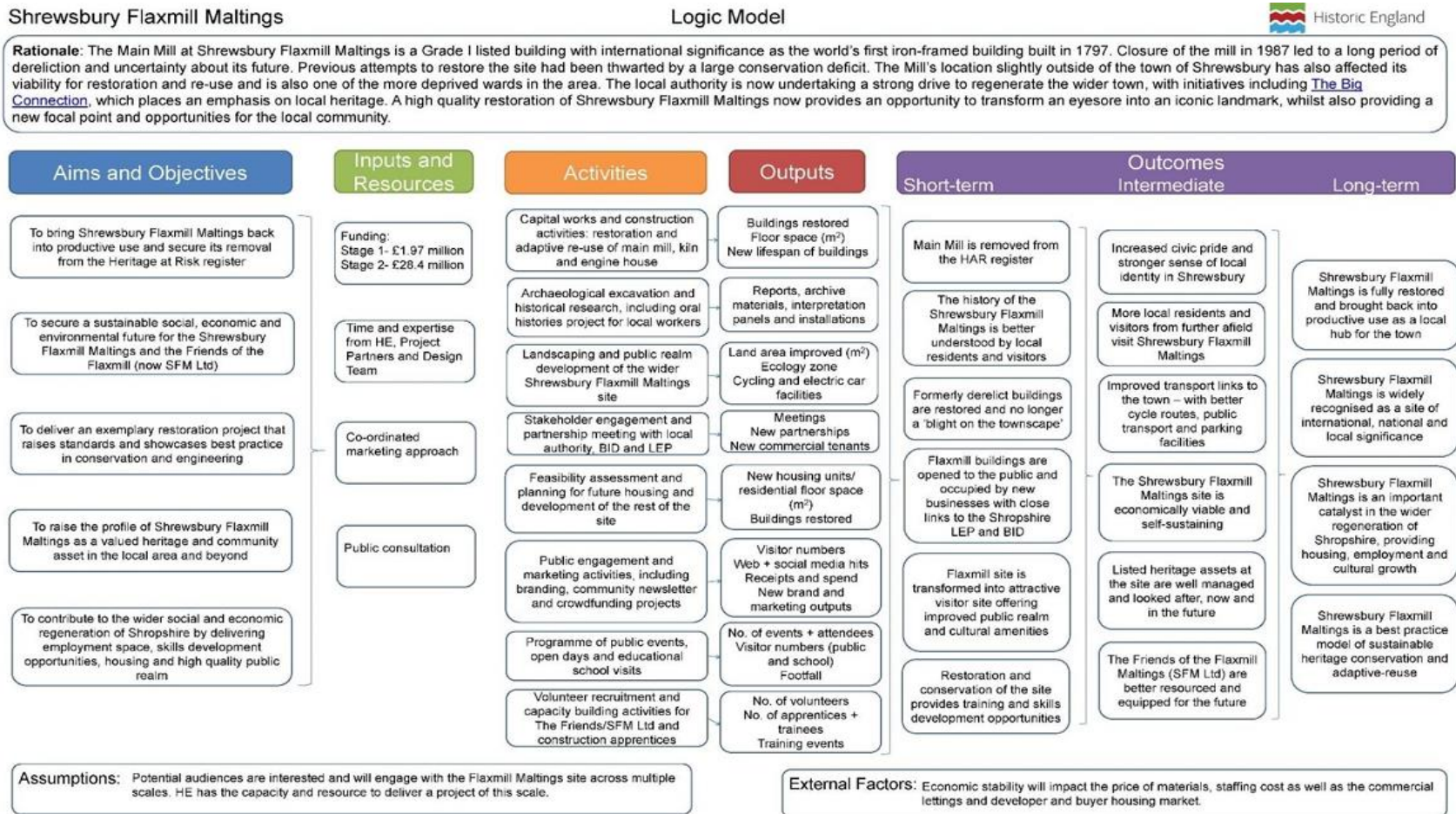
² <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/41-2024>

1.2 Evaluation approach

1.2.1 *Key evaluation questions*

The evaluation of the Flaxmill Maltings was conceptualised using a logic model (see **Figure 1-1** overleaf), which sets out the links between activities, expected outputs and outcomes for key elements of the scheme. An indicator framework was devised to determine the specific observable evidence needed to indicate if an output or desired change had been achieved.

Figure 1-1: SFM Logic model



In 2017, the outcomes for The National Lottery Heritage Fund were split into three elements, as shown in **Table 1.1** below.

Details have been provided as to when these outcomes have been fully evaluated and reported upon. The Phase 1 (Construction Phase) Evaluation Report has therefore already considered many of these outcomes. This Phase 2 report will assess the success of the project at delivering all The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes at the time of the award.

Table 1.1: National Lottery Heritage Fund’s outcomes, August 2017		
Outcome Category	Individual Outcome	Evaluation timetable
Outcomes for Heritage	Heritage will be better managed	Construction Phase
	Heritage will be in better condition	Construction Phase
	Heritage will be better interpreted and explained	Construction Phase and Operational Phase
	Heritage will be identified/recorded	Construction Phase
Outcomes for People	People will have learnt about heritage	Construction Phase and Operational Phase
	People will have developed skills	Construction Phase and Operational Phase
	People will have changed their attitudes and/or behaviours	Operational Phase
	People will have had an enjoyable experience	Operational Phase
	People will have volunteered time	Operational Phase
Outcomes for communities	With our investment, environmental impacts will be reduced	Construction Phase
	More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage	Operational Phase
	Your local community will be boosted	Operational Phase
	Local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit	Construction Phase and Operational Phase
	Your organisation will be more resilient	Construction Phase and Operational Phase

Our plan for data collection is directly informed by the key evaluation questions as follows:

1. Did the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project deliver the short and intermediate outcomes as outlined in the Logic Model? Is there any indication that longer term outcomes identified will be achieved?
 - How have these contributed to The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes at the time of the original grant award
 - Outcome for Heritage;
 - Outcomes for People;
 - Outcomes for Communities; and
 - Were there any unintended outcomes produced by Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project (positive and negative)?
2. Why were elements of the project successful or unsuccessful at delivering the intended outcomes? This includes the role of the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings.
3. How has the project benefited the public?
 - What community and social benefits have been generated (if any)?
 - What heritage benefits have been generated (if any)?
 - What other non-monetised benefits have been generated (if any)?
 - What economic benefits have been generated (if any)?

Table 1.2 sets out the relevant sections in this report which answer each evaluation questions above.

Table 1.2: Relevant sections for each Evaluation Question	
Evaluation question	Section
1a) Did the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project deliver the short and intermediate outcomes as outlined in the Logic Model?	Section 3.3
1b) How have these contributed to The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes at the time of the original grant award	Section 3.4
1c) Were there any unintended outcomes produced by Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project (positive and negative)?	Section 3.5
2) Why were elements of the project successful or unsuccessful at delivering the intended outcomes? This includes the role of the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings.	Section 5
3) How has the project benefited the public?	Section 4

1.2.2 *Evaluation methodologies*

To ensure that a robust evidence base was captured to answer evaluation questions 1 and 2, an information mapping exercise has been undertaken in **Table 1.3**.

This table highlights the significance of engaging with these groups during the development of the evaluation framework, elucidating how it contributes to the framework's robustness and its alignment with the project's outcomes. This primary data collection has been supported by any existing survey, engagement, and ticketing data as well as secondary data sources. A combination of the primary data collection together with the operational data has enabled a comprehensive evaluation of achieved outcomes and reasons.

Table 1.3: Information gathering – mapping against Heritage Fund outcomes

Individual outcome	Workshops	Interviews	Visitor survey	Business survey	Secondary data	Key information
Heritage will be better interpreted and explained	✓	✓	✓	-	-	Visitor survey
People will have learnt about heritage	✓	✓	✓	✓	DCMS Participation Survey	Visitor survey, workshops, DCMS
People will have developed skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	ONS data	Business survey and staff interviews
People will have changed their attitudes and/or behaviours	✓	-	✓	-	DCMS Participation Survey	Visitor survey, DCMS
People will have had an enjoyable experience	-	-	✓	-	ONS personal well-being estimates	Visitor Survey (NPS) and ONS
People will have greater wellbeing	✓	-	✓	-	ONS personal well-being estimates	Visitor survey, ONS, community workshop
People will have volunteered time	✓	✓	-	-	DCMS Community Life Survey	Volunteer workshop, Friends interview; DCMS
More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage	✓	-	✓	-	SFM ticketing data, DCMS Participation Survey	DCMS and SFM ticketing data
Your local community will be boosted	✓	✓	✓	✓	IMD Deprivation	Visitor survey, workshops
Local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit	✓	✓	✓	✓	IMD Deprivation	Visitor and business survey, workshops
Your organisation will be more resilient	✓	✓	-	-	SFM annual revenue and operating cost data	HE, staff and Friends interviews

To robustly consider evaluation question 3 relating to public benefits, AMION have assessed value for money through social cost benefit analysis (SCBA) to determine the total Net Present Social Value (NPSV) and Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of the project.

AMION has developed an in-house SCBA model, which includes heritage, cultural and wellbeing values for both users and non-users. Additionally, the model captures land value uplift³, productivity and other social benefits such as volunteering and training in line with guidance. This model has been used evaluate the performance of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings, supported by a bespoke contingent valuation survey⁴ to ensure the heritage value of this significant investment is accurately measured. The model is consistent with the total economic impact approach set out in the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) Culture and Heritage Capital framework⁵.

The SCBA approach has quantified as many of the costs and benefits attributable to the scheme as possible in monetary terms. The assessment has used the quantitative evidence of the outputs and outcomes arising from the scheme gathered through the other workstreams described above (such as financial sustainability/performance, jobs, visitors, survey data). Valuing the benefits has been carried out in line with HM Treasury Green Book methods and departmental guidance such as DCMS and Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)⁶.

The costs and benefits have then been compared to determine whether benefits exceed costs. To assess the performance of the project and compare the findings with other evaluation benchmarks, the results will be presented using BCRs.

To ensure that the required data for the output, outcome, and benefit assessment was gathered, the following primary research was undertaken:

- cost and output monitoring data from Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings and Historic England;
- online visitor survey led by Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings with 645 responses;
- in-person visitor survey led by AMION and Spirul with 146 responses;
- detailed engagement process with nearly 30 stakeholders including staff from Historic England, Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Friends of the Flaxmill, Shropshire Council, Shrewsbury Business Improvement District (BID), local estate agents, and businesses on-site; and
- a bespoke contingent valuation survey led by AMION and Spirul to robustly calculate the use and non-use heritage benefits from the redevelopment. This is a hypothetical survey to help the researchers understand how people feel about the investment that has been made. During this survey, we presented before and after photos of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. Responses were presented with hypothetical scenarios, which required respondents to imagine how much money they would be willing to pay for the project in absence of public funding.

³ Land Value Uplift is the increase in land or property values that occurs because of an investment. In social cost-benefit analysis, it is used as a proxy for the wider social and economic benefits created by a project.

⁴ A contingent valuation survey estimates the monetary value people place on specific goods, services, or outcomes – often non-market ones – by asking them directly how much they would be willing to pay or accept under hypothetical scenarios.

⁵ Available here: [Culture and Heritage Capital portal - GOV.UK](#)

⁶ MHCLG, (2025); The MHCLG Appraisal Guide: Third Edition. Available here: [The MHCLG Appraisal Guide - GOV.UK](#)

The key findings from the surveys and consultations are summarised during **Section 3** of this report during the assessment of outcomes, as well as the during **Section 5** relating to the delivery and management of the project. The key findings from the bespoke contingent valuation survey informs the value for money assessment in **Section 4**. A Primary Research Summary is provided in **Appendix A**.

1.2.3 Evaluation limitations

As is typical with evaluations of this nature, the scope of research was shaped by resource constraints. While the methodology adopted was proportionate and appropriate for the objectives, it inevitably involved trade-offs between depth and breadth. Given the high profile of this project, further research could always be undertaken to build on these findings and provide deeper insight into long-term outcomes and impacts. The limitations within the methodology include:

- Limited scale of in-person survey work – The programme of in-person visitor surveys was restricted to approximately 150 completions due to budget and resource limitations, compared with the 600 online responses. The in-person responses provided greater depth as well as more statistics on visitor demographic. The overall programme of survey work provided sufficient insights for our assessment of outcomes however, a larger-scale programme of structured in-person surveys would have provide greater confidence in the analysis.
- Constraints of the contingent valuation study – The bespoke contingent valuation (CV) survey was not originally part of the scope but was added by AMION to strengthen the evaluation and provide a more accurate assessment of the project’s value. While this delivered important headline data on the use and non-use value of the site, the study was deliberately concise, with 350 responses and minimal demographic information collected. This meant that no detailed statistical analysis could be undertaken to interrogate variations in willingness-to-pay values or to understand the reasons underpinning responses. The CV results therefore provide robust aggregate values for the value for money assessment, but limited explanatory insight. Future evaluations on projects of this scale should allow for a larger survey with full demographic profiling and multivariate statistical analysis.
- Consultation programme scope – The stakeholder consultation programme provided valuable qualitative depth, with over 30 consultees engaged through semi-structured interviews and workshops. However, the reliance on interviews with identified stakeholders means that perspectives largely reflect those already engaged in the project. Wider community views – particularly from groups who may not have participated in activities at all – are under-represented. Broader community surveys or deliberative workshops could have helped to capture a wider range of voices.
- Timing of the evaluation – The evaluation was conducted relatively soon after the re-opening of the site. While this has allowed early outcomes to be assessed, it inevitably limits the ability to make firm conclusions on longer-term impacts such as financial sustainability, ongoing visitor growth, and catalytic regeneration effects. Some findings are therefore

indicative, and further follow-up evaluation at a later stage would be valuable to assess the project's enduring impacts.

- Reliance on self-reported data – A significant proportion of the evidence base draws on self-reported data from surveys and interviews. While this provides essential insights into perceptions and experiences, it is inherently subjective and may be influenced by biases such as positive reporting by stakeholders closely involved in delivery, or selective response from engaged visitors. Additionally, AMION were not involved in the Phase 1 Construction Evaluation and therefore, our evaluation utilised findings from this report where appropriate.

Section 2

Project Context

2 Project Context

2.1 Site context and history

Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings is located within the Shrewsbury Town Centre Conservation Area, approximately a mile from Shrewsbury train station and the town centre.

The Flaxmill Maltings site has spanned multiple histories operating as a flax mill, a maltings, and a military barracks during World War Two. The history of the site up to Historic England's involvement is presented as follows:

- **1797:** The state-of-the-art steam-powered flax mill is built to process flax into linen yarn and thread. The business thrives for a large part of a century becoming Shrewsbury's largest employer.
- **1887:** The flax mill closes and lies empty for a decade, due to the falling popularity of linen which is eclipsed by the popularity of cotton, competition from other linen producers and declining efficiency
- **1897:** Buildings at the site are converted into a maltings by William Jones with major alterations to existing assets. The new developments on site include the Kiln building along with several other new structures
- **1933:** The traditional floor malting could not compete with new technologies and new purpose-built maltings facilities. William Jones goes bankrupt but the operation was continued in administration by Alliance Insurance.
- **1940-1945:** Site is used as an infantry training centre during World War Two. The malting floors are used as sleeping accommodation for soldiers.
- **1948:** Ansell's Brewery takes over management of the complex. New investment leads to the construction of two concentric grain silos in the 1950s and 1960s.
- **1987:** The business (now run by Albrew) ceases in 1987 due to financial challenges following competition from larger purpose built pneumatic maltings and the site begins to fall into disrepair through gradual degradation and physical obsolescence. The site remained derelict for 18 years, acting as a physical marker of local economic decline.
- **2005:** The site stands largely empty until Historic England, a government sponsored public body, purchased the site as an owner-of-last-resort.
- **2010:** The Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings were a local charity created in 2010 by volunteers to engage the public with Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. They worked in collaboration with partners, Historic England and Shropshire Council, in planning the project to restore and bring back to life this internationally important site.
- **2014:** As site owners, Historic England took leadership of the restoration project at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings in 2014

As shown in the **Figure 2-1**, the site is made up of eight listed buildings.

Figure 2-1 Site overview



Source: Historic England, adapted by AMION to improve image quality

The first two buildings (Smithy and Stables) were converted in 2015 with European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant investment as part of a Stage 1 project. This Stage 1 project made use of the ERDF funding to demolish the south grain silo, one of the major risks on site, and convert the Office (Smithy) and Stables buildings into a visitor centre for use by the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings (known as the Friends), a local charity set-up by volunteers to engage the public with Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. The relationship with the Friends is covered within AMION’s Stage 2 evaluation within **Section 3** and **Section 5**.

The Stage 1 project was completed in November 2015 at a cost of £1.9 million and considered as ‘permission to spend’ by The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Completion of this project demonstrated to funders, partners, potential investors, and the local community the ambitions of Historic England in redeveloping the site. It also demonstrated the ERDF’s commitment to the site and a belief that this first stage would be the start of its renaissance.

The latest phase of works, which is the core focus for this evaluation, relates to the restoration of the Grade I listed Main Mill and Grade II Kiln at the Flaxmill Maltings through £20.7m of funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The below table sets out the site buildings and their current status.

Table 2.1: Site buildings and status				
Designation	Known as	Grade	Built	Current Status – project stage
The National Lottery Heritage Fund project				
Spinning Mill	Main Mill	I	1797	Restored - Stage 2 Heritage Fund project
Maltings Kiln	Kiln	II	1898	Restored - Stage 2 Heritage Fund Project
Remainder of the site				
Cross Building	Cross Mill	I	1803 then rebuilt 1812	Partial repairs carried out - Stage 4 - No current timescale for major restoration. Roof structure repaired through Heritage Stimulus Fund (HSF) grant in 2020.
Flax Warehouse	Warehouse	I	1810	Major repairs required - Stage 4 - No current timescale for restoration
Apprentice House	Apprentice House	II*	c. 1811	Major repairs required - Stage 4 - No current timescale for restoration. Some repairs carried out in 2021 through HSF grant.
Dye House & Stove House	Dye & Stove House	II*	1850	Major repairs required - Stage 4 - No current timescale for restoration. Some repairs carried out funded by HE for improved access and meanwhile usage from 2016 to 2020.
Smithy or Workshop and Office	Smithy	II	1804	Restored - Stage 1 European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) project – opened as a Visitor Centre in 2015. Formed part of the wider Stage 2 project.
Stables and remains of Packing Warehouse	Stables	II	1804	Restored - Stage 1 ERDF project – opened as a Visitor Centre / learning facility in 2015. Formed part of the wider Stage 2 project

2.2 Project description

2.2.1 National Lottery Heritage Fund intervention

As shown in **Figure 2-2** below, the Main Mill and Kiln were previously in disrepair leading to negative perceptions of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings and the wider area as a whole. The physical presence of a site of such scale in a state of abandonment was considered reflective of wider feelings of the area. Therefore, Historic England’s intervention looked to reverse the idea that the Flaxmill Maltings site was emotionally segregated, and a forgotten part of Shrewsbury.

Figure 2-2 Site conditions prior to Heritage Fund investment



Source: Historic England

The history of The National Lottery Heritage Fund applications is presented as follows:

- An initial funding bid was made to The National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2011 by Shropshire Council. This bid requested £12.1 million funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.
- When The National Lottery Heritage Fund gave a Stage 1 “permission to start” in 2012, it was envisaged as part of a single, continuous project together with Stage 2. However, ERDF funding carried a strict deadline for expenditure. If that money was not spent by the cut-off date, it would have been lost. Therefore, the project was split with Stage 1 focused on urgent works and largely funded by ERDF.
- An updated application in 2013 by Shropshire Council awarded £12.8 million of The National Lottery Heritage Fund grant funding⁷.
- Historic England formally took leadership of the restoration project in 2014 as owner of last resort as the works stalled. This shift in governance strengthened the project’s credibility.
- A successful (revised) bid by Historic England to The National Lottery Heritage Fund was approved in 2017, **which secured £20.7 million of National Lottery Heritage Fund investment** against a total Stage 2 cost of £28.4 million. The Stage 1 investment was considered part of this investment, taking the total projected cost to **£30,382,488 for the restoration of the site**. The revised bid saw several elements omitted from the 2012 scheme due to increased costs, as mentioned within the Construction Stage evaluation report.

Table 2.2 presents more detailed descriptions of the Stage 1 and Stage 2 works at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. The overall investment has transformed the site, bringing it back into productive use, and saved a unique building for the nation. The project has created an interpretation space, cafe and offices alongside enhanced outdoor area around the site.

Table 2.2: National Lottery Heritage Fund intervention descriptions					
Stage	Phase	Funders	Description	Projected Costs	Dates

⁷ [World’s first iron-framed building secures £12.8m Heritage Lottery Fund investment - Shropshire Council Newsroom](#)

1	-	ERDF, HE (part of the wider Stage 2 project - permission to spend by Heritage Fund).	Office, Stables and Public Realm – creating visitor centre and educational space within Office (Smithy) and Stables, demolish 1950’s concrete grain silo to create public realm space between Office and Stove House	£1.97m	Sept 2014 – Dec 2015
2	1	Heritage Fund, HE, Shropshire Council, Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings, Trusts, Foundations and Individuals.	Conservation and repair work to the Main Mill – roof, windows, facades, structural strengthening	£28.4m	April 2017 – 30 Dec 2018
	2		Remaining structural work to Main Mill, Kiln and Jubilee Tower		Feb 2019 – March 2020
	3		Refurbishment of Main Mill and Kiln, infrastructure, landscaping and car park, interpretation, ground floor and first floor fit out.	Of which, £20.7m from Heritage Fund	April 2020 – Sept 2022 (visitor areas), May 2023 (Kiln & offices)
	Operations	Heritage Fund, HE, and generated income	Three years of ground floor operations.		Sept 2022 –2025

Table 2.3 presents the projected and outturn costs for the Stage 1 and Stage 2 projects.

As evaluated within the Construction Phase report, the capital works for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the project was delivered against its final revised budget allocation. Delivering a project of this scale in line with budget is a hugely successful achievement.

The total project cost, in terms of eligible costs for The National Lottery Heritage Fund, amounts to £30,069,796. This outturn cost is marginally lower than the expected £30.4 million cost, due to reduced volunteer time spent on the project after the disbandment of the Friends of the Flaxmill and an underspend on the Activity Costs of circa £178,000.

In addition, there was additional expenditure required which was not considered eligible as match-funding against The National Lottery Heritage Fund investment. There was circa £3.3 million of in-kind staff contribution for Historic England and nearly £0.4 million of operational costs. This spending meant that the overall cost allocated to the project exceed the forecasted costs.

In future, appropriate budgets for staff time and operational costs should be allocated to projects on this scale based on the complexities that often arise during delivery.

Table 2.3: Cost and funding summary		
Cost/funding items	Projected costs (£)	Outturn costs (£)
Costs by category		
Stage 1 Capital Costs	1,973,999	1,973,999
Stage 2 Capital Costs	25,434,217	25,515,718
Stage 2 Activity Costs	1,022,077	860,942
Stage 2 Project Costs	1,952,194	1,719,137
Total Project Cost (National Lottery Heritage Fund eligible costs)	30,382,488	30,069,796
<i>Ineligible costs - in-kind contribution</i>	-	3,281,808
<i>Ineligible costs - operational costs</i>		354,252
Total Project Cost	30,382,488	33,641,329
Funding source by category		
Stage 1 ERDF	892,848	892,848
Stage 1 Historic England	1,081,152	1,081,152
Stage 2 National Lottery Heritage Fund	20,717,533	20,509,516*
Stage 2 Historic England	5,530,000	5,906,209
Stage 2 Shropshire Council	1,000,000	1,000,000
Friends' income	431,655	239,257
Volunteer time	729,300	593,727
Total eligible funding	30,382,488	30,005,269
<i>Historic England funding to ineligible costs</i>	-	3,636,060
Total funding	30,382,488	33,641,329

Source: Historic England

Note: The in-kind contribution and operational costs since opening are not considered eligible costs for The National Lottery Heritage Fund. These were not included in the original application and therefore, are provided below the line as an additional cost.

* Final grant award figure is with The National Lottery Heritage Fund for finalising.

The Flaxmill Maltings scheme is a landmark and flagship project for Historic England. The plans pushed boundaries in terms of sustainability, with the incorporated renewable energy technologies producing two-thirds of the heat for the building. Evidence to date suggests the project is hitting or exceeding the targets and thus can be a benchmark for future projects.

The main construction phase was partially completed in September 2022 to allow the ground floor to open. The Main Mill and Kiln fully opened in May 2023 with commercial office space on the upper floors of the Main Mill available to let. The key objective of the public investment and capital works were to ensure Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings was brought back into productive use. The project aimed to deliver a stronger sense of pride in place through the following:

- catalyse wider development to lead to an increase in jobs and a boost to the local economy;
- deliver a more attractive destination for residents and visitors to increase the number of people engaging in recreation activities;

- using the site’s tangible link to the past, deliver a place where residents feel more connected to history and think the place is special; and
- become a national example of best practice heritage conservation by avoiding construction carbon emissions and virgin materials through adaptation as well as operational energy and carbon from restoration works.

According to the Design and Access Statement as part of the Heritage Fund bid in 2016, the planned vision for the uses of each building were as follows:

Main Mill

The ground floor of the Main Mill houses the main visitor space comprising of a café, and a large activity and interpretation space to the north. This interpretation space will be an engaging and interactive exhibition to learn about the history and significance of the building. The North Engine House also provides a black box AV experience. Guided tours will also take place where the building can be explored further including the upper floors, Kiln, Warehouse, Cross Mill and even the top of the Jubilee Tower taking in the spectacular views.

The upper floors are to be let as office/creative industry space with up to 240 jobs. They are to be finished to shell with the fit-out following on at a later stage. The South Engine House upper floors also include three meeting rooms with level access via the lift in the Kiln.

Kiln

The Kiln is to receive minimal fit-out, being retained as a raw, industrial (unheated) space. During this phase, only the primary structure has been installed on the upper floors, to allow lift/stair circulation that provides access to all floors. The Kiln is the key element that unlocks the future phases of renovating the Warehouse and the Cross Mill by providing a vertical circulation core connecting all these buildings together.

The Kiln also provides a grand entrance to the new offices where the full volume and roof form of the Kiln can be seen and appreciated. The design of the structure will allow for the future fit-out of useful meeting room/breaking spaces within the Kiln, but this is not included at this stage.

Figure 2-3 presents the planned uses of the Main Mill and Kiln alongside a visual of the buildings submitted to the Heritage Fund within the Design and Access Statement as part of the application.

Figure 2-3 Planned uses of the Main Mill and Kiln

Vision:



Source: Historic England Heritage Fund Bid in 2016 – Appendix Q Design and Access Statement

As a result of the analysis as part of the funding bid, the Historic England team developed a number of the proposed outputs and outcomes for the project.

The approved purposes from The National Lottery Heritage Funding Agreement documentation are listed below and aim to meet all three outcomes for the Heritage Fund around conservation, people, and communities. It should be noted that some outputs and outcomes also arise due to the Stage 1 investment, but these have been separated where possible.

Table 2.4: Target activities and outputs/outcomes of the Heritage Fund investment	
Project activity	Output / Outcome
Restore and conserve the Main Mill	Ground floor will be used for interpretation/activity space, along with interpretation in the North Engine House. The upper 4 floors will be used for commercial space, with the South Engine House providing meeting space and toilets.
Restore and conserve the Kiln	Kiln will be the principal entrance point to the commercial areas of the Main Mill. It also provides access to the Jubilee Tower for guided tours. Historic features on the ground floor will be retained and be part of the interpretation offer.
Repairs to the Cross Mill	Upgrading ground floor windows to provide an improved appearance and better 'meanwhile' use.

Table 2.4: Target activities and outputs/outcomes of the Heritage Fund investment	
Project activity	Output / Outcome
Deliver external landscape and infrastructure enhancements to the project site	A new permanent car park will be created on the 'Railway Triangle' at the back of the site, allowing access for commercial tenants to the Kiln via a new set of steps. Site enhancements will continue based upon the work started during Stage 1.
Fit commercial space to Cat A standard	2,328m ² of commercial space will be provided on the upper floors of the Main Mill. Potential to support 280 jobs if all floors occupied at full capacity.
Provide public cultural space	1,050m ² of cultural space will be created as a result of Stage 1 and 2. The ground floor of the Main Mill and Kiln will provide 870m ² of interpretation and activity space.
Undertake activities identified within the Activity Plan	<p>Headland Design produced an Activity Plan for the Stage 2 project in conjunction with the Friends. Of relevance to this evaluation, operational phase outputs include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 88,878 visits per year during the operation phase⁸ • 320,573 visits in total during the life of the project • 5,471 volunteer activity days • Retention of 3 Historic England staff • 196 local jobs supported⁹ • 6,940m² landscape upgraded with SUDS • 2,580m² served by natural ventilation • 2,580m² office space served by natural lighting <p>In April 2023, an Activity Plan written by Haley Sharpe Design on behalf of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings was submitted to National Lottery Heritage Fund. This included, but was not limited to, a programme of activities and events as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a learning offer • Writing of a site guidebook • Temporary third-party exhibitions in the Dye House • A street art project inspired by WW2 graffiti in the Cross Mill • Flaxmill Voices – an audio and light art installation • A Grants scheme for access (Community Micro-Grants) • A youth forum (the Flax Collective) • Late opening of the Cafe and Exhibition with live music (Flaxmill Fridays) • Talks – ticketed • Sustainability Month (June 2024) • A three day festival (Flaxmill Creates) • Enlivenment of the East Terrace

Source: Historic England National Lottery Heritage Funding Agreement ('Narrative for HLF' and Appendix C HLF Approved Purpose – Changes from HLF Application Letter').

⁸ Within the Approved Purposes document with The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the visitor numbers comprise of 10,190 visits from learning activities, 22,600 visitors from the visitor experience, 4,000 from events, 522 from new projects, 5,000 from the café, and 44,112 through website visits.

⁹ The amount of commercial space in the Main Mill is designed to accommodate a maximum of 70 on each floor (potential for 280 in total). It is unlikely there will be full occupancy and a 70% occupancy rate has been assumed

2.2.2 *Delivery and operation arrangements*

Friends of the Flaxmill disbandment and Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Ltd

The restoration of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings was supported by a local charity, the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings (known as the Friends), who were set up by volunteers in 2010 to engage the public with Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. They worked in collaboration with Historic England and Shropshire Council to reinstate this internationally important site. It was planned they would take over responsibility for the management of the ground floor visitor offer, including the shop and cafe, and delivery of the Activity Plan when the site re-opened.

There were difficulties establishing an achievable Business Plan and Activity Plan. This was the responsibility of the Friends, working with Historic England at key points. CounterCulture were appointed during September 2021 following a transparent procurement process that also involved the Friends. Their initial role was to assist the Friends in becoming operationally ready. In addition, CounterCulture were tasked with identifying challenges and shortfalls in the project and refining the Business Plan to focus on delivering a Minimum Viable Product. CounterCulture worked extensively alongside the Friends on the above tasks.

The Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Ltd trading company was set up by Historic England in May 2022 to deliver the visitor operations on site whilst the Friends increased their capacity and capabilities, with the intent that the trading company would hand over to the Friends when appropriate. Historic England quickly mobilised the trading company to ensure the visitor experience and Activity Plan was ready for opening. This trading company was not considered a long-term operator, but rather a temporary solution.

After months of support, the Friends announced their decision to disband and withdraw from the project in July to September 2022, shortly before the end of the project's construction phase. This decision was made as they felt they were no longer going to be the main operator of the site and therefore, felt they had no role going forward. The circumstances around their disbandment is assessed as a key outcome in **Section 3.3** and as a lesson learned during delivery in **Section 5.2.1**.

The trading company was a Limited Company with three executive directors who are senior Historic England staff members. The trading company's directors and the company secretary sat on the Historic England Strategic Project Board, which was responsible for the oversight of the Flaxmill Maltings project overall. The Head of Visitor Experience at SFM was line managed by the project SRO, who was also one of the trading company directors. They attended Strategic Project Board meetings which occurred five to six times per year. The Head of Visitor Experience reported on the delivery of the business plan, including the 5 Year Financial Profit & Loss and the Activity Plan. They also attended and reported at regular National Lottery Heritage Fund monitoring meetings. The team worked with key stakeholders, identified in **Section 2.3**.

Visitor experience

The visitor experience was managed by Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Ltd until March 2025. During this evaluation, it has been agreed that the operation of the visitor experience will be transferred from Historic England to English Heritage. This transfer took place on 1st April 2025.

In line with the business plan, there were two sides to the visitor experience:

- **Day to day activity** – Visitors who pay to visit the exhibition and/or guided tours, as well as walking around and visiting the shop and café; (the shop and cafe are free to visit) and
- **Activity plan** – An Activity Plan has been in place since the grant application to The National Lottery Heritage Fund covering wider engagement and learning activities and events, and a programme of community outreach. This was initially managed by the Friends. The final iteration was created by consultancy firm Haley Sharpe Design after the Friends disbanded. Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Ltd had responsibility for delivering the Activity Plan. The Activity Plan had several initiatives to reach hard to reach groups as well as engage with local cultural organisations such as Lovelyland, the Hive, Jamila Walker, Drawn, Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust, Severn Bridges Multi Academy Trust, and Wild Strawberry.

The ground floor uses of the Main Mill, and shop and café, were managed by the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Ltd trading company. The trading company was itself a defacto tenant of the exhibition space and offices they occupy. This arrangement mirrored what Friends would have become if they had continued.

The café was run by an independent company with contracting arrangements, managed by the trading company. This café operator submitted their notice with the intent to cease trading in October 2025 however, recruitment of a similar company to provide this service is underway. The shop was run by the trading company. All aspects of the visitor offer – such as the brand, website, ticketing, social media, and shop – were initially developed with the Friends and then by Historic England for the Trading Company.

All the above responsibilities have now been transferred to English Heritage since April 2025.

Leasing of upper floors

The upper floors consist of 2,600sqm of commercial space. The first floor was fitted out by Historic England and has since been fully leased out to four high-quality businesses. The second floor was leased to a single company in summer 2024 who undertook their own fit out. A design is in place to compartmentalise the fourth floor into two suites, with construction hoped to commence in autumn 2025.

Historic England will enter leasing arrangements with any other businesses who will let the space. Historic England continues to hold responsibility for the commercial space in the upper floors. The transfer of operations to English Heritage only relates to the visitor experience on the ground floor.

2.2.3 *Wider site plans*

As discussed, The National Lottery Heritage Fund investment formed Stage 2 of the masterplan. The other stages do not form part of this evaluation, however, should be considered as part of the overall vision for the site including:

- **Stage 1**¹⁰ – Office, Stables and Public Realm project completed in November 2015, with ERDF and Historic England funding, creating a visitor centre and interpretation space within two

¹⁰ In 2012, the Stage 1 project was considered as permission to start by The National Lottery Heritage Fund along with the Stage 2 project. They were only split as the ERDF funding needed to be spent by a set date, or the funding would have been lost.

Grade 2 listed buildings. The centre was managed by the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings on a lease with Historic England prior to their disbandment.

- **Stage 3** – New Build project, to create new residential and commercial units on the surrounding enabling land. The scope has been outlined within the masterplan proposals. The wider masterplan site is a 7.2ha with planning consent for 120 residential units. In July 2025, Historic England announced Capital&Centric as the preferred developer for a residential development project within the grounds of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. The proposal aims to create new homes while preserving the legacy of the Grade I listed Main Mill and iconic Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings complex.
- **Stage 4** –The redevelopment of the remaining historic buildings, which could be restored individually or as a group. This will occur when funding and demand allows.

2.3 Key partners and stakeholders

The key partners and stakeholders for the delivery of the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings scheme are set out as follows:

National

- Historic England
 - Facilities Management Team – site and national
 - Estates Team
 - Public Engagement Team
 - Business Improvement Team
 - National Conservation Projects Team
 - Socio-Economic Analysis and Evaluation (SEAE) team
- Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Ltd (trading company)
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund
- English Heritage
- Departmental government bodies such as Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) and Arts Council England (a wider stakeholder)
- National heritage and conservation community

Regional

- Marches LEP / CA

Local

- Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings

- Business Improvement District (BID) team
- Shropshire Council and Shrewsbury Town Council
- Residents and community representatives
- Occupying businesses
- Local artists, cultural organisations, and volunteers
- Local schools

2.4 Baseline Summary

The baseline review undertaken as part of the Project Review in March 2024 looked at a range of economic, culture and heritage indicators to assess performance of the area prior to delivery of works (2014) up to the opening of the facility and beyond (2024). The report provides a comprehensive overview of various aspects of Shropshire's local economy, population, labour force, deprivation, wellbeing, culture, heritage, and environment.

The key findings from the review are as follows:

- **Healthy economy:** Shropshire currently has a lower unemployment rate than the West Midlands (and equal to the national unemployment rate), as well as a higher economic activity rate than both comparator areas
- **Pockets of deprivation:** Overall, Shropshire displays relatively low levels of deprivation, ranked 174 out of 317 local authorities (1 = most deprived). The Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings site, however, is located within one of the pockets of deprivation in the town, sitting within the top 40% most deprived LSOAs in England.
- **Normal level of heritage engagement:** In 2022/23, 68% of Shropshire and Staffordshire residents attended a heritage site in the preceding year, broadly in line with the national average.
- **Increasing wellbeing:** The post-pandemic uplift in life satisfaction and happiness in Shropshire in 2023 coincided with the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings opening – with a life satisfaction score of 7.75 and happiness score of 7.66 for Shropshire residents in April 2022 to March 2023.

2.5 Previous Evaluation

An overall Evaluation Report has been produced by Historic England's Socio-Economic Analysis and Evaluation (SEAE) Team and the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Project Team¹¹. This report reflects an independent evaluation commissioned by HE as well as work undertaken by HE staff. It covers all aspects of the construction phase of the project, with reference to Historic England's governance of the project over that period¹². The report was based on the Logic Model and evaluation framework. It takes a mixed method approach, incorporating both quantitative and

¹¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/41-2024>

¹² The report does not explicitly cover the partnerships element of the governance arrangements

qualitative datasets as well as involving consultations with individuals of representative organisations and a workshop with members of the community.

The key findings from the Construction Phase 1 evaluation were:

- **Heritage Impacts:** evidence underlines the priority on delivering a high-quality restoration project utilising best practice conservation techniques. A key project success lies in saving the building for the public, now and in the future.
- **Economic Impacts:** As set out in **Table 2.3**, £29 million of public funding was invested from ERDF, Historic England, Shropshire Council, and The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The construction project is estimated to have a net Gross Value Added (GVA) impact of £32 million localised to the Shrewsbury area. In total, through direct and indirect impacts of the project has been estimated to support £64 million to the UK economy disregarding any impacts of displacement, leakages and substitution.
- **Environmental Impacts:** the project has an associated carbon footprint of 475 tonnes of carbon emissions, however, the restoration efforts resulted in 900 tonnes of embodied carbon savings. The project also has an associated operational carbon cost, but this has been minimised as much as possible but prioritising innovative approaches such as introducing a ground source heat pump or reusing existing materials.
- **Social Impacts:** social impacts are newly emerging and require further investigation. That being said, data from stakeholder interviews, market research and visitor feedback suggest a perception shift toward the site, reported increases of pride in place and a reduction in crime. For example, HE economists analysed data from Police.Uk and the Department for Justice, which indicated that incidents of crime in 2022 were down by approximately 27% in the area surrounding SFM compared to the Shrewsbury average between 2011 and 2021.

The overall evaluation noted that the relationship between Historic England and the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings was not included as part of the construction stage evaluation and that ‘this is deemed to be an essential piece of key learning and, thus, should be delivered impartially by an external consultant’.

The evaluation to date has laid a good base for the Phase 2 Operational phase evaluation. The Phase 1 evaluation included a Theory of Change from which a Logic Model was developed. The Theory of Change and the Logic Model remained valid for this evaluation. AMION have tested both the Theory of Change and Logic Model against the latest DCMS and MHCLG outputs for schemes to ensure compliance with the latest guidance.

The balance of the Phase 1 evaluation focus was on the inputs and resources used to deliver the restored Mill and Kiln and detailed at length the activities and timelines to reach construction completion. Regarding outputs and outcomes achieved, these were tested through a series of consultations by Historic England staff. These provide useful insights into the degree to which wider outputs have or are likely to be achieved such as increasing pride in place, conserving heritage and Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings becoming a national as well as local destination.

It is the longer-term outputs and outcomes regarding the process and partnerships involved in operating the Flaxmill Maltings as well as its impact on social, environmental, and economic well-being and prosperity that have been further explored during this Phase 2 operational evaluation.

Section 3

Project Performance

3 Project Performance

3.1 Overview

This section assesses the performance of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings against its key outputs and outcomes. In particular, this section assesses evaluation question 1 as set out below:

1. Did the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project deliver the short and intermediate outcomes as outlined in the Logic Model? Is there any indication that longer term outcomes identified will be achieved?
 - How have these contributed to The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes at the time of the original grant award?
 - Outcome for Heritage;
 - Outcomes for People; and
 - Outcomes for Communities.
 - Were there any unintended outcomes produced by Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project (positive and negative)?

As the capital costs were evaluated during the Phase 1 Evaluation, this element of the project does not form part of this evaluation. However, where operational costs and revenues influence the achievement of outcomes relating to financial sustainability, this has been considered as appropriate.

3.2 Project Activity and Outputs

This section reviews the project's delivery of key activities and how well it has achieved intended outputs.

3.2.1 *Physical regeneration and employment outputs*

The project has delivered **its main physical regeneration outputs, with key buildings restored and additional high-quality commercial/cultural floorspace delivered to bring the site back into productive use**. The funding enabled a best-practice heritage restoration at a regionally significant site that had remained vacant and derelict for decades.

The project's exceptional quality earned widespread recognition, including regional and national RIBA Awards, the Civic Trust Conservation Award, and the Europa Nostra Award. In total, **it received 18 awards, highlighting the refurbishment's significance and excellence**. Innovation was key throughout, with sustainable measures integrated to boost resilience and long-term viability. Nick Hill, Historic England's internal Project Manager of the redevelopment was awarded

an MBE for services to Heritage, with his leadership of the restoration at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings cited as a highlight of his long career¹³.

The mixed-use development has delivered a public exhibition on the ground floor alongside a shop and café run by an independent local operator, supported by high-quality commercial space on the upper four floors. Consolidation of adjacent historic buildings, including repairs to the Cross Mill, and improvements to the surrounding public realm and infrastructure has enhanced the accessibility and preservation of the site. This investment has also **helped to unlock the wider regeneration of the site**, including the planned housing development on the grounds of SFM. As part of this, Historic England have announced Capital&Centric as their developer partner for the construction of a new development of residential homes around the newly restored historic mill complex. The wider site has planning consent for 120 residential units.

The project aimed to provide 870sqm of interpretation and activity space within the ground floor of Main Mill and Kiln. Based on floorspace breakdown, it is calculated 930sqm of productive floorspace (excluding 'Kiln void' space) has been delivered¹⁴, which is 107% of the target. However, the **physical regeneration of the scheme has marginally underperformed on the upper floors at this stage**. The project aimed to deliver 2,328sqm of commercial floorspace for tenants on the upper floors fitted out to Cat A. Based on the delivered floorspace breakdown, it is calculated 2,259sqm of commercial floorspace was delivered on these floors¹⁵, which is 97% of the target. It was reduced as the fitted out designed for the first floor included a circulation corridor and suites rather than a sole occupier.

Historic England delivered all floors with shell and core, ready for letting. In addition, to stimulate demand in an emerging office market, Historic England invested over £1 million to fit out the first floor to Cat B standard and let this floor to four separate companies. The companies include a legal practice, telecommunications, architects, and a trust. Subsequently, the second floor and one meeting room on the third floor has been fitted out and let to a risk management company. An architect and design team have been commissioned to support fit out of the fourth floor. The remaining third floor space remains vacant at this stage.

The occupancy rate is yet to reach its target, but signs suggest it could do by year 5 as indicated in the final business plan. The submitted 2016 business plan had a target occupancy rate of 70% after 5 years of opening. The upper floors currently have a 55% occupation after 2 years, with one tenant lined up for half the fourth floor. Property market agents also suggest that the whole fourth floor could be occupied by 2026/27 (year 4), which would take overall occupancy to around 80%. Therefore, it is likely that the occupancy rate could reach 70% by year 5 (2027/28).

The employment outputs were calculated upon a 70% occupancy, with a target of 196 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs supported by the project by year 5. These targets were established prior to Covid-19. Before evaluating progress, it is important to note that the **original employment targets**

¹³ [BBC Radio Leicester - Leicester, MBE for huge contribution to heritage conservation](#)

¹⁴ The breakdown of commercial floorspace indicates the delivery of 227sqm of café and back of house space and 471sqm of interpretation space within the Main Mill as well as 232sqm of interpretation and pathway space in the Kiln. There was also the delivery of 303sqm of void space in the Kiln which has not been included in the analysis.

¹⁵ The breakdown of commercial floorspace across floors 1 to 4 indicates the delivery of 1,907sqm of office space, 174sqm of meeting rooms, and 178sqm of circulation space (on 1st floor).

were highly ambitious when measured against standard industry employment densities, irrespective of Covid-19.

To meet the target of 3,378 sqm of floorspace, the entire development would require an average density of 12 sqm per job. This assumption is broadly reasonable for office space, though still optimistic if applied to gross internal areas. However, cultural space typically has a much lower density – closer to 70 sqm per job. **Based on AMION’s analysis, a target of 117 FTE jobs is more realistic for a 70% occupancy.**

It is currently calculated that Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings supports 62 FTE jobs by year 2 of operation. These jobs arise from:

- 14 jobs from onsite and Historic England operations (Facilities Management, Visitor Experience, and Security);
- 38 staff from the four companies on the first floor (with capacity for more); and
- 10 staff from the company on the second floor (with capacity for up to 60).

If we assume that the fourth floor has the average employment density of the currently occupied first and second floors, it is robustly estimated that there will be at least 86 FTE jobs by year 5. There will also be identified capacity for 50 more jobs on the second floor, taking the potential job figure to 136 FTE jobs. As these figures are uncertain, we have used the lower range of the future jobs, with commentary provided on the higher range.

Based on this, the project is expected to deliver around **44% of the employment target by year 5 in the Approved Purposes with The National Heritage Lottery Fund**, with the potential to reach 69% if the company who is leasing the second floor grows into its leased space. The project is expected to deliver around **74% of our revised job target by year 5**, with the potential to reach 116% of this more realistic target.

Therefore, the employment levels currently fall short of the target of 196 FTE jobs. However, three mitigating factors should be noted as follows:

- The project was planned and designed prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. This global pandemic significantly altered with a substantial shift from office to remote working. Market analysis and stakeholder consultations indicates that the move back towards office working is slowly taking place, which is likely to increase demand for the commercial floorspace. However, working patterns have shifted to co-working spaces which are likely to have a lower employment density for the same amount of leased space compared to original forecasts;
- Prior to Covid-19, a local creative company was interested in occupying the entire commercial floorspace over floors 1 to 4. These discussions were well progressed and would have led to the target occupancy being achieved through a single deal; and
- It is rare for the project funder to fit out commercial floorspace within regeneration opportunities. The office space was being delivered in an emerging market through a complex restoration of a fragile building. Historic England prioritised investment in the fit-out of the first floor to a high-quality Cat B standard to stimulate future demand. This has been deemed a success, as it has demonstrated the potential of the site to other prospective occupiers which has helped the occupation of the second floor. The second-floor tenant paid for their

own fit out at a lower cost than the first, as it acts as a show room to demonstrate what could be achieved. The development has achieved higher rental values than the average rates for the Shrewsbury and Shropshire markets. These achieved rates is evidence of the quality of the development.

Overall, the project was expected to reach its occupancy target after five years of operation. The project team has leased the upper floors in line with the targets per year, with the first and second floor fully let as well as ongoing conversations for the fourth floor. However, the businesses are yet to fully utilise the floorspace in line with the industry employment densities. It is hoped that the single company on the second floor will fully occupy the space, which has potential for an additional 50 jobs. If this was to happen, the project will support over 130 jobs, which is over AMION’s revised target. **However, it is unlikely that the original targets in the Approved Purposes will be reached as the employment densities used in these calculations were overly optimistic.** As set out above, Covid-19 did alter working patterns and influence immediate demand.

An assessment of the physical regeneration and employment outputs is presented in **Table 3.1** below.

Table 3.1: Assessment of regeneration and employment activities and outputs		
Project activity	Commentary of outputs	% of target from funding agreement
Restore and conserve the Main Mill	The Main Mill has been restored to an exemplary standard, as shown by the various awards. A mixture of uses has been delivered, which has been deemed successful.	Complete
Restore and conserve the Kiln	The Kiln has been restored to an exemplary standard, as shown by the various awards. There were complex issues during delivery relating to the lift and Jubilee Tower which are further explored in Section 4.	Complete
Repairs to the Cross Mill	Cross Mill has been upgraded to improve appearance and consolidate site.	Complete
Deliver external landscape and infrastructure enhancements to the project site	Numerous accessibility, landscape, and infrastructure enhancements to the project site have been made, as well as a new permanent car park. This phase of work has helped to unlock future regeneration on the wider site.	Complete
Fit commercial space to Cat A standard	The project aimed to deliver 2,328sqm of commercial floorspace on the upper floors fitted out to Cat A. Based on the delivered floorspace breakdown, it is calculated 2,259sqm of commercial floorspace was delivered on these floors due to the need for more circulation space on the first floor. However, the first-floor space has been fitted out to a higher Cat B standard and is now fully leased. The office space is served by natural ventilation and lighting as set out in the designs. The development has been achieving higher rental values than expected for the area.	97% due to circulation space, but with first floor fitted to higher Cat B standard

Table 3.1: Assessment of regeneration and employment activities and outputs		
Project activity	Commentary of outputs	% of target from funding agreement
Provide public cultural space	1,050m ² of cultural space will be created as a result of Stage 1 and 2. The ground floor of the Main Mill and Kiln will provide 870m ² of interpretation and activity space.	107%
Historic England staff outputs within the Activity Plan	The original Activity Plan aimed to retain 3 Historic England staff: Project Lead, Project Manager and Project Officer. Based on information provided, two Historic England staff continue to work on the project whilst one did so until his retirement upon construction completion.	100%
Total employment outputs by year 5	<p>The project originally aimed to support 196 jobs by year five, based on achieving a 70% occupancy rate.</p> <p>Progress to date shows good alignment with leasing targets: the first and second floors are fully let, and discussions are ongoing for the fourth floor. Current occupancy is 55%, which could rise to 80% if the fourth floor is secured – making the 70% target by year five realistic.</p> <p>However, the original targets were ambitious given the available floorspace and employment densities. So far, the project supports 62 FTE jobs. By year five, this is expected to increase to 86-136 FTE jobs, depending on fourth-floor occupancy. This equates to 44-69% of the original target in the funding agreement.</p> <p>Against our revised job target, the project is forecast to deliver around 74% by year five, with the potential to exceed it at 116%.</p> <p>The apparent underperformance is therefore partly due to unrealistic original targets, and partly to shifts in working patterns, as many tenant companies are not using their leased space as intensively as expected. Additionally, one company was interested in occupying the entire space prior to Covid-19, which would have led to the target occupancy being achieved through a single deal.</p>	44-69%
Landscape upgraded by SUDS	No information has been provided to demonstrate the Sustainable Urban Drainage System being delivered across the site.	Incomplete

Note: Assessment status is green for >=100%, amber for 65-100%, and red for <65%

3.2.2 Visitor and Activity Plan outputs

Total Outputs since Reopening

Since reopening to the public in some form, there have been over 61,000 in-person visits to Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings for visitor experience, learning activities, or events and new projects. This total figure excludes visitors purely to the café, which has only been calculated for the past year using survey information collected since our evaluation.

The project has had a significant online presence and reach. In total, the eligible websites (Friends, Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings, Historic England, and Shropshire Council) have had attracted over 118,000 unique users during the project.

The Activity Plan did not set quantified targets for social media. Instead, it anticipated the development of a social media strategy alongside websites and other promotional materials. In practice, social media has become a major channel for the project. The project has been widely promoted across these platforms, reflecting changing trends in how audiences are reached. To date, the content has achieved a reach of 3.2 million people, with almost 100,000 engagements.

In total, there have been 3,323 volunteering activity days, contributing over 23,000 hours of volunteering.

Table 3-2: Total Outputs since 2015	
	April 2015 to March 2025
In person (excluding café)	
Visitor experience	29,618
Learning activities	8,330
Events and new projects	23,453
Total	61,401
Digital / Online	
Website visits	184,118
SFM Social Media 'Reach'	3,254,929
SFM Social Media 'Likes/Followers'	19,425
SFM Social Media 'Engagement'	96,444
Volunteering	
Volunteer activity days	3,323
Volunteer hours	23,259

Assessment against targets in Approved Purposes

Within the Approved Purposes document with the National Lottery Heritage Fund, there was a target of 88,878 visits per year during the operation phase split as follows:

- 10,190 visits from learning activities;
- 22,600 visitors from the visitor experience;
- 4,522 from events and new projects;
- 5,000 from the café; and
- 44,112 through website visits.

Based on the last year of data available (March 2024 to February 2025), **the visitor numbers to the site have not reached this annual target level.**

Robust data is available for all categories excluding the café. Using this data, the site has attracted 18,340 in-person visitors and 37,766 website visits, which is 67% of the target. This

underperformance is particularly driven by the visitor experience¹⁶ (7,289 visitors compared to a target of 22,600) and learning activities¹⁷ (2,949 visitors compared to a target of 10,190) which were significantly below their targets. The events and new projects¹⁸ have exceeded their target by nearly 4,000 visitors per annum, with activities such as the Flaxmill Creates Festival a success with local residents.

Café visitors have been estimated using the responses to the visitor survey, which requested how often attendees had previously visited the site and the main purpose of the visit. Based on this method, it is calculated that the café attracted around 19,000 visitors within the last year¹⁹. As part of this evaluation, an in-depth stakeholder engagement process has been undertaken with over 30 stakeholders. Many stakeholders indicated that the **café has been popular with the community** as it exceeds the food and beverage offer in the surrounding area. This level of visitors from the café greatly surpasses the projected attendance at the café (5,000 visitors per annum).

Historic England and delivery partners made a significant decision to make the café more commercially focussed with a professional organisation responsible for its ongoing operation. This decision originally looked to have been correct as the operator, Turned Wood Café, has delivered a high-quality service for the local community. However, it should be noted that financially it is difficult to sustain, and it has since closed. Part of the reason for this was the underoccupancy of the upper floors currently. English Heritage are looking to procure a similar operator for the long-term sustainability of the site. A future café will be better supported once the occupancy rates for the upper floors reach expected levels by year 5.

Once the café visitors are included within the analysis, **it is calculated that the site attracted 89% of its target in-person visitors and 85% of its target total visitors**. Although the café visitors are unlikely to receive the same heritage and learning benefits from visiting the site, there are considerable wellbeing benefits from being able to access a community hub in the local area.

The project has provided substantial volunteering opportunities for local communities, supporting 23,259 volunteer hours or 3,323 volunteer days (defined as 7 hours a day). However, this level of volunteer activity days supported was also below target, with a target of 5,471 days. The achieved level of volunteering represents a financial contribution of around £593,727, compared to expected match funding amount of £729,000. The disbandment of the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings is likely a key reason for this target not being met, as a wider group of regular volunteers were no longer active on the site. It is worth noting however, a number of volunteers with the Friends did stay and become a volunteer with the trading company.

The assessment of visitor and Activity Plan outputs are presented in **Table 3-3**.

¹⁶ Visitor experience analysis has included the visitor centre, guided site tours, and Jubilee Tower Tours

¹⁷ Learning activities analysis has included adult group learners, school groups, talks off site, guided walks, conference attendees, and workshops

¹⁸ Events and new projects have been combined as it was unclear which categories related to new projects. This combined analysis has included Heritage Open Days, Family Fun Days, Flax to Fabric, public open events, trails, and other activities

¹⁹ Financial data has been examined from the café in order to triangulate this estimation.

Table 3-3: Assessment of visitor and Activity Plan outputs			
Visitor category	Target in the Approved Purposes with National Lottery Heritage Fund (per annum)	Achieved outputs from March 2024-February 2025	% of target
Visitor experience	22,600	7,289	32%
Learning activities	10,190	2,949	29%
Events and new projects	4,522	8,192	181%
Website visits	44,112	37,766	86%
Sub-Total (known in-person visits)	37,312	18,430	49%
Sub-Total (known total visits)	83,878	56,196	67%
<i>Estimated café visits</i>	<i>5,000</i>	<i>19,051</i>	<i>381%</i>
Total (estimated in-person visits)	42,312	37,481	89%
Total (estimated total visits)	88,878	75,247	85%
Volunteer category	Target in the Approved Purposes with National Lottery Heritage Fund (total)	Achieved outputs from April 2017 to February 2025	% of target
Volunteer activity days	5,471	3,323	61%

Implementation of Activity Plan

The implementation of the Activity Plan was affected by the process by which it was agreed. As noted in **Section 2.2 above**, the Friends were originally expected to develop and deliver the Activity Plan. CounterCulture tried to work with the Friends to deliver an updated Activity Plan which ultimately failed and led to the disbandment of the Friends. Historic England and Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings subsequently looked to deliver an updated plan however, this was also not possible. Therefore, Haley Sharpe Design was brought in to deliver a revised Activity Plan which was submitted to The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The targets within the Approved Purposes with The National Lottery Heritage Fund were agreed prior to this streamlining of the Activity Plan. This process meant there was a shorter period to implement the Activity Plan, as it was agreed nine months after opening. It should be noted that the extended period to finalise an Activity Plan was a consequence of the changing model for delivery of the visitor operation from the Friends to the trading company.

The activities and events within the Activity Plan have mainly been delivered as required, with some key exceptions such as the east terrace enlivenment. However, as shown by the reduced outputs above relating to learning activities, this Activity Plan has not reached the level of audience envisaged.

The Activity Plan also underspent against certain key categories such as school engagement. Overall, there has been an underspend of circa £178,000 in Activity Costs compared to the agreed allocation. Given the lower engagement from school groups than expected to date, it is assessed that more could have been done to maximise the reach of the project. Increased innovation and

outreach within the Activity Plan could have been explored within the budget parameters to match the quality of the physical redevelopment. Some local schools have incorporated a visit to the site within their curriculum however, this type of activity needs to be maximised to increase the overall visitor numbers.

Importantly, the Activity Plan includes initiatives that reduce participation barriers, such as subsidised family activities, targeted youth workshops in deprived wards, and creative partnerships with community organisations. Specific initiatives illustrate how this focus translated into practice. The microgrants scheme supported community organisations to deliver activities at the Mill or in local neighbourhoods, reducing barriers and fostering new partnerships. Programmes such as graffiti workshops in Harlescott and textile projects with disabled community members provide authentic, place-based engagement with those who might otherwise be excluded. Embedding these initiatives shows a clear commitment to engaging NEETs, families, and marginalised groups, going beyond broad audience targets.

Despite this, given the scale of the investment into the scheme by the Heritage Fund, the engagement numbers are not as high as expected. The physical regeneration of a historic site has been rightly lauded however, participation and engagement are key outputs and outcomes for the Heritage Fund which are yet to be fully met.

Transfer to English Heritage

It should be noted however, that the transfer of the visitor experience to English Heritage is likely to increase visitor numbers due to their engaged customer base with over one million members. English Heritage are an experienced operator, overseeing over 400 historic places across the country. **Early visitor numbers from English Heritage since they took over operations are positive** and suggest this long-term increase in visitors may be achieved. For example, there have been 6,145 visitors to either the Mill Exhibition or Guided Tour between April and August 2025, an increase of 86% compared to the same period in 2024 (3,312 combined visitors).

If the same percentage increase was sustained over the year, the visitor experience would attract 13,514 visitors in 2025/26, closing the gap towards the original target in the Approved Purposes with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. Therefore, although original visitor numbers were not as positive as envisaged, early indications from the transfer to English Heritage are positive in terms of a long-term sustainable attraction.

3.3 Logic Model Outcomes

The following section provides an evaluation of each of the project's key outcomes in turn. Using a combination of visitor survey data and qualitative consultation feedback, the extent to which each of the outcomes have been achieved has been evaluated. For clarity and ease of interpretation, we have adopted a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating system, summarised in **Table 3-4** below. This rating system has been used for both the logic model and The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes.

Table 3-4: RAG rating of outcome performance

Rating	Conclusion
Red	Outcome has not been met
Amber	Outcome has been partially met
Light green	Outcome has been largely met
Dark green	Outcome has been fully met

3.3.1 Short-term outcomes

The assessment of short-term outcomes is presented in **Table 3-5**.

Table 3-5 Performance against short-term outcomes

Objective	RAG status	Commentary
Main Mill is removed from the HAR register	Dark green	The Main Mill has been removed from the register. The renovation of the historic building has been an example of best practice heritage regeneration. The building is of productive use and is looking to build a legacy for the future.
The history of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Malting is better understood by local residents and visitors	Dark green	The site was previously derelict and vacant. The investment has delivered a public exhibition on the ground floor, supported by an Activity Plan to develop a programme of events. The public exhibition focusses on the history of the Flaxmill, providing an interactive experience for visitors to learn about the different stages of the site. Visitor surveys have demonstrated that the history has been better understood by residents and tourists. In particular, 80% of visitors to the public exhibition stated that they have either learnt 'a lot' or 'a little' about the area's history. This proportion dropped to 25% for the events such as Flaxmill Creates and Halloween Half Term Festival which focussed on arts and crafts, music, and children entertainment.
Formerly derelict buildings are restored and no longer a blight on the townscape	Dark green	Stakeholder consultations and visitor survey feedback have highlighted the difference the restoration of the formerly derelict buildings has made to the townscape and image of the area. The site is located on a key access route into Shrewsbury, within an area of deprivation according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation. The derelict site previously led to negative perceptions of the economic potential of the area. The regeneration of the scheme has helped to reverse this trend. Property agent and market research have demonstrated that redevelopment has helped to support the surrounding property market. The commercial floorspace within SFM is attracting rents equivalent to Grade A space, whilst the

Table 3-5 Performance against short-term outcomes		
Objective	RAG status	Commentary
		scheme has unlocked the potential housing scheme on the wider site.
Flaxmill buildings are opened to the public and occupied by new businesses with close links to Shropshire LEP and BID		<p>SFM has been opened to the public since 2022. Visitor numbers have not reached the levels expected, particularly for the visitor experience, but events in the Activity Plan have performed well.</p> <p>The upper floors were redeveloped into high-quality commercial space for let to office users. Historic England worked closely with the LEP and BID during the construction phase. The working relationships were considered positive.</p> <p>Covid-19 has affected the ability to let the upper floors as efficiently as desired. A prospective tenant for all four floors was identified however, they no longer required this level of space after the pandemic. The first floor was fitted to Cat B by Historic England and has been subsequently leased to four companies within various professional sectors. The second floor is now occupied by a risk manager however, the third and fourth floors are currently unoccupied.</p>
Flaxmill site is transformed into attractive visitor site offering improved public realm and cultural amenities		<p>The site has been redeveloped into an active mixed-use development with an exhibition and interpretation, supporting facilities such as café and shop, commercial floorspace, and enhance outdoor public realm. The transformation of the site has been well received by stakeholders and visitors, particularly in terms of the quality of the redevelopment.</p> <p>For example, visitors were asked to rate the site on a scale of 0-10 before and after its restoration such that Net Promoter Scores could be calculated²⁰. The Net Promoter Score before the regeneration was -83.6, highlighting significant dissatisfaction among respondents. The Net Promoter Score (NPS) for the new set of responses after the restoration is 78.6, which is a very strong score, indicating a high level of satisfaction and loyalty among respondents.</p>
Restoration and conservation of the site provides training and skills development opportunities		The restoration of the site has delivered some training and skill development opportunities, particularly during the construction phase. The Construction Training Activity Programme enabled people to be involved in the restoration of the building, through placements, CPD and training opportunities. The project utilised best practice conservation techniques and prioritized innovative

²⁰ Pictures were shown if visitors were not aware of the restoration work that has taken place at SFM

Table 3-5 Performance against short-term outcomes		
Objective	RAG status	Commentary
		<p>approaches such as introducing a ground source heat pump or reusing existing materials.</p> <p>The operation of the site has provided some further skills development opportunities including for Heritage Visitor Assistants. However, the engagement levels within learning activities have not reached the projected targets. Over the last year, 2,949 visitors engaged in learning activities compared to a target of 10,190.</p> <p>Despite this, it is important to note that attendees at the visitor exhibition felt that they developed their skills or knowledge due to their visit. Around 93% of attendees to the visitor experience felt the activities improved their skills/knowledge ‘a lot’ or ‘a little’. Due to the entertainment focus of the festivals, this proportion dropped to 18% for events.</p>

3.3.2 Medium-term outcomes

The assessment of medium-term outcomes is presented in **Table 3-6**.

Table 3-6: Performance against medium-term outcomes		
Objective	Objective	Objective
Increased civic pride and stronger sense of local identity in Shrewsbury		<p>The heritage-led redevelopment of SFM has revived its historic fascination, fostering civic pride and a stronger local identity. The restored buildings and revitalised public spaces now serve as symbols of the town’s rich heritage, deepening community appreciation.</p> <p>The visitor feedback indicates this positive effect on pride and perceptions of the area, with 53% of respondents stating that their visit had improved their perceptions of Shrewsbury as a place to live and 54% stating their visit had improved their perceptions of Shrewsbury as a place to visit. All other respondents stated ‘no change’ with no negative responses in terms of perceptions.</p>
More local residents and visitors from further afield visit Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings		<p>The site has welcomed nearly 61,000 in-person visitors to the visitor experience, learning activities, and events/new projects (excluding the estimated café visitors of around 51,000). Around 131,000 have visited the SFM website.</p> <p>Although these visitor figures are clearly a large increase compared to the counterfactual where the site remains derelict, they have not reached the expected visitor levels targeted – particularly given the scale of investment. The site has acted as a community hub for local residents, with the café particularly popular. However, the site has not</p>

Table 3-6: Performance against medium-term outcomes

Objective	Objective	Objective
		<p>drawn significant visitors from further afield, as around 52% of visitors to the exhibition and events live in the town and 87% have a 'SY (Shrewsbury)' postcode.</p> <p>The National Lottery Heritage Fund evaluation period finished on March 31st 2025 in line with the Activity Plan. Therefore, visitor numbers after this date are not factored into the outcome assessment.</p> <p>However, it is worth noting that the transfer of visitor operations to English Heritage is likely to stimulate growth in this area, as this experienced operator has access to over 1 million members who have an active interest in historic places. Early visitor numbers from English Heritage since they took over operations are positive and suggest this long-term increase in visitors may be achieved. For example, there have been 6,145 visitors to either the Mill Exhibition or Guided Tour between April and August 2025, an 86% increase compared to the same period in 2024.</p>
Improved transport links to the town – with better cycle routes, public transport, and parking facilities		<p>The redevelopment has improved transport links through the site and with the town. Cycling and walking paths across and around the site have been delivered to enhance the attractiveness of active travel. The permeability of the site has been increased significantly, and the pathways are used by residents in the surrounding area.</p> <p>Car parking and cycle parking facilities have been installed at the site. Due to the location of the site, which is slightly away from the town and the train station, additional public transport connections could be explored with stakeholders.</p>
The Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings site is economically viable and self-sustaining		<p>The site has been operating for three years, with stable visitor numbers and an increasing occupancy of the upper floors. The Turned Wood Café has attracted additional visitors to the site and provided an income to Historic England. However, the lower visitor numbers than expected and the current vacancy of the upper floors means that the business plan has not been achieved as envisaged. The operation of the site would be difficult to sustain financially without continued public support. If the plan was for Historic England to continue operations, the outcome assessment would be partially met.</p> <p>However, an agreement between Historic England and English Heritage has been confirmed for the transfer of the visitor operations, which took place in April 2025. This agreement secures the long-term sustainability of the visitor experience at the site, utilising English Heritage's wide-ranging expertise and capabilities. Historic England</p>

Table 3-6: Performance against medium-term outcomes

Objective	Objective	Objective
		<p>will continue to operate the upper floors. Our assessment has indicated that occupancy in the upper floors is in line with expectations and rental values are higher than the average for the market. This transfer has increased the assessment to largely met, as it is still dependent on future visitor levels.</p> <p>Additionally, the mixed-use masterplan has helped to support the future regeneration of the site. The visitor exhibition generates an interest in the site whilst the businesses on the upper floors provide continual income. This phase of development will help to unlock the future housing development on the wider site.</p>
Listed heritage assets at the site are well managed and looked after, now and in the future		<p>SFM and Historic England have professionally managed the listed heritage assets on-site, ensuring their preservation for future generations. Through a careful balance of conservation and innovation, sustainable solutions – such as energy-efficient lighting, ground source heat pumps, and re-use of materials – have been thoughtfully integrated to protect the site's historic integrity while enhancing its resilience.</p> <p>Looking ahead, the site's ongoing visitor operation will be entrusted to English Heritage, with a strong track record in heritage stewardship. Their expertise will guarantee that the site remains well-maintained, accessible, and valued, securing its long-term sustainability while continuing to enrich the community and visitors alike.</p>
The Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings ²¹ are better resourced and equipped for the future		<p>Despite best efforts from all parties, the relationship between the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings and Historic England broke down during project delivery.</p> <p>The collaboration between Historic England and the Friends was rooted in a shared vision for preserving heritage and ensuring sustainable future operations. The national body recognised the local group's passion and deep connection to the site, entrusting them with drafting the activity and business plans. However, given the scale and complexity of the task, the Friends struggled to meet the required level of detail and strategic planning within tight deadlines. While Historic England provided guidance and support, its approach could have been more supportive, offering additional resources and expertise earlier in the process to bridge the gap in experience. In addition, feedback from the Friends indicated that they no</p>

²¹ The outcome related to equipping an organisation to run the facility. At time of the application, this referenced Friends of the Flaxmill. Based on the process undertaken since the application, this outcome has been split into two (Friends of the Flaxmill and SFM Ltd) to provide a robust assessment.

Table 3-6: Performance against medium-term outcomes

Objective	Objective	Objective
		<p>longer felt they had a role in the project due to the communication from Historic England, whilst bringing in CounterCulture to manage this issue did not help.</p> <p>Additionally, it should be noted that the challenge of creating a viable activity and business plan for such a significant project has become evident during the operation of the attraction, as even the final agreed plans have proven difficult to implement.</p> <p>It is assessed that the project failed to deliver this outcome, as the Friends disbanded during project delivery.</p>
<p>SFM Ltd is better resourced and equipped for the future</p>		<p>The Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings Ltd trading company was set up by Historic England in 2022 to deliver the visitor operations on site when the Friends were no longer able to deliver the evolving requirements.</p> <p>The Limited Company has three executive directors who are senior Historic England staff members. The trading company’s directors and the company secretary sit on the Historic England Strategic Project Board, which is responsible for the overall oversight of the Flaxmill Maltings project. The Head of Visitor Experience is line managed by the project SRO, who is also one of the trading company directors. The Head of Visitor Experience reports on the delivery of the business plan, including the 5 Year Financial Profit & Loss and the Activity Plan. This structure is deemed to be appropriate for the management of the attraction.</p> <p>The team has overseen the day-to-day operation and the delivery of the activity plan. This structure has been able to ensure the attraction has received strong feedback from visitors and key components of the activity plan were delivered. It should be noted that the operational financial performance is challenging due to reduced visitor numbers and the ongoing socio-economic environment. However, the delivery of activity plan would have been supported by a more holistic view on the capital works and visitor experience, instead of two slightly separate elements.</p> <p>A strategic decision has been made to transfer operations to English Heritage and therefore, SFM Ltd will not continue in this role. It should be noted that Historic England had to get permission from DCMS to set up the trading company and it was done so on a short-term basis. The company was never intended to be the long-term solution and the transfer to English Heritage is sensible for this type of attraction.</p>

3.3.3 Long-term outcomes

The evaluation has considered whether there is any indication that longer term outcomes identified will be achieved. As shown below, two of the longer-term outcomes identified look like they will be fully achieved whilst the other two outcomes will be largely achieved. It is too early to fully confirm these assessments; however, the early signs are extremely positive. The assessment of longer-term outcomes is as follows:

- **Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings is fully restored and brought back into productive use as a local hub for the town** – Initial assessment indicates that this long-term outcome will be **fully achieved**. The buildings have been fully restored, are acting as a hub for the town, and will look to build a long-term legacy through its continued operation as a mixed-use development. The potential future housing redevelopment will further establish the site as an active, growing community.
- **Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings is widely recognised as a site of international, national and local significance** – Initial assessment indicates that this long-term outcome will be **largely achieved**. Regionally, the site is of huge importance and its regeneration has greatly enhanced the image of the area. AMION’s contingent valuation study (outlined in Section 5) has elicited willingness to pay values from both Shropshire and West Midlands above industry-standard benchmarks. The project's national significance is clear from its prestigious awards, though visitor numbers from across the country remain limited. Its potential international importance cannot be established at this stage as it is a longer-term outcome which is unlikely to be seen after two years of operation, but it does seem slightly ambitious.
- **Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings is an important catalyst in the wider regeneration of Shropshire, providing housing, employment and cultural growth** – Initial assessment indicates that this long-term outcome will be **largely achieved**. The site has delivered additional employment on site, whilst establishing an operational visitor attraction. This investment is likely to unlock the housing redevelopment on the wider site, providing much needed housing for the town. Market analysis has also suggested that the attractiveness of the immediate area has been improved due to this redevelopment. However, the site acting as a catalyst for economic growth across the wider catchment appears uncertain at this stage and may have been an ambitious long-term outcome.
- **Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings is a best practice model of sustainable heritage conservation and adaptive re-use** – Initial assessment indicates that this long-term outcome will be **fully achieved**. The investment has helped to deliver a best-practice heritage restoration project on a regionally important site, which had previously been vacant and derelict for decades. For example, the restoration of the Main Mill and Kiln has been widely recognised based on its quality, winning numerous awards including both regional and national RIBA Awards, Civic Trust Conservation Award and the Europa Nostra Award for conservation and adaptive use. In total, the project won 18 awards which is an acknowledgement of the importance and quality of the refurbishment. Innovation was prioritised throughout the redevelopment, with a series of sustainable measures implemented to enhance its resilience and longevity.

3.4 The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes

3.4.1 Outcomes for heritage

The outcomes relating only to the Construction Phase (as set out in **Table 1.1**) were assessed within the Construction Phase report. The outcomes for heritage which were previously covered by the Construction Phase Report are:

- Heritage will be better managed
- Heritage will be in better condition
- Heritage will be identified/recorded

For these outcomes, this section collates the findings from the Construction Phase Report as well as utilises new stakeholder feedback and operational building data where possible to further assess the outcomes.

The construction and operational phase outcome (Heritage will be better interpreted and explained) has been fully assessed at this stage using our mixed-method approaches.

Heritage will be better managed

As set out in the Construction Phase Report, the restoration of the Main Mill and Kiln has unquestionably secured the physical conservation of the Flaxmill to an exemplary standard, ensuring the heritage asset is safeguarded for the future. This evaluation has found that circa £3.3m of in-kind time from Historic England staff has contributed to the successful delivery of the project.

However, when the wider management processes are considered, some limitations become clear. The handover from construction to operations presented challenges, including lengthy snagging lists, some unresolved lift and Mechanical & Engineering issues, and gaps in Operations & Maintenance documentation. Much of the project knowledge was held by a small number of leads, and their departure created some continuity issues. In addition, decision-making in the run-up to opening was necessarily accelerated, and limited approval structures in place at the time added to pressures of this stage.

These challenges do not undermine the quality of the conservation itself, but they indicate that the systems supporting the ongoing management and maintenance of the building were not as robust as they could be. While the Flaxmill is undoubtedly better managed than prior to redevelopment, these process weaknesses temper the assessment.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: Heritage will be better managed

Summary: The outcome has been largely met. The asset has been successfully secured and restored to a high conservation standard. Improvements to handover, documentation, and management processes would have strengthened the way the asset was managed during this period. Historic England should be commended for the resource contributed to the project to ensure its successful delivery.

Assessment: Objective has been largely met

Heritage will be in better condition

The Main Mill has been removed from the Heritage at Risk register. The renovation of the historic building has been an example of best practice heritage regeneration. The building is of productive use and is looking to build a legacy for the future. The project’s outstanding quality has been widely recognised, receiving 18 awards in total, including regional and national RIBA Awards, the Civic Trust Conservation Award, and the prestigious Europa Nostra Award, underscoring the significance and excellence of the refurbishment.

Stakeholder feedback has emphasised that SFM is now in a far stronger condition than at any point in its recent history, having moved from a derelict, at-risk state to a fully restored attraction with robust management systems in place. The investment has effectively future-proofed the asset, meaning it can now be maintained to a high standard while preserving its historic character.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: Heritage will be in better condition

Summary: The restoration has transformed a derelict, at-risk site into a landmark preserved to the highest standards, retaining its authenticity and historic character while addressing complex structural challenges.

Assessment: Objective has been fully met

Heritage will be better interpreted and explained

The Construction Phase evaluation assessed that there were explanatory hoardings and onsite signage explaining the works. The full exhibition was subsequently opened, with an associated website and social media. As shown, the exhibition was created by leading designers Mather & Co, which ensure a quality product and design as well as a range of forms of interpretation in terms of digital, written, objects, and sensory experiences. Through volunteer research and the creation of an exhibition space, the heritage of the site has been appropriately identified and explained. The exhibition space and heritage tours leave a legacy to engage visitors and future generations with the unique story of the Flaxmill Maltings. Many articles have been written about the restoration work for national publications²² bringing it to the attention of the wider public. As noted above, there has been significant reach over social media with content reaching 3.2 million people, with almost 100,000 engagements.

²² Articles include [Building Design](#), [European Heritage Awards](#), and [Public Practice](#)

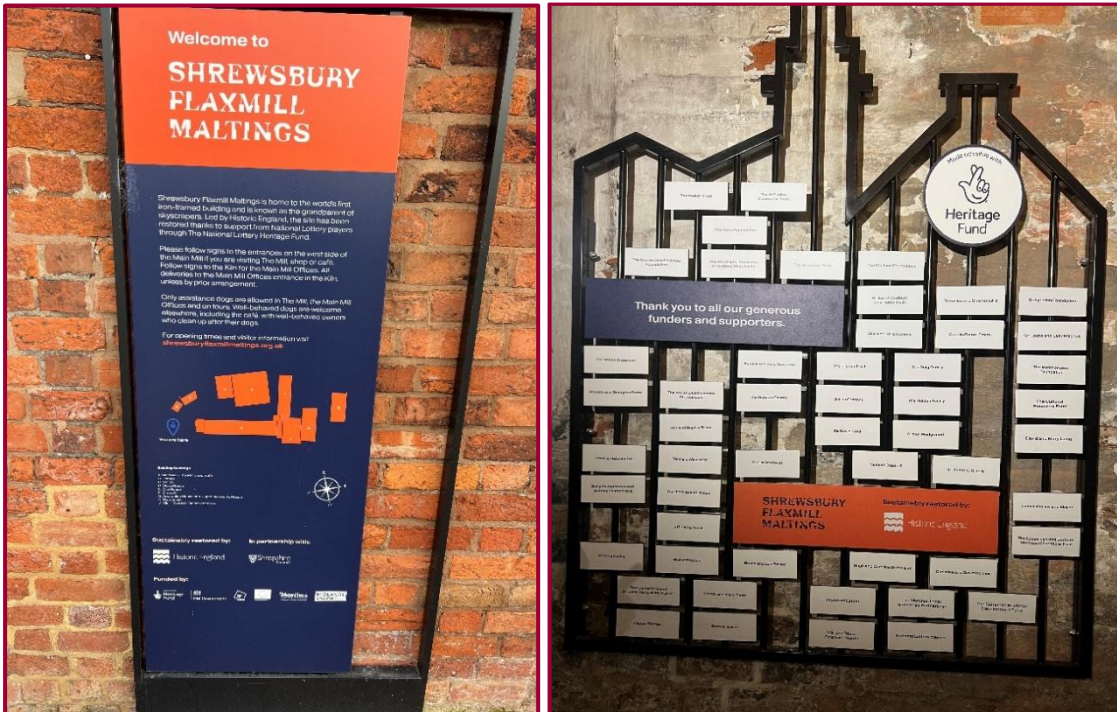
Figure 3-1: Exhibition Space



Source: Building Life (Left) and European Heritage Awards (Right)

Despite its significant history, the site had been vacant since 2005 with no public access. Now that the site is fully operational, the project has fully met the outcome to interpret and explain the heritage of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. The site’s exhibition provides an interactive experience of the site’s heritage, whilst there are various accessible signs explaining the significance of the site as well as the renovation works themselves. The various funders are credited, with a particular focus on the investment from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the partnership with Shropshire Council. Nearly 94% of visitors were aware of the restoration works that have taken place. **Figure 3-2** presents examples of the signage around the site.

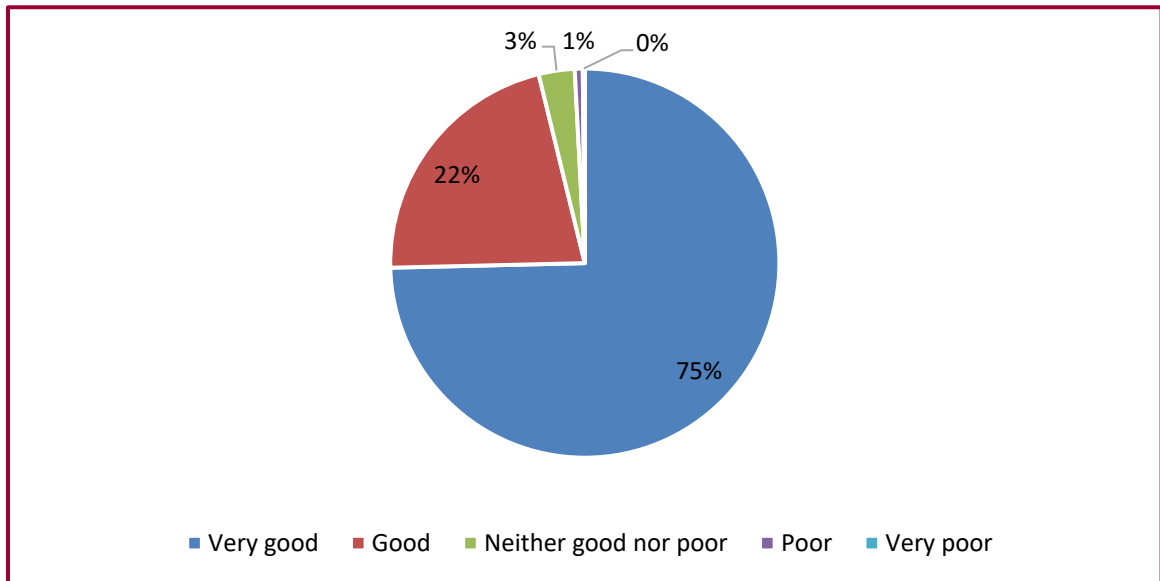
Figure 3-2: Signage around the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings site



Source: AMION Consulting on March 2024 site visit

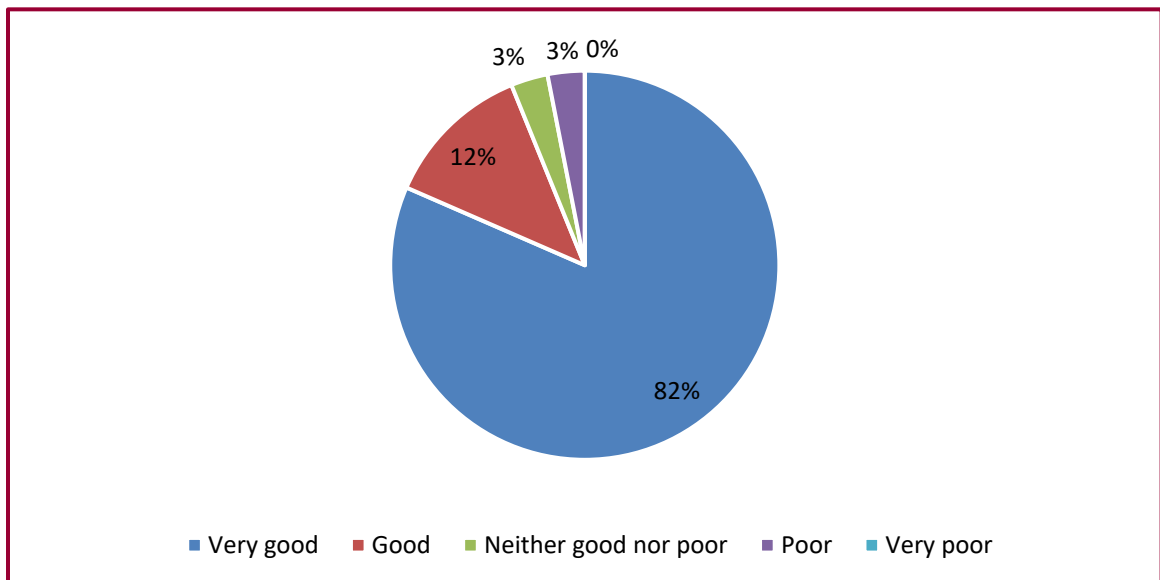
Feedback from visitors around explanation of the site’s heritage has been positive. For example, 97% of visitors to the Mill’s exhibition rated their experience as ‘very good’ or ‘good’, whilst 94% of Guided Tours attendees rated their experience as ‘very good’ or ‘good’. **Figure 3-3** and **Figure 3-4** present the breakdown of responses from visitors when asked to rate the Mill’s exhibition and Guided Tours.

Figure 3-3: ‘How would you rate The Mill exhibition?’



Source: Visitor Survey

Figure 3-4: ‘How would you rate the Guided Tours?’



Source: Visitor Survey

The qualitative feedback from visitors demonstrates the exhibition and site tours are a successful way to bring the site’s heritage to life, as shown by the comments from attendees below:

- ‘We were impressed with the exhibition and enjoyed the two interactive boards and spent some considerable time using them.’
- ‘We spent nearly three hours at the Flax Mill enjoying the history and hands on exhibits. A beautiful building sympathetically restored. Brilliant.’
- ‘The exhibition was pitched at the right level in terms of being informative for adults and the interactive elements were also good for children. It was also about the right amount of time as it took about an hour to progress through. Future visits by myself or friends/colleagues will also be useful to see how the development of the site progresses.’
- ‘Well laid out and very informative with the information and interactive bits well planned to show the mills varied history’.
- ‘It was excellent a fascinating insight, have gone past the building many times always wondered what it was like inside and its history amazing.’
- ‘Excellent interesting guides for behind-the-scenes tour. Also good exhibition with good interactive items’

There were only seven ‘poor’ ratings for either The Mill exhibition or the Guided Tours from 645 online survey responses. The reasons for this include the following:

- ‘More needs to be conveyed about the set-up in the Dye House – not enough to just be in a big empty space. Some warning that the tour takes place largely outside would be helpful’
- ‘There is very little to see apart from information boards and video – nothing to really link visitors with the building’s past’

These negative responses are very much in the minority and therefore, greater emphasis should be placed on the positive qualitative feedback above.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: Heritage will be better interpreted and explained
Summary: The quantitative and qualitative feedback on this outcome has been extremely positive. Our site visit has also verified this feedback. The project has ensured the site’s heritage has been better interpreted and explained during both the construction and operational phases.
Assessment: Objective has been fully met

Heritage will be identified/recorded

The project has made substantial progress in recording and interpreting the heritage of the Flaxmill Maltings. Extensive surveys and documentation were undertaken during the construction phase, ensuring that the historic fabric of the Main Mill and Kiln was fully understood before and

during works. Archaeological investigations, condition surveys, and conservation records have been compiled, providing a comprehensive archive of the site’s evolution.

In addition, heritage has been actively interpreted and shared with the public. The exhibition space presents the history of the Flaxmill Maltings through durable, well-researched content, while educational programmes and guided tours communicate findings to schools and visitors. Volunteers and local historians have contributed through talks, archive work, and public engagement activities, ensuring that community knowledge has been captured alongside professional research.

Stakeholders noted that while the exhibition is strong, content updates and more dynamic programming will be needed to sustain public interest over time. Nonetheless, the core objective of recording and presenting the site’s heritage has been clearly achieved.

<p>The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: Heritage will be identified/record</p>
<p>Summary: The outcome has been fully met, with SFM’s history thoroughly documented and effectively presented to the public.</p>
<p>Assessment: Objective has been fully met</p>

3.4.2 Outcomes for people

People will have learnt about heritage

The Construction Phase Evaluation Report sets out that there were a number of learning opportunities around the importance of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings heritage as well as heritage more broadly. The report stated that this has been possible through Heritage Open Days, articles published and the Construction Training Activity Programme.

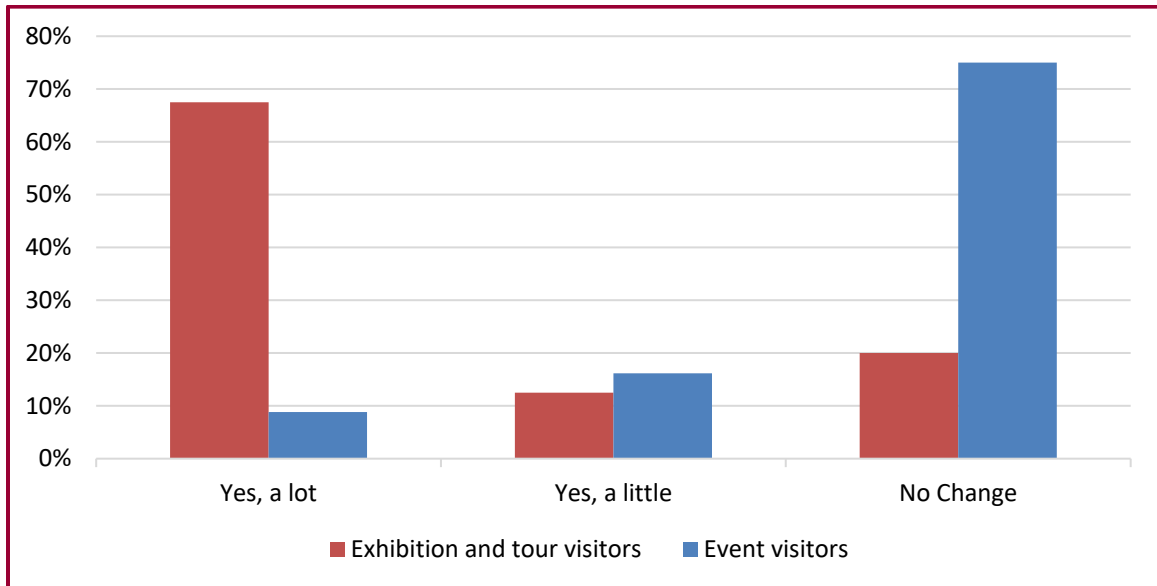
Visitor feedback demonstrates the heritage of the site is a driving motivation for attending the site. For example, 58% of visitors stated a historic interest in the building was a motivation for their visit²³, 38% stated the exhibition was a motivation for their visit, and 26% stated that learning something was a motivation for their visit. As shown above, the qualitative feedback from visitors during the operational phase has also been positive, particularly relating to learning about the site’s heritage.

Feedback from exhibition and tour visitors highlights the educational impact of the Flaxmill Maltings restoration. As shown in **Figure 3-5**, around 80% of these visitors reported learning about the local area’s history, with 68% stating they learned a lot. In contrast, event attendees have not gained as much historical insight, with 75% indicating they did not learn about the site’s heritage. The most popular events at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings include music performances, children’s entertainment, and market stalls. The project team has prioritised these activities to maximise

²³ Visitors were allowed to select multiple motivations for their visit to the site therefore, the proportions add up to over 100%. This is not an error.

visitors and support the site's cash flow. However, these events currently place less emphasis on sharing the site's historical significance with attendees.

Figure 3-5: 'Do you think you have learned more about the local area's history as a result of visiting Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings?'



Source: Visitor Survey

The participation figures within learning activities are substantially lower than the forecasted targets within the original Approved Purposes document agreed with The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The latest 12 months of available data from the Activity Plan (March 2024 to February 2025) has been the best performing year for learning activities, with 2,949 attendees at these events. However, this level is still far below the target of 10,190 learning activity visitors per annum. The learning activity figures within the past 12 months are broken down as follows:

- 1,937 visitors from school groups;
- 446 visitors to heritage open days;
- 700 visitors to workshops; and
- 148 visitors to trails.

The school groups have provided positive feedback to the project team in terms of the benefits to school children. For school visits to take place, the day's activity must be linked to the school curriculum. Consultation with local teachers identified strong curriculum connections:

- KS1: significant local people/events, and events beyond living memory.
- KS2: studying national history in the locality, chronology (jobs and lives over time), and changing childhood experiences.

- Cross-curricular links: geography (land use, canals), art/design/technology (textiles, dyeing), science (properties of materials), and architecture (the world’s first iron-framed “skyscraper”). Literacy opportunities were also noted.

Teachers agreed the site was most relevant to KS2 pupils and highlighted potential workshops, such as “Follow the Thread” (tracking flax from growth to processing), drama role-play of apprentices, visual timelines, and design or architecture workshops inspired by the Mill itself. Feedback from schools included “We were extremely grateful for the funding which enabled us – as a small school – to engage with the site. I would not hesitate to run this trip again in the future”. This evidence demonstrates that school visits have presented an interactive experience for children to learn from.

However, these participation levels are below the intended target as well as benchmarks for attractions of a similar scale and significance. For example, data produced for Historic England²⁴ indicates that the average annual number of school children visits across all historic sites in England is 2,613, and across historic sites in West Midlands is 2,721. The number of visitors from school groups, therefore, is 74% of the average for all historic sites and 71% of the average for West Midlands historic sites.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: People will have learnt about heritage

Summary: Feedback from visitors to the site’s exhibition and tour have been overwhelmingly positive regarding the heritage learning benefits from their visit. Visitors to events have not tended to learn about the local area’s history as part of their visit, whilst the participation level in learning activities are considerably below the expected target level. The school visits are also below average levels for other historic sites. Based on the reduced participation levels, it is assessed that the objective has only been partially met. However, the learning benefits for visitors to the exhibition and tour should not be understated based on qualitative and quantitative feedback.

Assessment: Objective has been partially met

People will have developed skills

As set out in the Logic Model outcomes, the Construction Phase Evaluation Report indicated the restoration of the site has delivered some training and skill development opportunities, particularly during the construction phase. The Construction Training Activity Programme enabled people to be involved in the restoration of the building, through placements, CPD and training opportunities. The project utilised best practice conservation techniques and prioritised innovative approaches such as introducing a ground source heat pump or reusing existing materials.

Throughout the construction phase CPD opportunities (309), training opportunities (209) and work placements (20) ensured that a wide range of people have developed skills because of the project. Beyond this, the scale and complexity of the site pushed HE and project partners to be

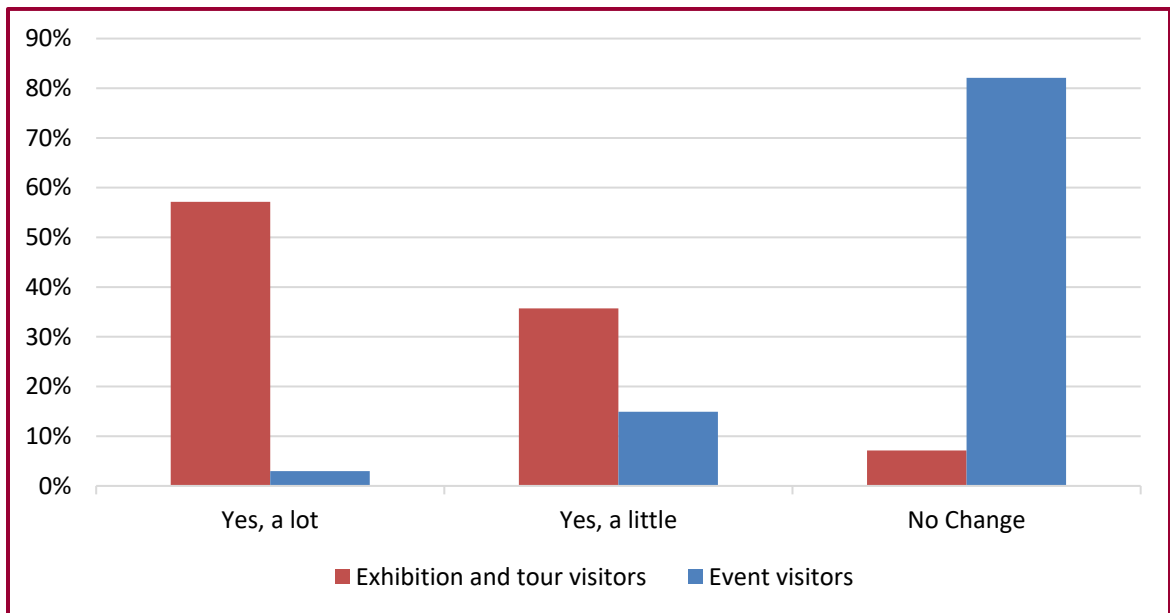
²⁴ BVA BDRC, (2024); Visitor Attraction Trends in England 2023: Annual Report for Heritage Counts – Prepared for Historic England

innovative in terms of best practice conservation and sustainability which can be applied to future heritage projects.

The operation of the site has provided some further skills development opportunities, however, the engagement levels within learning activities have not reached the projected targets. Over the last year, 2,949 visitors engaged in learning activities compared to a target of 10,190.

It is important to note that attendees at the visitor exhibition felt that they developed their skills or knowledge due to their visit. As shown in **Figure 3-6**, around 93% of attendees to the visitor experience felt the activities improved their skills/knowledge ‘a lot’ or ‘a little’. Due to the entertainment focus of the festivals, this proportion dropped to 18% for events.

Figure 3-6: ‘Has visiting Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings today improved your skills and/or knowledge?’



Source: Visitor Survey

Stakeholder engagement has also highlighted that the delivery and operation of this significant capital project has been a learning experience for Historic England and delivery partners. It was a complex restoration project, of a scale which Historic England rarely leads. There have been various project management, marketing, teamwork, and stakeholder communication skills learnt across the company. Although there were challenges during construction, the delivery of the project and the recognition within the sector as shown by the numerous awards demonstrates the skillsets implemented on the project. Several lessons have also emerged for future projects, which are summarised in **Section 6**.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: People will have developed skills

Summary: Overall, the project has provided opportunities to develop skills in both the construction and operational phase. Visitors to the site have also enhanced their knowledge,

whilst workshops with community groups have presented opportunities for local people to develop connections and new skills. Managing a project on this scale is unique for Historic England, and the delivery team succeeded in bringing significant historic buildings back into use. This process has better equipped the team to deliver capital projects in the future. It should be noted however, the engagement levels within learning activities have not reached the projected targets.

Assessment: Objective has been largely met

People will have changed their attitudes and/or behaviours

The site has been redeveloped into an active mixed-use development with an exhibition and interpretation, supporting facilities such as café and shop, commercial floorspace, and enhance outdoor public realm. The transformation of the site has been well received by stakeholders and visitors, particularly in terms of the quality of the redevelopment.

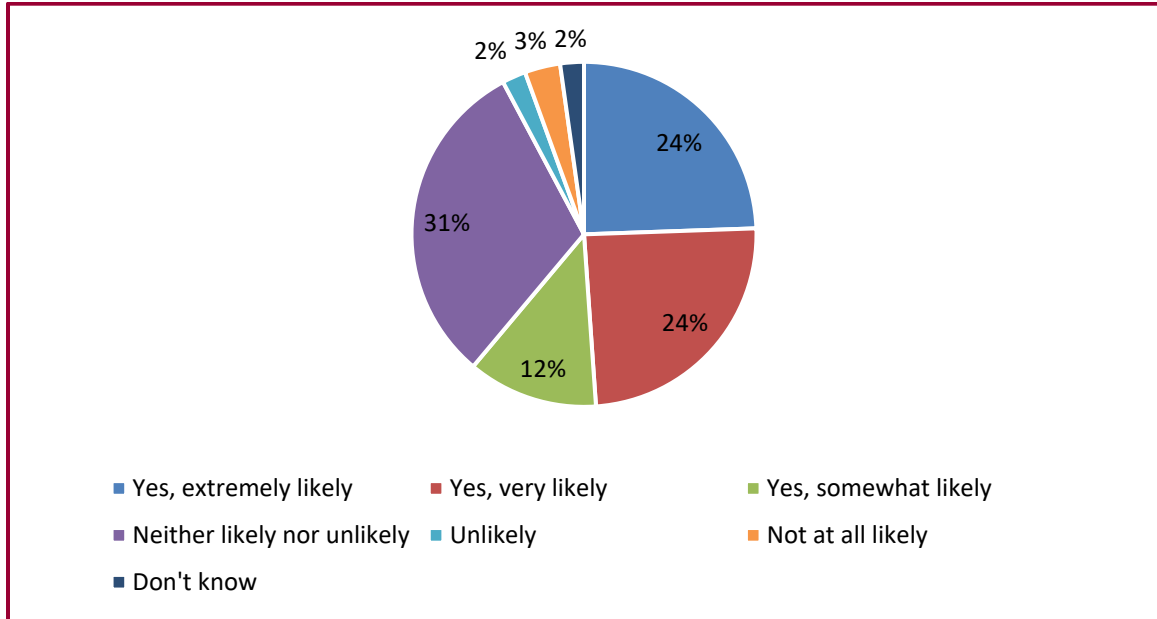
For example, visitors were asked to rate the site on a scale of 0-10 before and after its restoration such that Net Promoter Scores could be calculated. The Net Promoter Score before the regeneration was -83.6, highlighting significant dissatisfaction among respondents. The Net Promoter Score (NPS) for the new set of responses after the restoration is 78.6, which is a very strong score, indicating a high level of satisfaction and loyalty among respondents.

As well as an improved view of the site specifically, the project has also positively impacted the attitudes of visitors to the town of Shrewsbury. Of visitors who live outside of Shrewsbury²⁵, 60% stated that their visit made them more likely to return to the town, with 48% stating that this was at least very likely.

Figure 3-7 presents the breakdown of visitors, in terms of likelihood to visit Shrewsbury in the future.

²⁵ Responses which stated that they lived in Shrewsbury have been excluded from the analysis to understand visitor perceptions

Figure 3-7: 'Has this visit made you more likely to visit Shrewsbury (the town) in the future?'²⁶
 (Visitors to Shrewsbury only)



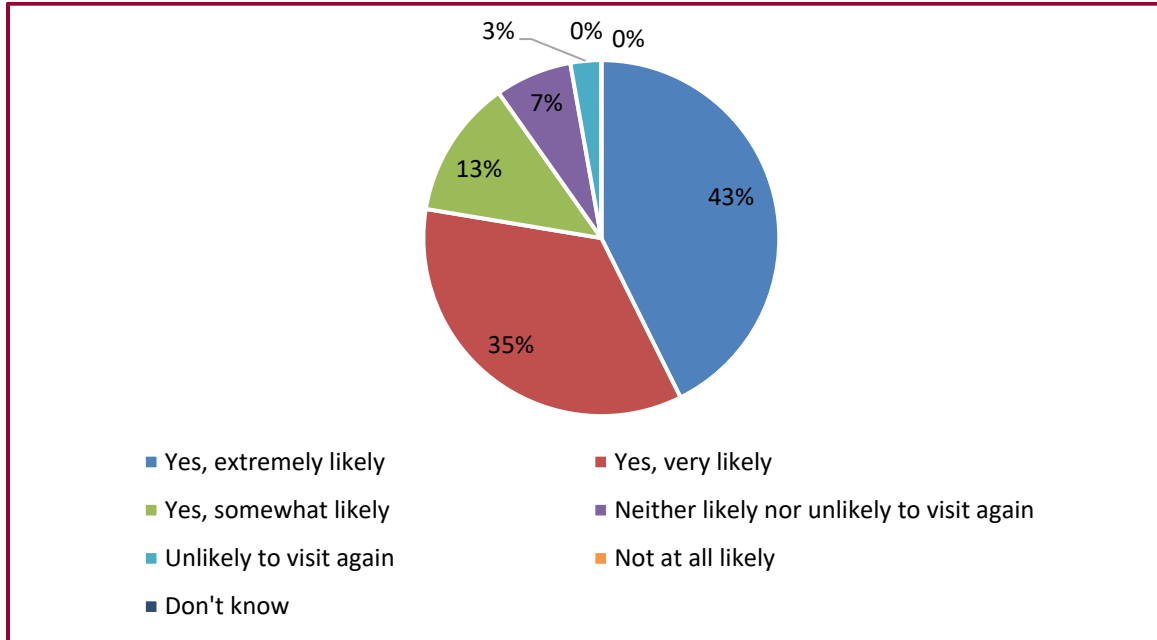
Source: Visitor Survey

Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings has also positively impacted the attitudes of visitors to heritage sites more widely. For example, **90% of visitors to the site stated that their visit made them more likely to visit other heritage sites in the future, with 78% at least very likely to visit.** This finding is vital, as The National Lottery Heritage Fund looks to support engagement and participation with heritage more widely. If the 78% of visitors who stated they were at least very likely to visit other heritage sites did so within the next 12 months, this proportion would exceed the baseline average for heritage engagement locally and nationally (68% attended a site in the preceding year).

Figure 3-8 presents the full breakdown of respondents, in terms of likelihood to visit other heritage sites in the future.

²⁶ If respondents stated more likely, a follow up question asked how likely. This process avoided any bias within the question.

Figure 3-8: 'Has this visit today made your more or less likely to visit other heritage sites in the future?'²⁷



Source: Visitor Survey

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: People will have changed their attitudes and/or behaviours

Summary: The project has enhanced attitudes and behaviours of visitors to the site, Shrewsbury as a town, and heritage sites more widely. The project has highlighted how increasing the accessibility to heritage assets can positively influence the attitudes to the wider area. The assessment of the 'Local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit' outcome illustrates how the perceptions of the area have also improved due to the project.

Assessment: Objective has been fully met

People will have greater wellbeing

The redevelopment of the Flaxmill Maltings has contributed positively to community wellbeing, both by transforming a previously derelict and unsafe site into a safe, welcoming place and by providing new opportunities for social interaction, learning, and recreation. Stakeholders consistently highlighted the impact of the café and surrounding public spaces in creating a community hub, offering a safe and inclusive environment for people to meet, relax, and take part in activities. Volunteers also reported feelings of pride, purpose, and social connection from their involvement in tours, events, and research, with some noting improved confidence through taking on new roles.

²⁷ If respondents stated more likely, a follow up question asked how likely. This process avoided any bias within the question.

The construction works themselves delivered wellbeing benefits by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in the immediate area. The Construction Phase report found a 27% fall in crime rates in 2022 compared with the wider Shrewsbury average for the preceding decade, with more recent data showing this reduction has been sustained.

During stakeholder consultations relating to the operational phase, the site’s improved image and the sense of pride associated with its award-winning restoration were cited as factors enhancing community morale and local identity. The contingent valuation study undertaken by AMION Consulting as part of this study demonstrates the value that both attendees and local residents place on the restoration works. These values exceed most of the available evidence in the industry, which is understandable given the scale of works and the significance of the site.

Family activities, school programmes, and free community events – particularly during school holidays – have widened access to cultural participation, helping local families who may otherwise face financial barriers. Feedback from participants emphasised the value of free events in providing enjoyable experiences that relieve financial pressure and encourage repeat visits. These opportunities, alongside the growing role of the site as a cultural venue, contribute to improved wellbeing across different groups in the local community. Feedback from October half-term family activities highlighted the impact of the site:

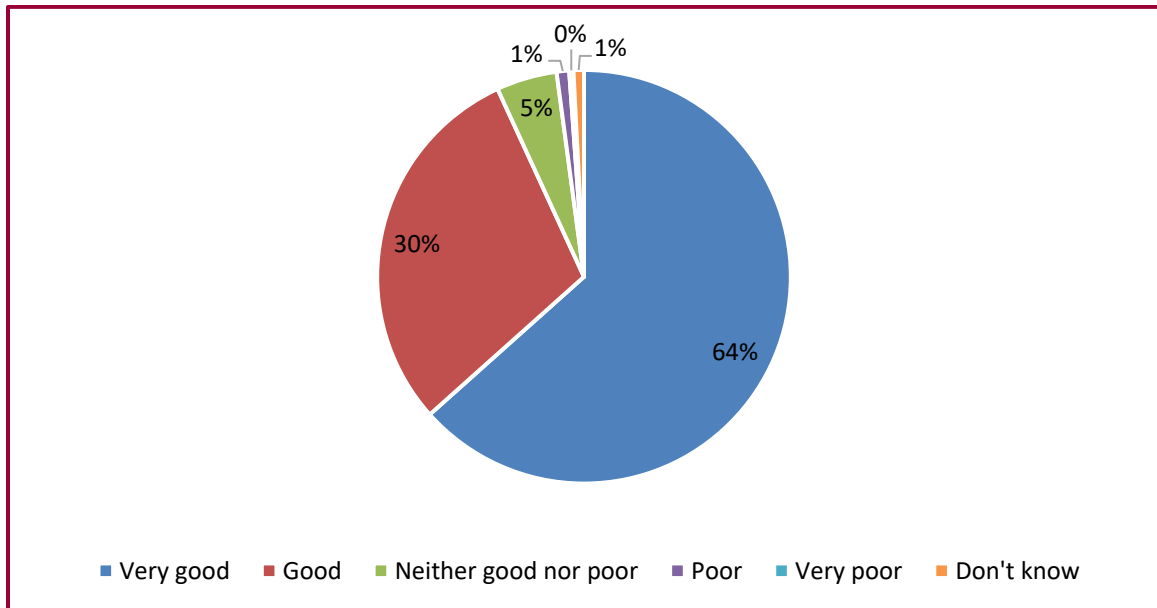
- *“As someone who has lived in Shrewsbury aged 0-20 it has been amazing to come back and see inside the mill – it’s incredible, so lucky it was saved from demolition.”*
- *“Activities and events encouraged us to visit, my 11 year old learnt about the Flaxmill at school so eager to walk around.”*
- *“Brilliant exhibitions, very informative, children loved interactive learning, we will be back.”*

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: People will have greater wellbeing
Summary: The Flaxmill has made a measurable contribution to wellbeing through improved safety, new community spaces, volunteering, and inclusive cultural activities. Continued investment in outreach, programme diversity, and sustained community engagement will be important to maximise these benefits in the longer term. The enhanced pride from the restoration works has been demonstrated by AMION’s contingent valuation study.
Assessment: Objective has been largely met

People will have had an enjoyable experience

Feedback has highlighted that visitors have had a very enjoyable experience at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. For example, **94% of visitors would rate the whole experience as at least good**, with 64% of respondents rating their experience as very good.

Figure 3-9: 'How would you rate the whole experience?'



Analysis of the Net Promoter Scores also highlights the positive experience felt by visitors to the site. When asked whether they would recommend a visit to Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings to a friend or colleague, the NPS was 59.7 – indicating a strong positive sentiment with a high proportion of promoters compared to detractors.

Table 3-7 showcases a selection of quotes from visitors explaining their scores. These quotes are categorised into the three groups: ‘promoters,’ ‘passives,’ and ‘detractors,’ with the number of quotes broadly reflecting the relative size of each category.

Table 3-7: Net Promoter Score and quotes from visitors		
NPS Category	% of responses	Quotes
Promoters (9-10)	72%	<p>‘Interesting exhibition. My daughter loved the interactive hands on activities. The staff were friendly & very knowledgeable. The cafe looked nice!’</p> <p>‘The Whole experience was fantastic. What has been done to restore the Mill is incredible’</p> <p>‘Thoroughly enjoyed my visit and learnt a lot. Staff were welcoming and knowledgeable’</p> <p>‘The volunteers were really enthusiastic and knowledgeable. The exhibits were interactive. The social, engineering and local history was fascinating’</p> <p>‘A wonderful building with a unique history of which Shrewsbury and our County can be proud’</p> <p>‘The building is iconic and unique. There is so much history to learn about. The staff are superb, friendly, knowledgeable and helpful. I assume many are volunteers’</p> <p>‘The history, the architecture and innovation. A local treasure’.</p> <p>‘I was very impressed by the Mill exhibition. It was extremely informative and engaging. We spent close to two hours reading and interacting with the various information points. It was so much more than just a presentation of the history of the site!’</p>
Passives (7-8)	20%	<p>‘It’s brilliant! But people need to appreciate why without having to pay £ for the exhibition. Perhaps need a free small introductory exhibition which would then entice them to see the full works’</p> <p>‘Only if someone is interested in flax and happened to be in the area would I recommend’</p>
Detractors (0-6)	8%	<p>‘Quite expensive for what took about an hour to visit. There could perhaps be some free tours’</p>

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: People will have had an enjoyable experience

Summary: Multiple metrics demonstrate the hugely positive experience felt by visitors to the site. The feedback from visitors demonstrates that multiple aspects of the attraction are of interest. Visitors were pleased by both the restoration as well as the knowledgeable and friendly staff.

Assessment: Objective has been fully met

People will have volunteered time

As set out in the output section, the project has provided substantial volunteering opportunities for local communities, with 1,407 volunteers contributing 23,259 volunteer hours or 3,323

volunteer days (defined as 7 hours a day). However, this level of volunteer activity days supported was also below target, with a target of 5,471 days. Several factors help explain this shortfall and highlight the importance of the volunteer perspective.

When the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings were active, volunteering was characterised by a strong sense of community, belonging, and shared purpose. The group created opportunities that went beyond simple site-based tasks, organising tours, open days, school activities, and volunteer forums. This sense of ownership encouraged higher levels of participation and helped to recruit and retain a broad network of volunteers.

Since the Friends disbanded, overall volunteer numbers have reduced, and the programme has been less extensive although some Friends members did continue to volunteer. Many volunteers continue to feel proud of their contribution, but some note that the current arrangements feel more fragmented and lack the same community spirit. Barriers to engagement have also been identified, such as training that felt burdensome for the roles being undertaken, and a need for better mechanisms to keep volunteers informed and connected.

Despite these challenges, the volunteer programme still provides valuable opportunities. and volunteers remain committed to sharing their knowledge and skills. Current volunteers still provide positive feedback based on their role on-site, supporting visitors and local community groups. The Jubilee Tower tours continued to be led by volunteers, providing views of Shrewsbury and insights into the site’s structural and historic significance. Community groups such as the Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust have utilised the wider site to host special exhibitions with other activities, demonstrating how the site can bring people together.

Overall, however, the reduction in large-scale community events and regular forums represents a missed opportunity to sustain the strong culture of volunteering established by the Friends.

<p>The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: People will have volunteered time</p>
<p>Summary: The project provided volunteering opportunities on the site however, the hours have not reached the expected targets. The main likely reason for this is the disbandment of the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings. However, the positive feedback from visitors on the current volunteers should be noted.</p>
<p>Assessment: Objective has been partially met</p>

3.4.3 Outcomes for communities

With our investment, environmental impacts will be reduced

This outcome is primarily a Construction Phase outcome, assessed within the Construction Phase Report. These findings have been collated below, together with insights from the latest stakeholder engagement undertaken as part of this evaluation.

The redevelopment of the Flaxmill has delivered environmental benefits alongside its heritage outcomes. Two derelict buildings have been brought back into active use, reducing the need for new-build construction and associated emissions. Calculations indicate that while the project

generated a carbon footprint of around 475 tonnes, the restoration process achieved an estimated 900 tonnes of embodied carbon savings, creating a clear net benefit in environmental terms. The project also introduced an ecology zone to encourage biodiversity, alongside practical measures such as electric vehicle charging points and new cycle pathways to promote sustainable transport.

A major component of its operational environmental performance is the adoption of a sustainable ground-source heating system, reducing reliance on gas central heating. This was complemented by additional environmentally conscious choices, such as avoiding artificial cooling, and fitting high-performance double glazing. Collectively, these interventions not only cut the site's environmental impact but also aligned the redevelopment with wider national climate and heritage sustainability agendas. Importantly, they have future-proofed the Flaxmill Maltings while safeguarding its historic character.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: With our investment, environmental impacts will be reduced

Summary: Overall, the project has delivered clear environmental gains by reducing operational carbon use, securing embodied carbon savings, and embedding sustainable features into the redevelopment. These actions ensure that the Flaxmill Maltings contributes positively to climate objectives while standing as a heritage exemplar for environmentally responsible regeneration.

Assessment: Objective has been fully met

More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage

Since re-opening, the site has welcomed nearly 61,000 in-person visitors to the visitor experience, learning activities, and events/new projects (excluding the estimated café visitors of around 19,000 in a single year only). Around 131,000 have visited the associated websites (Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings, Friends, Historic England, and Shropshire Council's relevant pages). To date, the content has achieved a reach of 3.2 million people, with almost 100,000 engagements.

Although these visitors' figures are clearly a large increase compared to the counterfactual where the site remains derelict, they have not reached the expected visitor levels targeted – particularly given the scale of investment. The site has acted as a community hub for local residents, with the café particularly popular. However, the site has not drawn significant visitors from further afield, as around 52% of visitors to the exhibition and events live in the town and 87% have a 'SY (Shrewsbury)' postcode.

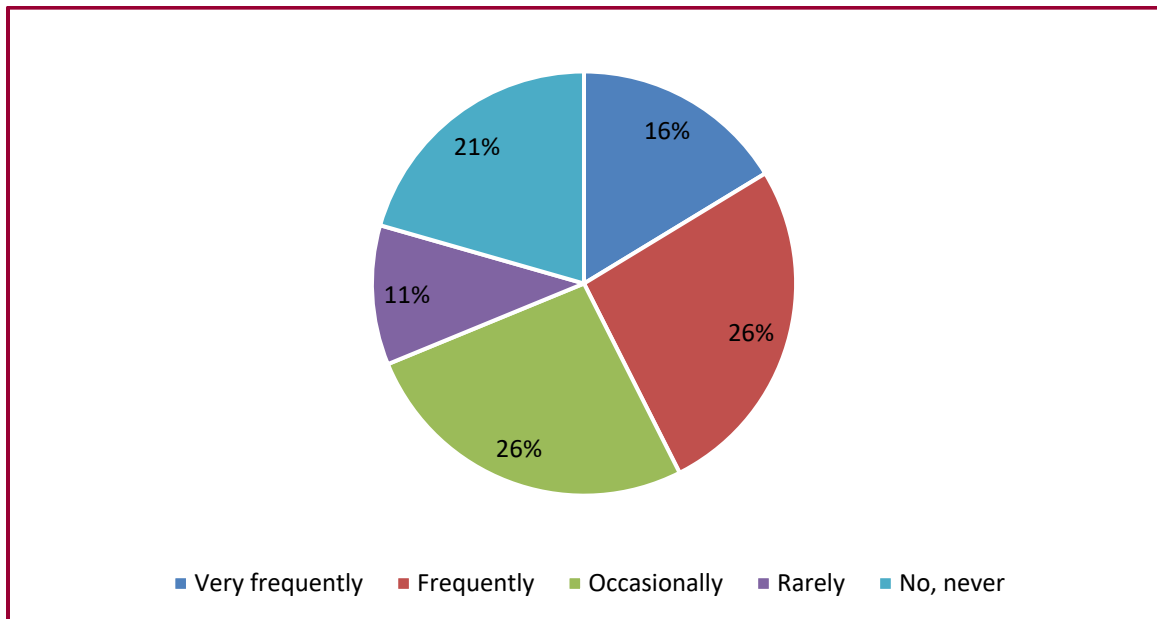
The project has helped to draw interest from people who have not typically engaged with heritage, but not more than the baseline assessment. Around 67% of visitors have at least occasionally visited a similar site within the previous 12 months. The baseline review indicated that 68% of Shropshire and Staffordshire residents attended a heritage site in the preceding year, broadly in line with the national average.

Appendix A presents details of the demographics of visitors. These statistics indicate that the audience attracted is not diverse, with around 97% of respondents to the exhibitions and events

identifying as ‘White’. Most respondents reported that their daily activities are not limited at all by health conditions (96%), with only 3% reporting that they are limited a little. Around 50% of responses were aged 35-54, whilst only 12% were above 65% and 3% were 16-24. Overall, these statistics demonstrate that the events and exhibitions did not reach a diverse and varied audience. However, the community activities delivered as part of the Activity Plan prioritised families and children with disabilities. These activities received positive feedback, demonstrating the impact that can be made with a targeted action plan.

The interpretation and marketing of the site have been well delivered; however, it should be noted that the current exhibition format does require visitors to arrive with some level of interest in the industrial archaeology. A more “living” building with working machinery or more frequent one-off events may have helped with engagement from a wider audience without the same pre-existing interest. However, the decision to maintain the building and present the exhibition in its current form was taken as the most appropriate way to safeguard the fabric of the site and ensure the heritage outcomes could be met.

Figure 3-10: ‘Have you visited any similar heritage sites in the past 12 months, and if so, how frequently?’



Source: Visitor Survey

The transfer of visitor operations to English Heritage is likely to stimulate growth in visitor numbers, as this experienced operator has access to over 1 million members who have an active interest in historic places. As noted above, early visitor numbers from English Heritage since they took over operations are positive and suggest this long-term increase in visitors may be achieved. For example, there have been 6,145 visitors to either the Mill Exhibition or Guided Tour between April and August 2025, an increase of 86% compared to the same period in 2024 (3,312 combined visitors). Therefore, although original visitor numbers were not as positive as envisaged, early indications from the transfer to English Heritage are positive in terms of a long-term sustainable attraction.

The National Lottery Heritage Outcome: More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage

Summary: The project has brought the site back into productive use. Visitors to the site have had the chance to engage with a historic site which was previously vacant. However, the number of visitors has not reached the intended levels, whilst the audience base has largely been local. Additionally, the visitors brought to the site have engaged with heritage the same amount as the overall local population. Our assessment considers that the transfer to English Heritage Trust could bring in additional visitors through their member audience however, these individuals are likely to already engage with heritage due to their membership.

Assessment: Objective has been partially met

Local community will be boosted

The assessment of other outcomes highlight that the project has enhanced the perceptions of the area, accessibility to heritage and skills opportunities, and the enjoyment felt by visitors. This assessment focusses on the other social impacts for the local community.

The delivery of the café, and the decision to bring in Turned Wood Café to manage its operations, established a community hub in the local area. Local people regularly attend for coffee mornings and gatherings, with the role of the café exceeding the original expectations within the bid. Feedback from stakeholders has indicated that the café has been extremely popular with the community as it exceeds the food and beverage offer in the surrounding area. The estimated level of visitors from the café greatly surpasses the projected attendance at the café.

The restoration of the site has enhanced the image of the local area, as well as bringing new opportunities for creatives, community groups, and young people. Through the programme of events, the project has engaged with local cultural organisations such as Lovelyland, the Hive, Jamila Walker, Drawn, Shrewsbury & Newport Canals Trust, Severn Bridges Multi Academy Trust, Wild Strawberry, and local storytellers. Working on the site has benefitted these organisations, by enabling them to deliver their services within a historically important site.

The feedback from visitors on community events has been positive. Many events were free, which has greatly enhanced the accessibility of the site to surrounding communities, particularly families with young children. Individual events have undertaken their Activity Reports for The National Lottery Heritage Fund. These reports are provided in **Appendix B** however, a summary of selected events is provided below:

- Fabric of Friendship sewing project:** During August 2024 young members of PACC (Shropshire Parent and Carer Council) with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) were invited to a series of participatory art sessions at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. With the support of artist Jamila Walker, the creatives developed one or more fabric square designs, inspired by the theme of ‘Friendship’ and the varied sub themes within this theme; support, comfort, sharing and more. The workshops were offered free of charge and took place in the Stables, as a more accessible space for the Send participants. In total, 23 people attended (13 young people and 10 parent carers/support workers). Feedback was positive as shown below:

- ‘As a family enjoyed visiting Flaxmill as we’d not been before’;
- ‘Loved the drawing game at the beginning hadn’t laughed so much for ages’; and
- ‘As PACC we enjoyed working with the Flaxmill on these summer workshops. It was a great introduction. Many families had not visited before and we are sure that their positive experience will encourage them to visit again or attend other workshops in the future. Lisa was so positive, listened to our needs and we hope we can do more work together to make this a safe inclusive place for the SEND community’. (PACC feedback).
- **Lovelyland Little Library launch event:** The launch event was delivered in partnership with Lovelyland and local charity Little Stars, who provide free or low-cost children’s clothing, including school uniforms, in the local community. Little Stars offered free craft activities at the launch and invited the local community to drop in pre-loved baby clothes for their clothing bank. In addition, Lovelyland facilitated a book swap event alongside the official opening of the Little Library. Jake Evans provided 3 free storytelling sessions. The launch event, despite inclement weather, was attended by 123 people. Little Stars were overwhelmed by the amount and quality of donated items. Feedback from the public was extremely positive, as shown below:
 - ‘(The event is) absolutely fantastic. It’s great to have an opportunity to get the kids to do some storytelling, they’ve really liked that. And we’ve already got a fantastic book. I’m really happy with that, and they’re making some crafts, so it’s been really good’ (Parent);
 - ‘It’s great to have books available for the little ones. They’re normally so expensive to buy new, and it’s great that you can just have a trust system’ (Parent); and
 - ‘We would like to extend our thanks to Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings for hosting us as well as LovelyLand and Jake Evans for their wonderful collaboration. It was fantastic to see the community come together for such a special event, helping to bring awareness to our charity. A huge thank you to all the families who attended and to everyone who generously donated such amazing items. We truly appreciate your support in making this event a memorable one and we look forward to more collaborations in the future!’ (Little Stars team).
- **Stories with Flax and Barley:** During the school holidays, there were free guided story-telling sessions exploring the buildings of the Flaxmill Maltings, creative drop-in sessions in the Dye House, a self-guided trail around the site, and family friendly behind-the-scenes tours. In total, 757 attended the different events and there were 42 hours of volunteering to deliver the activities. The storytelling and craft drop-in activities took place in the Dye House. The larger space was again very positively received. Feedback was positive, as shown below:
 - ‘Absolutely brilliant - children thoroughly enjoyed it and are really interested in the history of the Flaxmill now as a result of the guided storytelling’;
 - ‘I find the environment calm and comforting for my SEN child’; and

- ‘We loved the arts and crafts, super volunteers, amazingly friendly and patient staff. Engaging, imaginative and no pressure to conform, all individuality encouraged. Loved it all’.

Lastly, the redevelopment of the site has had a small beneficial impact in reducing crime incidents in the surrounding area. The Construction Phase Evaluation Report indicated that recent crimes rates within the Flaxmill Maltings area have fallen relative to the wider Shrewsbury area, with incidents of crime in 2022 down by approximately 27% in the area surrounding SFM compared to the Shrewsbury average between 2011 and 2021. Further analysis into Police.Uk data suggests that since 2022, crimes in the immediate area have fallen by 1%, which is similar to the change in the wider Shrewsbury area. Given the scale of change identified in the Construction Phase report compared to the pre-development levels, there appears to be a small beneficial impact on crime levels in the surrounding area.

It should be noted that stakeholder consultations have suggested that the enhanced built environment and walking routes have provided a safer experience for both visitors and passers-by. According to the 2019 Index of Deprivation, the site was located within one of the pockets of deprivation in the town, sitting within the top 40% most deprived LSOAs in England. Therefore, these social benefits are crucial and help to enhance the immediate vicinity as a place to live, work and visit.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: Local community will be boosted

Summary: The project has project substantial benefits for the local community. In addition to the impacts explored as part of other outcome assessments, the project has created a community hub through the café, supported local artists, and provided accessible events for local families. The high-quality design of the facility has removed blight from the area and helped to create a safer public environment.

Assessment: Objective has been fully met

Local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit

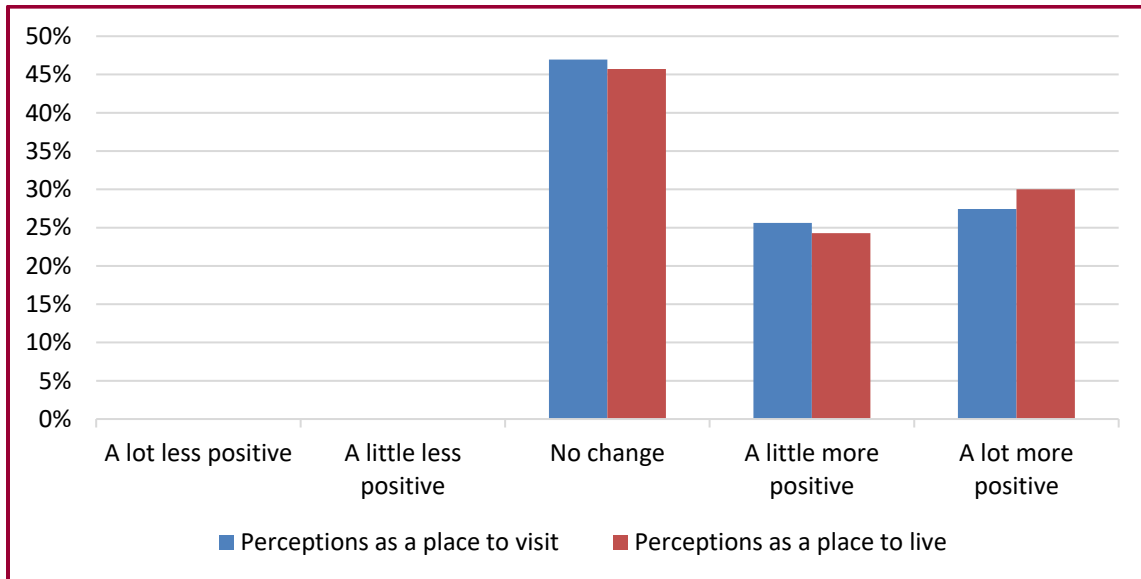
The Construction Phase Evaluation Report set out the area has been visually enhanced that as a result of the project. The Flaxmill Maltings area has transformed from a derelict site into an open multi-functioning space. Additionally, there has been continued public realm improvements, via grants from the Marches LEP and Heritage Stimulus Fund, particularly focused on increasing green space and transport infrastructure. Stakeholders and residents report excitement around the opening of the Flaxmill Maltings.

Through its operation, the heritage-led redevelopment of SFM has revived its historic fascination, fostering civic pride and a stronger local identity. The restored buildings and revitalised public spaces now serve as symbols of the town’s rich heritage, deepening community appreciation.

The visitor feedback indicates this positive effect on pride and perceptions of the area, with 53% of respondents stating that their visit had improved their perceptions of Shrewsbury as a place to live and 54% stating their visit had improved their perceptions of Shrewsbury as a place to visit.

All other respondents stated ‘no change’ with no negative responses in terms of perceptions. **Figure 3-11** provides a full breakdown of these responses.

Figure 3-11 ‘Has your experience changed your perception of Shrewsbury as a place to visit and live?’



Source: Visitor Survey

The project has also created 62 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, with the potential to increase to 110 FTE jobs once the company letting the second floor fully utilise their space. There are a range of professional service businesses within the upper floors, including architecture, risk management, telecommunications, and law.

Engagement with stakeholders has indicated a small positive impact on the surrounding areas in terms of property prices and demand. This investment is likely to also help unlock the future residential stage, which will establish a community around Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: Local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit

Summary: The project has delivered an accessible visitor attraction alongside high-quality commercial space. This investment will also help to unlock the delivery of residential units on the wider site. The feedback from visitors demonstrates the beneficial impact on the area as a place to visit and live. Stakeholder engagement has also confirmed that the immediate area has benefitted from this regeneration.

Assessment: Objective has been fully met

Your organisation will be more resilient

The Construction Phase Evaluation Report indicated that the project offered Historic England the opportunity to experience project delivery – something that previously would have been delivered by English Heritage, whereas Historic England had more experience of being a grant manager. This has provided valuable lessons and growth for the organisation, including a new philanthropy function and an increased understanding of project delivery on this scale. The Philanthropy Team has continued to grow since this point becoming involved with other projects across Historic England.

From stakeholder engagement, it appears the project has significantly strengthened the organisation's resilience by establishing clear governance structures and defining internal roles and responsibilities. From the outset, the Chair and Board provided strong support, ensuring that decision-making was streamlined and well-coordinated. This clarity of leadership allowed for efficient resource allocation and the ability to adapt as the project evolved. Additionally, the organisation demonstrated financial resilience by effectively managing contingencies, once the expanded budget was agreed with The National Lottery Heritage Fund due to various challenges. However, the expanded budget is likely to have had negative impacts on their overall financial position, whilst the level of internal resource required to deliver the project was greatly underestimated (circa £3.3 million of in-kind staff time by project completion which was not originally factored in).

Some deep-rooted partnerships were formed during the project delivery, including collaboration with Shropshire Council. The phased approach to delivery, spanning nearly two decades, enabled the organisation to take a long-term view of regeneration and heritage conservation, ensuring that progress was steady and strategic.

However, there were areas where improvements could have strengthened resilience further. Communication with stakeholders, the Friends and The National Lottery Fund, could have been more transparent, particularly when challenges arose. Some stakeholders felt disengaged due to a perceived imbalance in decision-making power, which may have limited collaborative problem-solving. The breakdown in the relationship with the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings was a negative outcome which arose from this, despite Historic England's best efforts to keep them engaged.

Additionally, operational resilience was tested in the post-construction phase, where unresolved defects, incomplete O&M documentation, and training gaps created ongoing maintenance challenges. The organisation could have benefited from a stronger project closeout process, ensuring that critical infrastructure issues were addressed before transitioning to full operation. A more proactive integration of capital works and activity programmes would have also ensured that delays in construction did not hinder the broader project goals.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcome: Your organisation will be more resilient

Summary: Overall, the project successfully delivered a transformative regeneration project on a hugely complex site. The success of this management is demonstrated by the restoration of the site and the awards won. Historic England is now better placed to deliver large capital projects, if the opportunity arose. However, a more structured post-project transition plan and enhanced stakeholder collaboration could have improved the organisation’s ability to navigate challenges more effectively.

Assessment: Objective has been largely met

3.5 Unintended outcomes

The project was largely delivered as expected however, there have been a couple unintended outcomes as follows:

- **Café acts as a community hub for the area.** The café has unexpectedly become a vibrant community hub, bringing people together despite this not being the initial goal. The initial plan for a café was a for a small operation run by volunteers, which was not expected to be a major attraction for visitors. There was a decision to bring in a professional commercial operator in order to increase the ambition and profile of the food and beverage offer at the site. The feedback on the café from both visitors and stakeholders has been positive. Therefore, the decision to work with a commercial operator appears to be the correct one, ensuring a professionally run space that maintains high standards. This has created a welcoming environment for local interaction. It should be noted that the café operator has tendered their resignation and will cease trading in October 2025. It is expected that a similar independent café operator will be brought in to manage the space following a tender process.
- **Delivery of a cycle and recycle storage to enhance sustainability.** The plans for Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings allocated space for a new cycle storage facility to be delivered at some stage across its operation. An opportunity arose to apply for UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment to deliver a new cycle storage and recycling facility. A separate independent evaluation of this facility has been undertaken by AMION which concluded that the investment was value for money based on the increase in cycling to site by visitors and tenants.
- **Some volunteers from the Friends are disengaged from the project.** The breakdown of relationship between the Friends and Historic England is an unintended negative outcome. Some Friends volunteers have continued to be involved with the facility however, some members of the Friends are now completely disengaged. This volunteer group was critical in saving the restoration and their expertise could have helped with community engagement on the site, as was the case in the early stages of operations.
- **The other unintended consequence from the project was the transfer of operations to the English Heritage Trust.** The intended plan was for the Friends to be heavily involved in the day-to-day running of the facility as The National Lottery Heritage Fund promotes community involvement in the operation of heritage facilities. After the trading company stepped in to

deliver the visitor experience, it was a sensible next step to transfer the operation to English Heritage as they are experienced at running similar facilities. The transfer could not have happened earlier as SFM Ltd was originally set up to support the Friends prior to their disbandment. It was subsequently agreed that April 2025 would be the most appropriate time for the transfer of operations to align with English Heritage new time for contracts to manage new sites. The National Lottery Heritage Fund extended the timeline of the Activity Plan to align with this. This transfer is likely to have a beneficial impact on visitor numbers based on their committed membership base. However, English Heritage Trust should ensure their direction of travel aligns with The National Lottery Heritage Fund's mission and outcomes, given the scale of investment provided by this partner. In particular, the school engagement that has taken place has been positive, but it needs to be on a greater scale across a wider region to deliver the impact originally envisaged. Overall, at this current stage, this unintended outcome does appear to be the best solution for the long-term sustainability of the facility.

Section 4

Value for Money Assessment

4 Value for Money Assessment

This section provides an assessment of the value for money of the SFM project. The main approaches that have been used to assess value for money relate to:

- Social cost benefit analysis (SCBA) to determine the total net present social value (NPSV) and Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of the project; and
- 3Es analysis to examine the relative economy, effectiveness, and efficiency of the programme.

4.1 Social Cost Benefit Analysis

4.1.1 Guidance and overarching approach

As part of this evaluation, **AMION has undertaken social cost benefit analysis (SCBA) within a Value for Money (VfM) assessment**, with the results presented below using a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) to enable the programme to be compared to other evaluation evidence and intervention benchmarks, in line with HMT Green Book guidance²⁸.

As set out within the Appraisal Guide, projects should be appraised based on a **Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR)**. As the name suggests, this is a ratio of the present value of benefits over the present value of costs and represents how much benefit in £s could be supported by £1 of public investment. BCRs²⁹ are widely used in governmental appraisals and are the recommended VfM metric in the HM Treasury's Green Book.

The value for money assessment of the SFM project aligns with Green Book guidance, including the following assumptions:

- the benefits are presented with a 75% additionality rate applied to account for potential displacement effects from other heritage facilities;
- monetised costs and benefits have been converted to 2024/25 prices using Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflators;
- the financial costs have been provided by Historic England, utilising expenditure figures from monthly and quarterly monitoring updates; and
- the economic cost assessment is the total financial cost of £33.6 million (£30.0 million of eligible costs and £3.6m of ineligible costs).

A range of economic benefits have been monetised and evaluated using established methodologies. Our assessment has been undertaken in line with HMT Green Book guidance and other departmental publications, such as the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local

²⁸ [The Green Book \(2022\) - GOV.UK](#)

²⁹ A BCR below 1 is considered poor value for money, between 1 and 1.5 is considered acceptable value for money, between 1.5 and 2 is considered medium value for money, between 2 and 4 is considered high value for money, and above 4 is considered very high value for money.

Government (MHCLG) Appraisal Guide 2025³⁰, and Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) Culture and Heritage Capital programme³¹.

The list of monetised benefits is presented as follows:

- Heritage use value from enhanced accessibility to a historic site;
- Heritage non-use value from bringing a historic site back into productive use;
- Cultural use value from attending and participating in cultural events;
- Public realm amenity benefits;
- Wellbeing benefits from learning activities;
- Wellbeing benefits from volunteering;
- Wellbeing benefits from new employment;
- Labour supply benefits;
- Productivity benefits;
- Carbon emission reduction benefits;
- Active mode benefits; and
- Distributional analysis.

In addition to the above monetised benefits, there are several substantial wider benefits that are not currently capable of being captured in the SCBA monetised analysis. A separate analysis of these impacts has been undertaken in **Section 4.1.4**.

4.1.2 *Economic costs*

This section presents the financial and economic costs of the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project. The financial costs have been converted into economic costs within the social cost benefit analysis by adjusting for inflation in line with Green Book guidance. This adjustment ensures all costs are in present 2024/25 prices³². Optimism Bias has not been applied given the costs and expenditure have already been incurred.

The financial cost includes the Stage 1 and Stage 2 project, in line with the funding allocation attributable to The National Lottery Heritage Fund project, as well as in-kind contributions. Once the financial costs have been converted to economic costs based on the approaches set out above, **the total public sector economic cost totals to £36.4m as presented in Table 4-2**.

³⁰ Accessed from: [MHCLG: The Appraisal Guide](#)

³¹ [Culture and Heritage Capital portal - GOV.UK](#)

³² This adjustment has been made to reflect the fact that expenditure on the programme started in 2023/24 and continued until the end of 2024/25.

Table 4-1: Economic Costs (£m)	
Cost Item	Project cost (£m)
Financial Costs in current prices	£33.6
Inflation adjustment to convert to constant 24/25 prices	£2.8
Total economic costs (24/25 prices)	£36.4

4.1.3 Economic benefits

The following economic benefits have been monetised and assessed:

- Land value uplift** – increase in the value of land resulting from external factors, such as new infrastructure, public investment, or changes in land use regulations. Measured using MHCLG land value estimates for policy appraisal 2019.
- Heritage benefits** – AMION have undertaken a bespoke contingent valuation study to estimate the heritage value of the redevelopment. Despite not originally being in scope, this decision was taken as it was judged that the heritage use and non-use values are likely to exceed the available evidence in DCMS guidance given the scale and importance of the restoration. This online study elicited responses from over 100 Shropshire residents and 250 West Midlands residents. **Appendix A** provides a summary of this study, with the key findings for this assessment presented below:
 - Use Value** – A mean willingness to pay value of £10.46 for Shropshire residents and £13.56 for residents elsewhere in the West Midlands Combined Authority. These values have been applied to the visitors from each area.
 - Non-Use Value** – A mean willingness to pay value of £15.49 for Shropshire residents and £19.55 for residents elsewhere in the West Midlands Combined Authority. These values have been applied to the residents within each area. A optimism bias rate of 24%³³ has been to the West Midlands Combined Authority residents to account for the size of this catchment within the analysis.
- Brownfield disamenity** – Homes England’s second paper published as part of their 2023 research programme focuses on measuring the social value associated with developing on brownfield land. The study looks specifically at the benefit to local households of the removal of disamenity caused by undeveloped brownfield land and the amenity value created by the inclusion of specific features, such as facilities for local communities and space for nature. The Brownfield Development Values Tool has been used to calculate the brownfield amenity and additional feature amenity benefits. An area of 2.7 hectares has been modelled. Project specific inputs relating to the number of households within a 0.5-mile, 1-mile, and 2-mile radius have been inputted, based on LSOAs whose population centroid are within each radius from the site centroid. Additionally, the amount of

³³ Optimism bias is the systematic tendency to underestimate costs and risks while overestimating benefits and the likelihood of success in project appraisal.

brownfield land in Shropshire as a whole and a 2-mile radius has been sourced from the latest Brownfield Register for Shropshire.

- **Additional amenity** – Within the above model, the following amenities have been modelled as part of the project: cycle path, hardscaped space, and walking path.
- **Cultural use value** – the DCMS Evidence Bank provides a range of values for attendance at cultural events and assets. These values have been applied as follows a value of £5.50 (2024/25 prices) per attendee has been applied to the known event attendees at public festivals and events organised.
- **Wellbeing benefits from learning activities and training courses** – The Green Book Wellbeing Guidance shows that life satisfaction improves for individuals who complete learning courses and training. Within the SFM, this benefit relates to individuals who have undertaken learning activities on-site³⁴. The improvement in life satisfaction associated with completing one of these courses has an annual value of £1,280 (2024/25 prices). This adjusted to a daily figure and applied to learning activity attendees.
- **Wellbeing benefits from volunteering** – The Green Book Wellbeing Guidance shows that life satisfaction improves based on undertaking volunteering activities with local charities and communities, with an annual value of £1,093 (2024/25 prices) for an individual undertaking regular volunteering. Guidance suggests that regular volunteering relates to two hours per week over the year gives a value of £10.50 per hour. This has been applied to the number of volunteer hours across the SFM operation.
- **Wellbeing benefits from new employment** – The employment generated will have well-being benefits associated with individuals moving into employment. These benefits have been estimated by applying a wellbeing value of £7,470 from the Green Book wellbeing guidance (2024/25 prices) to each full-time equivalent job. The overall wellbeing benefit is expected to last for one year. Based on the labour market availability and analysis of ONS Labour Market Flows data, it is anticipated that 10% of jobs will be occupied by new entrants.
- **Labour supply benefits** – the employment generated by the programme has been converted into Full-Time Equivalent jobs based on the number of days supported. A local GVA per worker figure has been applied to the jobs taken up by new entrants, based on Experian GVA forecasts. In line with the labour market availability and government guidance, it is assumed 10% of jobs will be occupied by new entrants and there will be a 40% welfare impact for these jobs with the benefit experienced across three years.
- **Carbon emissions benefits** – Measured using Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) guidance³⁵ on monetising carbon emissions within policy appraisal. The project has an associated carbon footprint of 475 tonnes of carbon emissions, however, the restoration efforts resulted in 900 tonnes of embodied carbon savings. The project also has an associated operational carbon cost, but this has been minimised as much as possible by prioritising innovative approaches such as introducing a ground source heat pump or

³⁴ To avoid double-counting, participants in the more-intensive Activate training programme have been excluded with a wage premium applied instead.

³⁵ [Green Book supplementary guidance: valuation of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions for appraisal - GOV.UK](#)

reusing existing materials. The carbon savings (embodied carbon minus footprint) of the construction phases has been monetised using DESNZ’s carbon values.

- **Distributional analysis** – SFM has had positive distributional effects, by encouraging investment into areas in need within Shropshire and the West Midlands. The approach used to calculate distributional effects is that set out in the HM Treasury Green Book, based on equivalised disposable household income and welfare weights (the estimate of the marginal utility of income). The Green Book distributional weighting framework is constructed using data from the DWP Households Below Average Income (HBAI) dataset. This dataset takes information from the Family Resource Survey (FRS) and constructs an income distribution profile for the UK, based on (weekly) net equivalised income before housing costs (BHC) and after housing costs (AHC). To reflect the level of deprivation in the West Midlands and the impact on communities most at need, distributional benefits have also had a factor of 34.5% applied, reflecting the proportion of small areas locally within the top 20% most deprived in England³⁶.

Table 4-2 below presents the benefit assessment for the Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. Following Green Book methodologies for monetising economic benefits, **the programme is assessed to have delivered nearly £49.6 million.**

Table 4-2: Monetised Benefits (£m)	
Benefits	Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings
Direct LVU	£0.6
Heritage Use	£7.4
Heritage Non-Use	£20.4
Cultural Use	£1.4
Brownfield disamenity	£6.4
Additional feature amenity	£6.0
Wellbeing from learning activities and training	£1.5
Wellbeing from volunteering	£0.8
Wellbeing from new employment	£0.1
Labour supply	£0.4
Productivity	£0.2
Carbon savings	£0.3
Distributional	£4.0
Total	£49.6

³⁶ English Indices of Deprivation 2019, MHCLG (2019)

4.1.4 Non-monetised benefits

It is also important to recognise that the programme is also expected to result in several substantial wider benefits that are not captured in the monetised analysis. Building upon the analysis of quantifiable effects, an assessment of the wider benefits associated with the programme has been undertaken.

The Green Book highlights that not all benefits can be easily quantified or expressed in monetary terms. These non-monetised benefits might include social, environmental, or cultural impacts that are significant but difficult to measure in financial terms or monetise using HM Treasury approved methodologies. In line with the latest DLUHC (now MHCLG) Appraisal Guide best practice, an assessment of non-monetised impacts has been undertaken for the capital and cultural strand using a seven-point scale from large adverse to large significant based on the definitions set out below.

Impact	Commentary
Large adverse	Large disbenefit likely to materially impact on VFM
Moderate adverse	Important disbenefit but will not on its own significantly impact on VFM
Slight adverse	Small disbenefit unlikely to have material impact on VFM
Neutral	No impact
Slight beneficial	Small benefit unlikely to have material impact on VFM
Moderate beneficial	Important benefit but will not on its own significantly impact on VFM
Large beneficial	Large benefit likely to materially impact on VFM

The delivery of the SFM cultural programme is likely to have resulted in the following substantial wider economic benefits that are not captured in the SCBA analysis:

- Unlocking housing development** – This investment is likely to unlock the housing redevelopment on the wider site, providing much needed housing for the town. Historic England has announced Capital&Centric as the preferred developer for a residential development project within the grounds of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. The proposal will create new homes while preserving the legacy of the Grade I listed Main Mill and iconic Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings complex³⁷. Capital&Centric’s proposal was most closely aligned with Historic England’s vision for an exemplary residential development around the newly restored historic mill complex, creating new homes while enhancing the mill’s historic setting. The proposal also aligns with Historic England’s objectives around social, economic and environmental credentials.

³⁷ [Historic England Announces New Developer for Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings | Historic England](#)

- **Wider land value uplift and regeneration** – Stakeholders, including the Council and property agents, have indicated that there has been increases in housing investment and associated improvements in property quality near to the site. Government guidance indicates that the redevelopments on brownfield sites has beneficial impacts on property prices in the surrounding catchment. In addition, academic evidence suggests that buildings with heritage listings and areas designated for conservation can generate value due to distinctiveness, attributable to their cultural significance. In line with government guidance, this benefit has not been monetised to avoid double counting with the brownfield disamenity benefit.
- **Image and perceptions** – Restoring the Flaxmill Maltings has had a moderate beneficial effect on local image and perceptions, transforming a long-derelict site into a nationally recognised heritage landmark. The assessment of the ‘Local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit’ outcome illustrates how the perceptions of the area have also improved due to the project. This benefit has not been monetised to avoid double counting with the heritage non-use value, which includes enhanced pride of place.
- **Crime and anti-social behaviour** – As set out above, crime around the Flaxmill Maltings fell by around 27% in 2022 compared to the Shrewsbury average between 2011 and 2021. Further analysis of Police.UK data within this evaluation shows a further 1% decline since 2022, which is in line with the wider town. Overall, this suggests a small beneficial impact on local crime levels relative to pre-development conditions.
- **Community benefits** – The inclusion of the café and other public spaces has delivered a slight beneficial impact as a local community hub, providing a welcoming place for people to meet and engage with the site. These benefits will be further enhanced once the commercial spaces are fully occupied and if the residential development is delivered in line with expectations.

The table below presents the results of the non-monetised impact assessment.

Table 4-4: Non-monetised impact assessment		
Benefit	Reference Case (Without Investment)	Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings
Unlocking housing	Neutral	Major beneficial
Wider land value uplift and regeneration	Minor adverse	Moderate beneficial
Image and perceptions	Moderate adverse	Moderate beneficial
Crime and anti-social behaviour	Minor adverse	Moderate beneficial
Community	Neutral	Slight beneficial

4.1.5 Evaluation Summary Table

As shown in **Table 4-5** below, **SFM has a BCR of 1.36:1, indicating ‘acceptable’ value for money.**

It should be noted that the non-use benefits of the scheme are substantial. The use benefits alone do not represent value for money. However, the enhanced altruism, bequest, and existence non-use values from residents across a regional catchment have been proven to be considerable. These values were established through a bespoke contingent valuation study as presented in **Appendix A**.

The non-monetised benefits presented above indicate that the value for money of the scheme is, in reality, likely to be greater than the BCR suggests. In particular, the benefits from unlocking housing and the enhancement to the wider area in terms of image and perceptions are likely to be significant.

The MHCLG Appraisal Guide emphasises the importance of a holistic approach to value for money assessments, which includes consideration of the non-monetised benefits in determining the overall value for money category of a programme. The non-monetised benefits of the SFM are judged to be substantial and should therefore be included within the overall value for money assessment, to ensure the programme’s impacts are not under-valued.

The programme is therefore likely to reach medium value for money once these non-monetised impacts are included. **Overall, based on the monetised and non-monetised impact assessments, the SFM project programme falls within the ‘medium’ category for VFM.**

Table 4-5: SFM – Evaluation Summary Table	
	SFM
A. Present Value Benefits (£m)	£49.6
B. Present Value Costs (£m)	£36.4
C. Net Present Social Value (A-B, £m)	£13.1
D. BCR (A)/B)	1.36:1
E. Significant non-monetised impacts	Unlocking housing Wider land value uplift and regeneration Image and perceptions Crime and anti-social behaviour
F. Value for money category	Medium

4.2 3E’s Framework

The 3Es analysis (compliant with Magenta and Green Book approaches) involved an assessment of the following:

- The extent to which the cost of resources and inputs has been minimised (economy)** – e.g. has the level of funding allocated and administrative costs been appropriate and minimised where possible? This focuses on obtaining the best value for money by ensuring that inputs (such as labour, materials, and services) are procured at the lowest possible cost without compromising standards.

- **The ratio of public sector costs to outputs (efficiency)** – This assessment considered whether the scheme has delivered its primary output metrics and whether the delivery of these outputs represents value for money in terms of economic benefits against public sector costs.
- **The extent to which the programme has achieved its objectives (effectiveness)** – This assessed whether the scheme delivered its outcomes. While the programme has specific objectives, the assessment of value for money also considers ‘equity’ and the extent to which funding has been used to reduce inequalities or support disadvantaged communities.

4.2.1 *Economy*

The restoration of the Main Mill and Kiln at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings was delivered to exemplar conservation standards, as was intended from the outset. The project necessarily required a substantial level of resource input, reflecting both the complexity of the Grade I and II listed buildings and the ambition to create a flagship scheme for heritage-led regeneration. While this meant costs were comparatively high, stakeholders consistently emphasised that the quality achieved represented good value for money, particularly given the project’s role as a national exemplar.

Procurement processes followed public sector requirements, with specialist consultants and contractors commissioned in line with Historic England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund guidelines. A range of design and construction professionals were engaged, ensuring that materials and techniques met the highest standards of conservation practice. This approach avoided compromises in quality, while still ensuring that resources were deployed efficiently to deliver long-term durability and reduce the need for corrective works.

There were several unforeseen technical challenges (e.g. lift systems and M&E integration) which added to project costs and created additional snagging pressures post-completion. Some snagging issues are still being dealt with and there have been additional costs to rectify patent defects. However, these issues are common in large-scale heritage projects. Stakeholders noted that while such complexities may have increased short-term inputs, they were unavoidable in delivering the scheme to the required conservation standard.

Administrative costs were proportionate to the scale of the project, with Historic England committing significant internal staff resource to project management, coordination, and governance. This represented a higher level of grant revenue funding and in-kind investment compared to typical schemes but was essential to safeguard delivery and reflects the unusual scale of direct involvement by a national heritage body. In practice, this allocation of internal resources helped to manage risks and maintain quality, offsetting potential external costs.

In summary, resource inputs were inevitably high given the scale, ambition, and conservation demands of the Flaxmill Maltings project. Expenditure was well managed, and procurement remained compliant throughout. The restoration’s exceptional quality has been recognised through multiple national and international awards. Overall, the project achieved strong value for money, securing lasting heritage benefits while meeting exemplar conservation standards.

4.2.2 *Efficiency*

The project delivered against its main capital works outputs metrics, considered a real success for a heritage restoration scheme. However, the project underperformed against its employment outputs, which were considered ambitious, as well as its visitor number and community outreach outputs. Further analysis of achieved outputs is set out in **Section 3.2**.

Based on the achieved outputs, the project has been assessed as delivering ‘**medium**’ value for money. This calculation is based on the project’s **BCR of 1.36:1** and a number of significant non-monetised benefits.

4.2.3 *Effectiveness*

The programme largely delivered on its key outcomes in the Logic Model as shown in **Table 4-6** below, which summarises the assessments within **Section 3.3**. The only objectives which were not at least largely met relate to visitor numbers from further afield and resourcing Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings and SFM Ltd to be better equipped for the future. However, a long-term solution for the visitor experience has been found through the transfer of operations to English Heritage, meaning that the site is equipped for the future.

Table 4-6: Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings – Assessment of Key Outcomes in the Logic Model	
Objective	Assessment conclusion
Short-term outcomes	
Main Mill is removed from the HAR register	Fully met
The history of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Malting is better understood by local residents and visitors	Largely met
Formerly derelict buildings are restored and no longer a blight on the townscape	Fully met
Flaxmill Maltings buildings are opened to the public and occupied by new businesses with close links to Shropshire LEP and BID	Largely met
Flaxmill Maltings site is transformed into attractive visitor site offering improved public realm and cultural amenities	Fully met
Restoration and conservation of the site provides training and skills development opportunities	Largely met
Medium-term outcomes	
Increased civic pride and stronger sense of local identity in Shrewsbury	Fully met
More local residents and visitors from further afield visit Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings	Partially met
Improved transport links to the town – with better cycle routes, public transport, and parking facilities	Fully met
Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings site is economically viable and self-sustaining	Largely met
Listed heritage assets at the site are well managed and looked after, now and in the future	Fully met
The Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings are better resourced and equipped for the future	Not met
SFM Ltd is better resourced and equipped for the future	Partially met
Long-term outcomes	
Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings is fully restored and brought back into productive use as a local hub for the town	Fully met
Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings is widely recognised as a site of international, national and local significance	Largely met
Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings is an important catalyst in the wider regeneration of Shropshire, providing housing, employment and cultural growth	Largely met
Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings is a best practice model of sustainable heritage conservation and adaptive re-use	Fully met

The project also met the majority of The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes as shown by **Table 4-7** below, which summarises the assessments in **Section 3.4**.

On the whole, the heritage outcomes have been fully achieved, reflecting the exceptional quality of the restoration, interpretation, and recording of the Flaxmill Maltings. Outcomes for people and communities have been largely met, supported by positive visitor feedback and community use. However, some outcomes which relate to the visitor numbers, community outreach and volunteer have only been partially met due to the underperformance of key engagement targets.

Table 4-7: Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings – Assessment of National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes		
Objective	Evaluation timetable	Assessment conclusion
Outcomes for heritage		
Heritage will be better managed	Construction Phase	Largely met
Heritage will be in better condition	Construction Phase	Fully met
Heritage will be better interpreted and explained	Construction Phase and Operational Phase	Fully met
Heritage will be identified/recorded	Construction Phase	Fully met
Outcomes for people		
People will have learnt about heritage	Construction Phase and Operational Phase	Partially met
People will have developed skills	Construction Phase and Operational Phase	Largely met
People will have changed their attitudes and/or behaviours	Operational Phase	Fully met
People will have greater wellbeing	Construction Phase and Operational Phase	Largely met
People will have had an enjoyable experience	Operational Phase	Fully met
People will have volunteered time	Operational Phase	Partially met
Outcomes for communities		
With our investment, environmental impacts will be reduced	Construction Phase	Fully met
More people and a wider range of people will have engaged with heritage	Operational Phase	Partially met
Local community will be boosted	Operational Phase	Fully met
Local area/community will be a better place to live, work or visit	Construction Phase and Operational Phase	Fully met
Your organisation will be more resilient	Construction Phase and Operational Phase	Largely met

Section 5

Delivery and Management

5 Delivery and Management

This section evaluates the delivery and management arrangements for the project, focussing on evaluation Question (2), as follows:

- Why were elements of the project successful or unsuccessful at delivering the intended outcomes? This includes the role of the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings.

Overall, the project is a major success in heritage-led regeneration, delivering an award-winning restoration of a nationally significant site. However, while conservation and capital works exceeded expectations, community outreach, visitor performance and the relationship with the Friends were less successful due to various reasons as summarised below.

5.1 Key successes

5.1.1 *High-quality restoration and construction delivery*

The restoration of the Main Mill and Kiln is widely recognised as an exemplary achievement in the field of heritage-led regeneration. The project faced a series of substantial technical challenges, from stabilising fragile historic fabric to integrating modern mechanical and electrical systems within a Grade I listed building. Structural interventions were particularly complex, requiring innovative engineering solutions that balanced conservation principles with the need for long-term durability. Despite these pressures, the works were ultimately delivered within the revised budget, a notable outcome given the scale and intricacy of the task.

One of the most celebrated aspects of the project is the attention to quality. The Flaxmill Maltings has won multiple architectural and heritage awards, including recognition from RIBA, which has reinforced its reputation as a benchmark in the conservation sector. The project is frequently described by stakeholders as a leading example of industrial heritage refurbishment, both for the technical solutions employed and the aesthetic outcomes achieved. By comparison with similar sites across the UK, it stands out as one of the highest-quality schemes delivered in recent decades.

The decision-making by the Project Board also demonstrated long-term vision. For example, the reallocation of £0.5m from contingency to fund a sustainable ground-source heating system illustrated a commitment not only to the immediate delivery of the project but also to its environmental sustainability. Other environmentally conscious choices – such as avoiding artificial cooling and fitting high-performance double glazing – aligned the refurbishment with broader climate and heritage sustainability agendas. These choices have future-proofed the site while maintaining its historic character.

Importantly, the scale of this redevelopment is rarely led directly by Historic England, which more often acts in an advisory capacity. Taking on the full responsibility for a scheme over £30 million, with all the risks and scrutiny that entails, is therefore a highly notable achievement. The successful completion of the Main Mill and Kiln demonstrates that Historic England can act not only as a regulator and funder but also as a capable delivery body for last-resort interventions at scale.

5.1.2 *Effective governance and project management*

Strong governance was central to ensuring the project's success. The Programme Board and Project Board structures were well established and provided the framework for both strategic oversight and operational decision-making. These governance arrangements largely enabled clear lines of accountability and offered reassurance to funders such as The National Lottery Heritage Fund, who were investing unprecedented sums in a single site.

Senior leadership from Historic England played a visible and active role, which was highlighted positively in multiple stakeholder consultations. The Chief Executive and senior directors provided consistent backing, lending credibility to the project and ensuring it retained priority status across the organisation. Their willingness to make bold choices meant the project could continue to progress even when unforeseen problems arose.

The governance structures also proved resilient during the Covid-19 pandemic. The project faced site closures, supply chain issues, and the withdrawal of potential tenants. Nevertheless, the Programme Board was able to take rapid decisions to adapt timetables, reallocate budgets, and manage risks effectively. These measures ensured that the refurbishment continued broadly on time and within the agreed financial envelope, despite the extraordinary disruption. The ability to navigate such external shocks speaks to the strength of the governance arrangements in place.

5.1.3 *Partnership working and fundraising*

The early partnership between Historic England, Shropshire Council, and the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings was fundamental in unlocking external funding. Each partner brought distinct but complementary strengths. Shropshire Council positioned the scheme within its wider regeneration strategy for the town, aligning it with economic development priorities and infrastructure planning. The Friends contributed grassroots support and a visible demonstration of community buy-in, which was critical in meeting The National Lottery Heritage Fund requirements for engagement and volunteering. Together, this partnership presented a compelling case that the project was not only technically feasible but also socially and economically justified.

The outcome of this collaboration was extraordinary in funding terms. The project secured one of the largest single grants from The National Lottery Heritage Fund ever awarded, alongside substantial match-funding from sources such as Historic England, ERDF, and Shropshire Council. This blend of national, regional, and local funding streams required complex coordination, but it ultimately enabled delivery at a scale that would otherwise have been impossible.

Stakeholders repeatedly emphasised that without this broad partnership, and especially without the presence of the Friends in the early stages, the project would likely not have secured such significant investment. Although the Friends' operational role later diminished, their involvement in the initial bids demonstrated the importance of community partnership in heritage regeneration. The funding story of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings illustrates how combining grassroots activism with institutional authority can unlock opportunities at a level far beyond what either could achieve alone. The challenges in delivering a solution such as this is explored in **Section 5.2**.

5.1.4 *Branding and visitor offer*

A further achievement of the project has been the development of a strong and distinctive brand for Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. Historic England made a conscious effort to establish the Flaxmill Maltings as a cultural asset in its own right, while keeping it complementary to the organisation's national identity. Brand values were applied consistently across the exhibition, café, shop, signage, website, and marketing activity. This has helped ensure that the visitor experience feels coherent and professional, supporting the site's growing reputation as a destination.

The exhibition design has been well regarded for its durability and adaptability. Acknowledging the uncertainty around long-term management arrangements, the design team ensured that the interpretive materials could be passed on to future operators with minimal adjustment. This approach has proved valuable as English Heritage now takes on the operational role. The delivery of a high-quality and transferable exhibition offers a useful model for other heritage projects.

The café has also become an important part of the visitor offer. Located in an area of Shrewsbury with relatively few amenities, it is increasingly used by local residents as well as visitors. Consultation feedback suggests it provides a space for social meetings, informal work, and family gatherings, helping to embed the site into local daily life. This community-focused facility has supported a shift in perceptions of the site, from a derelict industrial building towards a place with an active role in the town.

5.1.5 *Volunteer contribution*

Volunteers have been central to sustaining the site's activities, particularly in tours, school visits, and family events. Many of these individuals had been involved since the earliest days of the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings, and their continued commitment reflects the strong sense of ownership that the project has fostered. Their contribution has ensured that local voices and knowledge remain embedded in the visitor experience.

In practice, volunteers have not only enhanced capacity but also provided authenticity. Guided tours led by people with long-standing personal connections to the mill carry a credibility and warmth that professional staff alone could not replicate. This has been especially valuable in cultivating repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

The continued involvement of many volunteers, even after the dissolution of the Friends, demonstrates resilience in community engagement. Although formal structures of partnership shifted, the individual commitment of volunteers has provided continuity. Their work has been instrumental in maintaining a living connection between the restored site and the community it serves.

5.1.6 *Early regeneration impacts*

Although it is still early in the operational phase, there are already clear signs that Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings is beginning to catalyse wider regeneration. Local stakeholders note that the project has improved perceptions of the northern part of Shrewsbury, an area previously associated with neglect. The transformation of a derelict landmark into a nationally recognised

heritage asset has sent strong signals of confidence to residents, investors, and policymakers alike.

New housing developments have already been delivered nearby, and local property improvements suggest that the area is becoming more desirable. The office and commercial spaces within Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings have begun to attract tenants, creating a new business hub that complements the visitor attraction. Meanwhile, events and markets hosted in the Dye House and café are drawing additional footfall, helping to activate a part of town that had previously been overlooked.

These impacts highlight the potential of heritage-led regeneration to deliver not only cultural but also economic and social outcomes. By setting such a high benchmark in terms of quality, the Flaxmill Maltings has positioned itself as a flagship for how historic sites can drive place-based renewal. Again, the rarity of Historic England directly delivering a project of this scale makes the achievement even more remarkable. It demonstrates that with the right combination of leadership, funding, and partnerships, heritage assets can be repurposed to act as anchors for regeneration in ways that benefit both local communities and the wider economy.

5.2 Potential areas for improvement

5.2.1 *Breakdown of the Friends partnership*

One of the most significant challenges in delivery and management was the breakdown of the relationship between Historic England and the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings. In the early years, the Friends were instrumental in securing National Lottery Heritage Fund investment through their demonstration of strong community involvement and volunteering. However, as the project evolved, expectations around their role grew increasingly misaligned with their capacity.

The Friends were expected to produce detailed business and activity plans as part of their role. Historic England provided variable levels of support, including bringing in external consultants to support them, but the scale and technical requirements of these plans exceeded what a small voluntary organisation could realistically deliver. This mismatch in expectations, combined with communication difficulties and changing personnel on both sides, led to frustration and ultimately a breakdown in the partnership. It should be noted that the challenge of creating a viable activity and business plan for such a significant project has become evident during the operation of the attraction, as even the final agreed plans have proven difficult to implement.

The consequences of this process led to The Friends, once a core partner, withdrawing entirely from management and delivery by mid-2022. This not only curtailed the community ownership element of the scheme but also created reputational challenges. Some stakeholders perceived that the long-established volunteer group, which had invested years of effort, became sidelined as the larger institutions assumed responsibility for the final stages of delivery. While many Friends volunteers continued individually, the loss of the formal organisation left a gap in grassroots representation.

5.2.2 *Communication and coordination challenges*

Another area for improvement lay in communication and coordination, both within Historic England and across partner organisations. Despite strong overarching governance arrangements, Historic England's central teams were not always as closely engaged with the Shrewsbury-based project team as might have been expected. Staff on-site reported that this occasionally left them feeling isolated and under-resourced, particularly during critical stages such as the lead-up to opening.

Externally, communication with partners and stakeholders was sometimes reactive rather than proactive. For example, significant project developments, including a royal visit, was communicated via the press rather than directly through project channels to funders and stakeholders. Similarly, the Friends expressed frustration at being excluded from discussions that directly affected their role. These patterns are likely to have contributed to the sense of mistrust and undermined collaboration to some extent.

In governance terms, while the Project Board structure was effective in many respects, there were also instances where decision-making processes were rushed or not clearly documented. The urgency to meet opening deadlines, compounded by Covid-19 delays, sometimes meant that long-term operational issues were overlooked in favour of short-term delivery pressures.

5.2.3 *Community outreach and activity planning*

Although the physical restoration was exemplary, the delivery of the associated activity plan was more limited. Stakeholder feedback emphasised that while the building outcomes were outstanding, the wider engagement and education objectives fell short of expectations. For example, resources allocated for schools and community activities were underutilised, with around an £178,000 underspend on overall Activity Costs.

The late implementation of activity planning was a key factor, which was caused by the change of visitor operation management from the Friends to the trading company. Many consultees noted that community and educational engagement should have been integrated earlier in the project lifecycle, rather than being compressed into the final stages before opening. As a result, programming was narrower in scope and less innovative than originally envisaged. Activities tended to focus on family-friendly events such as markets and craft sessions, while opportunities to develop specialist heritage or STEM-linked content were missed.

This shortfall highlights an important lesson: capital works and community engagement must be planned and delivered in parallel, and it was the ambition to have this level of integration working with the Friends. When activity planning is delayed or deprioritised, it is difficult to achieve the same level of impact as the physical regeneration.

5.2.4 *Operational handover and facilities management issues*

The transition from capital project to operational site revealed several issues in handover processes. Facilities management staff reported inheriting incomplete or inconsistent documentation, particularly around mechanical and electrical systems. Complex installations such

as lifts, alarms, and heating systems proved unreliable, leading to significant snagging issues even after opening.

Some stakeholders described these systems as over-specified and poorly coordinated, with a lack of clear training or manuals for the operational team. This not only created frustration but also placed additional costs and resource burdens on Historic England. The absence of a structured handover template or process within Historic England was highlighted as a weakness that should be addressed in future projects.

While the overall aesthetic and conservation quality of the restoration was exemplary, the functionality of some elements of the building such as M&E caused challenges for the project team. This gap between design ambition and operational practicality highlights the need to ensure that capital investment decisions are fully aligned with long-term maintenance requirements and the needs of users.

5.2.5 *Long-term sustainability and integration*

Some concerns remain about the long-term sustainability of the site, although the transfer to English Heritage provides opportunities for growth, particularly through its large membership base. Stakeholders have highlighted the importance of ongoing investment in staffing, programming, and maintenance. Without these resources, there is a risk that the momentum from opening could diminish over time.

Sustainability extends beyond finance to cultural relevance. Some consultees observed that the site may not reach its full potential if community events, and school engagement are not further developed. Embedding the Flaxmill Maltings in Shrewsbury's identity will depend on maintaining a balance between its role as a national heritage landmark and as a hub for the local community.

The key lesson is that large-scale capital projects need to consider post-opening sustainability from the outset, including what happens after an initial Activity Plan. Delivering the building is a critical milestone but ensuring it remains active and relevant requires continued focus and long-term commitment.

5.3 Summary

The delivery and management arrangements at SFM were highly effective in achieving their central aim: the rescue and restoration of a nationally significant heritage asset. This is an achievement of national significance, given the site's dereliction and the complexity of the works. At the same time, outcomes in community engagement and outreach have been less fully realised. The breakdown of the Friends partnership curtailed opportunities for grassroots involvement, and weaknesses in communication, activity planning and handover processes limited the scale of outcomes achieved to some extent.

Section 6

Conclusions

6 Conclusions

6.1 Summary of findings

The Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings project has delivered a nationally significant regeneration of the Main Mill and Kiln to exemplar conservation standards, earning 18 national and international awards. This outcome has safeguarded the fabric of the buildings, removed them from the Heritage at Risk register, and established the Flaxmill Maltings as a flagship example of heritage-led regeneration. The site now provides high-quality office space, a café, and an interpretation centre, contributing to improved perceptions of Shrewsbury and signs of wider regeneration.

In terms of output performance, the project delivered its main physical regeneration outputs but has fallen short of employment, visitor and volunteer targets as follows:

- **Physical regeneration** – The project has delivered its main physical regeneration outputs, with key buildings restored and additional high-quality commercial/cultural floorspace delivered to bring the site back into productive use. The funding enabled a best-practice heritage restoration at a regionally significant site that had remained vacant and derelict for decades.
- **Employment** – The project has underperformed against its original employment targets, which are considered overly ambitious. The project has delivered 62 FTE jobs to date. By year five, this is expected to rise to 86 to 136 FTEs (44-69% of the original target). Against our revised and realistic target, the project is forecast to achieve 74% by year five, with potential to exceed it at 116% depending on fourth-floor occupancy.
- **Visitor numbers** – Based on the last year of data available (March 2024 to February 2025), the visitor numbers to the site have not reached its target of 88,000. The site has attracted 18,340 in-person visitors and 37,766 website visits, which is 67% of this target. Since reopening to the public in some form, there have been over 61,000 in-person visits to Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings for visitor experience, learning activities, or events and new projects. This total figure excludes visitors purely to the café, which has only been calculated for the past year using survey information collected since our evaluation.
- **Volunteers** – The project has provided substantial volunteering opportunities for local communities – with a total 23,259 volunteer hours or 3,323 volunteer days (defined as 7 hours a day). However, this level of volunteer activity days supported was also below target, with a target of 5,471 days. The decision from the Friends of the Flaxmill Maltings to disband is likely a key reason for this target not being met, as a wider group of regular volunteers were no longer active on the site.

The heritage outcomes have been fully delivered, demonstrating the high quality of the Flaxmill Malting's restoration, interpretation, and recording. Outcomes for people and communities have been largely achieved, underpinned by strong visitor feedback and community use. However, some engagement-related outcomes – particularly around visitor numbers, outreach, and volunteering – were only partially met due to underperformance of key targets above.

SFM has a BCR of 1.36:1, indicating ‘acceptable’ value for money. Most benefits come from the site’s heritage and cultural importance, which extend beyond visitors to local residents and the wider region. Our contingent valuation study shows these ‘non-use’ benefits – such as pride, wellbeing, identity, and assurance of preservation – are substantial, whereas ‘use’ benefits alone would not justify the investment. In reality, value for money is likely higher than the BCR suggests, particularly when considering non-monetised benefits such as unlocking housing and improving the area’s image and perception. **The project is judged to be ‘medium’ value for money once the non-monetised benefits are included.**

From a management perspective, governance during construction enabled delivery within the revised budget. The transition to operations, however, was less smooth, with some challenges in handover processes, documentation, and facilities management. In addition, the decision of the Friends group to disband reduced community-led capacity, which likely limited the reach of outreach and volunteering activities. While these issues did not undermine the conservation outcomes, they highlight areas where more resilient processes and partnerships could strengthen delivery in future projects.

Overall, the project can be judged a qualified success: it has safeguarded and transformed a nationally important heritage site, while also highlighting important lessons about community partnership, governance and sustainability for future regeneration projects.

6.2 Lessons learned and recommendations

The main lessons from can be summarised as:

1. **Ability to deliver high-profile restoration schemes as a last resort solution** – Large-scale, high-quality regeneration can be achieved when a national body intervenes as the delivery client of last resort, but this places significant strain on internal resources. National leadership and governance are important for securing and completing large-scale capital projects.

Recommendation for action: Historic England should only intervene on a capital project of this scale as a last resort solution. If deemed necessary, clear governance and decision-making hierarchies must be implemented at project outset. Exemplar schemes should be balanced with operational requirements.

2. **Integration of activity planning with capital delivery** – Delayed activity planning due to the change in delivery model for the visitor operation meant that outreach and engagement activity was not as ready it could have been when capital works were completed. Long-term operational sustainability was uncertain until the transition to English Heritage, which provided the most viable operating model.

Recommendation for action: Future projects should adopt a joined-up project management approach, with clear direction from the Project Director and Executive Board. This will help ensure capital delivery and activity planning are aligned and delivered in a coordinated way that builds audiences and supports long-term sustainability.

- 3. Consistent communication and realistic expectations for community partners** – Inconsistent communication and misaligned expectations contributed to the breakdown of the Friends’ partnership. Volunteer numbers and community participation weakened after the Friends’ withdrawal, reducing grassroots involvement. Sustainable community participation requires realistic expectations and consistent investment in engagement capacity.

Recommendation for action: Historic England must ensure that expectations placed on community partners are realistic and achievable. Build resilient volunteer and community engagement structures that are not dependent on a single organisation.

- 4. Embed robust handover process** – Operational handover highlighted challenges, with snagging and unresolved technical issues impacting delivery. Robust operational handover processes are vital to protect investment and ensure smooth transition from construction to operation.

Recommendation for action: Develop a structured handover process involving facilities and operations staff well before opening, with clear documentation, training, and accountability. Introduce a structured staff handover process with documented responsibilities, key updates, and transfer of access to ensure continuity when team members leave.

- 5. Targeted approach required for diverse audience** – The engagement numbers have not yet reached expected levels, meaning certain The National Lottery Heritage Fund outcomes were not fully met. The targeted community activities attracted hard to reach audiences however, the typical visitor profile to exhibitions and events was not diverse.

Recommendation for action: Maintain and prioritise a robust Activity Plan to engage diverse audiences in future projects, with no hard stop at project end. English Heritage should look to proactively build on positive school engagement to reach a wider range of communities.

- 6. Heritage is greatly valued by society** – The value experienced by both users and non-users (as shown by Contingent Valuation study findings) demonstrated that heritage assets are strongly valued by society, justifying significant public investment.

Recommendation for action: Continue to protect and invest in heritage assets, using robust valuation evidence to secure support from funders, policymakers and communities. Publish a database of evaluation results to support future business cases.

Appendices

Appendix List

[Appendix A – Primary Research Summary](#)

[Appendix B – Activity Reports](#)