

Assizes for Devizes background information

Project Overview

Wiltshire Museum has received initial support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for an ambitious and exciting project 'Assizes for Devizes: Unlocking Wiltshire's Stories'. This large-scale redevelopment project aims to create a sustainable cultural hub at the heart of Wiltshire, by revitalising the much-loved Devizes Assize Court as a new home for the Wiltshire Museum and its internationally important collections. *Assizes for Devizes* will transform the currently derelict Grade II* listed building into a world class tourist and community destination, central to the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site.

Development funding of £300,748 has been awarded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to help Wiltshire Museum, working closely with the Devizes Assize Court Trust, to progress plans for the project before applying for a full National Lottery grant in 2025. If successful, work would start on the Assize Court building in three- or four-years' time, with a target opening date of 2030.

This transformative project will be a catalyst for social and economic regeneration in the market town of Devizes, supporting local businesses, community groups and bringing new employment opportunities.

The project will enable our organisation to continue to grow and develop, with new, diverse income streams, and investments in training and development. This vital work will secure a long-term sustainable and successful future for both the Wiltshire Museum and the Devizes Assize Court building, ensuring we are able to continue to engage audiences with Wiltshire's remarkable and unique story for many years to come.

Assizes for Devizes is a joint venture between the Devizes Assize Court Trust (DACT), which owns the building, and the Wiltshire Museum, which will manage the project and run the building post-completion.

What we will do:

- Conserve and restore the Grade II* listed Devizes Assize Court, including extensive repair work.
- Design new and accessible facilities within the building, including a designated learning space and a multi-use event and community space.
- Reach out to and work with new and existing audiences to co-produce displays and activities, which will shape the new museum offer.
- Deliver an exciting programme of activities, volunteering and health & wellbeing courses to Devizes and wider Wiltshire.
- Develop interactive new permanent galleries that innovatively showcase the Museum's world class collections and Wiltshire's incredible stories.
- Create a vibrant temporary exhibition space to host a dynamic exhibition programme of a national standard.
- Work with stakeholders, including Wiltshire Council and Devizes Town Council, to support the regeneration of the wider Devizes Wharf area.
- Enable the Museum to develop a more sustainable business model – by increasing earned income – moving away from its current (over) reliance on legacies and subsidy from the museum's reserves.

For more information, please visit: <https://devizesassizecourt.org.uk/>

Project Background

Devizes Assize Court Trust and the Assize Court building

The Devizes Assize Court Trust (DACT) is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and in 2017 acquired the derelict building with the aim of restoring the building as the new home for the Wiltshire Museum. The Assize Court is a Grade II* Listed Building and has been on the Historic England Heritage at Risk Register since the scheme was established in 1991.



The Devizes Assize Court building in 2022

The Assize Court site adjoins the Kennet & Avon Canal and the Wharf area, identified in Wiltshire Council's draft Local Plan as a key site for regeneration. The Plan identifies the Assize Court as a significant project for the town of Devizes, the county of Wiltshire and the wider area.

Wiltshire Museum

The Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society (WANHS) was founded in 1853 and owns and operates the Wiltshire Museum, home to the best Bronze Age archaeology collections in Britain. Set in the historic market town of Devizes the Wiltshire Museum is housed in Georgian and Victorian buildings – all Grade II listed.

The collections are Designated as being of national significance, and include many objects excavated in the landscapes surrounding the Avebury and Stonehenge World Heritage Sites, as well as the archives that record their discovery. We have award-winning displays of 500 Stonehenge period objects, including 30 pieces of gold treasure, together with archaeology, art, natural history, local history, and an Archive and Library which is open to visitors.

Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Society is a Registered Charity and Company Limited by Guarantee. The Society was formed in 1853 to establish a Museum and Library and for the promotion and study of objects connected with Wiltshire.

The Museum is open throughout the year (7 days a week during summer months) for visitors and researchers and in addition to the permanent galleries offers a variety of events, lectures and special exhibitions for all ages. We welcome over 20,000 users each year.

For more information, please visit: www.wiltshiremuseum.org.uk



The Bush barrow lozenge – from the Museum's collection.

Assizes for Devizes Development Phase Project Management Structure

Project Management Structure

