



**\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\***

March 2026—

## QEST awarded grant by The National Lottery Heritage Fund to support underrepresented young people into heritage craft careers through new project 'Tradition in Transition: Youth Journeys Through Heritage Craft'.

The Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust (QEST) has been awarded £134,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for a new, major project. **'Tradition in Transition: Youth Journeys Through Heritage Craft'** looks ahead; bridging gaps in access, knowledge, and careers for underrepresented young people aged 16–25. The project combines three regional **CraftLab** programmes, follow-on **Craft Career Kickstarter** micro-grants to support individual progression, and a co-created digital **Craft Traditions Library**, leaving a legacy beyond the project.

Tradition in Transition aims to:

- Expand inclusive access to heritage craft skills, training, and career opportunities for underrepresented youth.
- Build youth leadership through mentoring, co-creation, and intergenerational exchange.
- Strengthen the visibility and sustainability of crafts through digital legacy and regional collaboration.
- Work in partnership across three regions, exploring four crafts with a strong legacy in those areas: silver and pewter metalworking in Sheffield, shoemaking in Sleaford, and heritage weaving in Blackburn.

*"This is a significant moment for QEST," shared **Deborah Pocock LVO, QEST's CEO**. "Over the past three years, we have taken substantial steps to engage and empower young people to see craft as a viable and exciting career. This has included the formation of 12 Craft&Making Clubs with the National Saturday Club, our Making the Future schools programme with Education and Employers, introducing an Emerging Maker Grant, creating the Craft Your Future online resource and establishing the QEST Youth Board.*

*Building on these foundations, we're delighted to further our relationships with regional partners, enabling us to reach more young people, widen access and offer new opportunities. Tradition in Transition celebrates our cultural heritage, materiality, skill and place, whilst equipping young people with the confidence and knowledge to shape what heritage craft looks for them in the future."*

**Helen Featherstone, Director, England, North at The National Lottery Heritage Fund**, said: *"We are extremely proud to be supporting this project and safeguarding heritage skills and crafts that are at risk of being lost. It's wonderful to think that, thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, our investment will give young people the opportunity to develop skills for the future through heritage crafts and forge a career path for themselves whilst building on an important legacy."*



Left to right: QEST Alumni representing crafts featured: weaver Momoka Gomi © Clare Coe, silversmith Manasi Depala and shoemaker Oluwamuyiwa Fadairo © Julian Calder

## CraftLab: Youth Workshops & Showcase

QEST will build on existing partnerships with Sheffield Museums, The Hub in Sleaford, and Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery to deliver youth programmes at each site in late summer 2026, February and June 2027 respectively. The venues and QEST will work with local youth groups from underrepresented backgrounds in the craft sector, particularly targeting Global Majority backgrounds in Sheffield and Blackburn, and rural youth in Sleaford, as well as master craftspeople willing to showcase their skills. The CraftLab programme will be free, offering local youth workshops, co-created showcases, and career events featuring demonstrations, hands-on activities and youth presentations.

**The Hub, Sleaford** said: *“Tradition in Transition is deeply relevant to Lincolnshire and the wider East Midlands, a region with a rich but increasingly overlooked history of leatherwork and shoemaking. Today, opportunities for young people to engage with these heritage skills are limited, and specialist crafts such as shoemaking are underrepresented in regional creative provision. Learning a traditional craft gives young people more than technical skills – it gives them confidence, connection to place, and a sense that their creativity has value. Projects like this show these young people that heritage crafts are valued skills with future career prospects, and The Hub is thrilled to be partnered in this project.”*



*Craft&Making Masterclass with Momoka Gomi © Faye Parker*



*Crafty Careers Fair 2024 © Andy Brown*

**Sheffield Museums** said: *“Sheffield Museums are delighted to be working with QEST and the Heritage Fund on the ‘Tradition in Transition’ project. Sheffield has a vibrant community of metalwork artists and makers, and this project will enable young people to explore heritage craft skills, engaging with Sheffield’s unique designated metalwork collection as well as with local makers and creatives. The programme will increase their knowledge and confidence and help them to explore opportunities for future career pathways.”*

**Alys Rouncefield, Outreach and Engagement Officer and Cairnley McKenna, Visitor Engagement Officer from Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery** shared: *“At Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery, we believe it is essential to create meaningful opportunities for underrepresented young people. Our Craft&Making Club with QEST and the National Saturday Club was established to introduce young audiences to the diverse career pathways within heritage crafts, offering access to skills, knowledge and creative experiences that may not always be available in the classroom. We are committed to building on this work and extending these opportunities to young people aged 16–25. We are very grateful to be part of the Tradition in Transition project with QEST and the Heritage Fund, and look forward to the programme ahead.”*



*Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery*

## Craft Career Kickstarter: Grants

Each CraftLab will be followed by an open call for participants to apply for micro-grants up to £750 (3–4 grantees per location). The grant will signpost age-appropriate training, mentoring, or travel to support skills in metalworking, shoemaking, or heritage weaving. Each grantee will receive 4 hours of mentoring from a craft practitioner and a Youth Board member for peer advice. These grants will align with QEST's wider offering, including individual awards for Scholarships, Emerging Maker Grants and Apprenticeships which are open twice a year.

## Craft Traditions Library: Digital Resource

The project's legacy will be supported through a digital Craft Traditions Library. This interactive resource on QEST's existing website will be developed by the QEST Youth Board with research and resources created by young people. The Library will feature a craft directory (starting with the four crafts in this project) and enriched by audio-visual documentation. The Library will be launched at the end of the project with a sector event in London. This Library will build on QEST's existing online offering for career advice and resources, Craft Your Future, which was co-created and launched with the Youth Board in May 2025, to mark QEST's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

**\*\*END\*\***

Images and interview opportunities with QEST representatives are available upon request. Please contact: Amy Bicknell, Communications Manager, QEST. E: [amy.bicknell@gest.org.uk](mailto:amy.bicknell@gest.org.uk)

## About Queen Elizabeth Scholarship Trust

Investing in the Future of Craft.

QEST is a charity that transforms the careers of talented and aspiring makers by funding their training and education, creating pathways to excellence and strengthening the future of the UK's craft sector.

To date, QEST has awarded £7.5 million to almost 900 craftspeople working across the UK in 130 different craft disciplines. From papermaking to thatching, ceramic conservation to sculpture, QEST supports both contemporary and traditional craft skills, as well as innovative techniques and practices. QEST is committed to empowering the next generation to see craft as a viable, fulfilling and sustainable career. Since launching its Partnership Programmes in 2023, QEST has reached over 19,000 young people and children, and supported underrepresented communities to explore craft and conservation careers.

QEST was founded by the Royal Warrant Holders Association in 1990 to celebrate the 90th birthday of HM Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother. HM The King is the Charity's Patron.

[gest.org.uk](https://gest.org.uk)

Follow [@gestcraft](#) on Instagram and [@QEST](#) on LinkedIn #QEST

## About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. That's why as the largest funder for the UK's heritage we are dedicated to supporting projects that connect people and communities to heritage, as set out in our strategic plan, Heritage 2033. Heritage can be anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations. We believe in the power of heritage to ignite the imagination, offer joy and inspiration, and to build pride in place and connection to the past. Over the next 10 years, we aim to invest £3.6billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to make a decisive difference for people, places and communities.

[heritagefund.org.uk](https://heritagefund.org.uk)

Follow [@HeritageFundUK](#) on Twitter/X, Facebook and Instagram and use [#NationalLottery](#) [#HeritageFund](#)

## **About The Hub, Sleaford**

The Hub delivers an inspiring programme of contemporary craft, design, dance and creative arts experiences, in Sleaford, across North Kesteven and beyond. Home to the national centre for craft and design, our celebrated exhibitions showcase contemporary artists and makers from around the world. We strive to make arts and culture accessible to all, promoting inclusivity, diversity and cultural democracy in all that we do.

[hub-sleaford.org.uk](http://hub-sleaford.org.uk)

## **About Sheffield Museums**

Sheffield Museums is the independent charity that operates six of the city's leading museums and heritage sites. Established in 2021, the charity cares for the city's collections of art, archaeology, social and industrial history, and natural science, alongside the Guild of St George's John Ruskin collection and is home to the Ken Hawley Collection Trust's Hawley Tool Collection. We work with our communities to tell remarkable stories of Sheffield and its people, and celebrate its reputation for excellence in craft, making and innovation. Together with local, regional and national partners, we showcase home-grown creative talent and bring outstanding cultural experiences to the city.

[sheffieldmuseums.org.uk](http://sheffieldmuseums.org.uk)

## **About Blackburn Museum & Art Gallery**

Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery opened on 11th June 1874 as the Blackburn Free Library and Museum. The museum now occupies the entire building and collections include British 19th and 20th century fine art; the R E Hart Collection of early books and coins; the Thomas Boys Lewis collection of Japanese prints; Greek and Russian Icons; Egyptology as well as the borough's local history and industrial history collections, including the Lewis Textile Collection which was formerly housed at the Lewis Textile Museum.

[blackburnmuseum.org.uk](http://blackburnmuseum.org.uk)