

**Coast to
Capital**



**CHA
N
Q
EST
RL**

A large, thick pink circular graphic that is open at the top, framing the central text.

Charleston Trust

Project Summary

Charleston Trust is a museum and arts centre of national importance. Our home is the seventeenth century farmhouse which was the home and studio of the painters Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant. Charleston was a gathering point for some of the 20th century's most radical artists, writers and thinkers known collectively as the Bloomsbury group. It is where they came together to imagine society differently and has always been a place where art and experimental thinking are at the centre of everyday life.

Charleston was the residence of Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant who are amongst Britain's best twentieth century artists and was where they hosted some of the most influential thinkers and writers of the early twentieth century, including Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes and T.S. Eliot. It now hosts a collection of artwork and artefacts of unique cultural and historical significance and represents the only surviving example of a modernist Bloomsbury interior.

Prior to redeveloping the barns, visitor capacity for the house and its gardens were limited to just 5 afternoons a week between April and October. A small café area was not able to provide much in the way of additional revenue. With the desire to increase capacity and make improvements to the cultural offering in the region, the barns project was intended to expand the cultural provision to allow for an extended visitor season and an enhanced experience.

This project set out to create a new gallery space and enhanced visitor facilities and complete the restoration of two historic barns to create a flexible auditorium and café space. This would allow for additional revenue streams to the Trust, preserve cultural heritage, enhance our economic role in the region and achieve a sustainable future for the site.

Project Achievements

The project works have delivered a dedicated exhibition area to display more of the Charleston Trust artwork as well as loans from art institutions and touring works. We have also added additional retail space. A new flexible 200 seat auditorium in the restored Grade II listed barn, provides a space available for lectures, artistic performances, film screenings and event hire. We have also created a larger café. The newly constructed and refurbished floor space attributed to this project

1,980 sqm commercial space
57 jobs



Both shop and café sell locally sourced products including local produce, wine, art works, homewares, and ceramics as well as other products such as books related to the Bloomsbury group. Since completion, the project has produced 57 jobs and we welcomed 54,000 visitors during 2019. Overall outputs achieved have increased by 16% compared with the original ambitions for the project.

Match funding for this project was achieved as intended with £783,109 awarded from the Heritage Lottery Fund, £32,187 awarded from Arts Council England and an impressive £2,014,777 kindly contributed as private donations from Trusts and individuals.



£650,000 Local Growth Fund

Project Benefits

The Local Growth Fund award of £650,000 enabled this project to complete work to the high standard of finish desired. This quality enabled the Trust to progress the additional revenue streams needed to create financial sustainability.

Following project completion, the Trust opened the new facilities in September 2018. The new and refurbished spaces allowed opening times to increase to 10-5pm throughout the year which increased revenue by 77% during 2019. In addition to the house and gardens, the three new gallery spaces display temporary exhibitions of Bloomsbury artists alongside contemporary artists. These exhibitions change through the year and encourage repeat visits to Charleston. Knowledgeable staff are on hand to enhance visitor experience by providing detail about the collections and this is now enhanced by a new app which provides an in-depth description of the house, its art works and inhabitants.

Part of the Trust's plan to create further revenue was to further develop our programme of festivals and events, this has included growing a year round festival programme, building on the success of the renowned Charleston Festival which takes place in May each year. The Trust has now launched a year-round programme of talks and events, in the region of 20 events were held during 2019. These included family and community events and two Designer and Maker fairs which hosted local creators and artisans selling their products. In Summer 2021 the Trust has created an outdoor stage in the barn yard which will host over 20 talks and performances in a socially distanced outdoor setting.

The café has recently been taken over by local female led business, Caccia & Tails, allowing the café space to become a destination in its own right.

These increased revenue streams have created opportunities for the Trust to become and remain financially sustainable and self-sufficient and this will contribute to preserving important local heritage.

The Trust is committed to creating Social Value in the local area and has actively sought opportunities to do this through the life of the project and beyond.

The new spaces have provided facilities to allow us to develop a programme of outreach activity. Using additional funding from trusts and the Arts Council, to support a programme of work with local schools and community groups. During 2018 and 2019 a Learning Officer built links with local schools and higher education, which led to a number of school visits and the creation of a programme of activities for families and

A Community Engagement Officer focused on outreach to local LGBTQ+ communities and residents in the nearby town of Newhaven, with a particular focus on engaging young people. This work delivered activity against all of the following outcomes:

- Increased understanding of schools, the value of Charleston's offer, and its links to supporting National Curriculum.
- Delivery of a new Schools' Programme.
- Ensuring teachers have increased understanding of value of Charleston and its links to the National Curriculum.
- Increased collaboration with rural schools and hospital schools through visits, projects, online resources, and outreach.
- Children and young people have more opportunities to explore their creative expression via multiple artistic platforms.
- Increased engagement from targeted community audiences including those with learning disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities, young people and residents of Newhaven.

The Trust employed an Apprentice Gardner through 2019 and since completing the programme this employee has progressed to become a permanent employee. The Trust continues to pursue new training opportunities for young people including 5 new placements created through the government's Kickstart Scheme 2021, which funds young people on universal credit into jobs and training opportunities.



The Trust's location does create difficulty in terms of the environmental impact of customer and staff journeys to the remote site, which is not well served by public transport. The Trust has several schemes that aim to contribute to lowering that impact including offering a mini-bus service from Lewes during larger festivals and events, careful waste management and recycling on site including composting café waste and offering sustainable and locally sourced items in the shop with plastic-free packaging. The Centenary Garden includes a number of local heritage apple varieties and the gardens emphasise local plant varieties and the Trust are introducing more meadow areas to support biodiversity and pollinator insects.

The Trust offer a Green Traveller incentive, with reduced ticket prices available to people travelling to us on public transport or by cycle and staff are encouraged to share their journeys to work where possible. Post Covid-19 we are also offering flexible working arrangements to allow more staff to work from home.

Continuing to enhance an environmentally friendly outlook, we would like to host beehives on site in the future. Additionally, funding has been secured through the government's Getting Building Fund to repair the 1km long access road from the A27 which has been in a poor state of repair for many years. This improvement will allow us to introduce a local bus service to the site, giving a public transport option and reducing the need for individual car use.