

Annual Review
2024–2025

INSPIRE

 ROYAL
AIR FORCE
museum



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WELCOME

This year, we reflect with joy on the stories, achievements, and relationships that have shaped the RAF Museum's work in 2024-2025. From community engagement and learning initiatives to major development milestones and prestigious awards, every success has been made possible by the incredible dedication of our staff, volunteers, and supporters.

We were honoured to receive the Patronage of His Majesty the King, who trained at RAF College Cranwell and flew in our very own Jet Provost T.5, now proudly displayed in Hangar 3 at the RAF Museum London. His connection to the Royal Air Force underscores the enduring relevance of our mission: to share the RAF story past, present and future.

This year, we made major strides towards our 'Inspiring Everyone: RAF Museum Midlands Development Programme', with new co-design workshops, planning approvals, and artist impressions capturing our long-term vision. The Museum's Midlands development highlights our ambition to remain forward-looking while deeply rooted in heritage.

Sustainability remained central to our operations. From carbon literacy accreditation to decarbonisation projects funded by Salix, we've taken meaningful steps toward our Net Zero goal. We also worked in partnership with Barnet Council on Barnet Climate Action Month and celebrated with the community through the Light and Flight Festival, further embedding our role as a cultural anchor.

We continued to welcome new audiences through events such as Highly Sprung's summer performance programme, National Lottery Open Week, and memorable learning opportunities including the Midlands Air Ambulance Simulation Day. We also strengthened our commitment to accessibility with dementia-friendly accreditation and initiatives supporting youth employment through Movement to Work and our Apprenticeship Pathways.

It is a pleasure to share the stories behind these successes in this year's Review. Whether it is inspiring the next generation through STEM learning, celebrating volunteers through the Marsh Award or welcoming international guests such as the Indian High Commissioner, each page highlights the best of what we do.

We look forward to welcoming you soon.

Maggie Appleton
Chief Executive Officer

Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier GCB CBE DFC
Chair of Trustees



INTEGRITY

We uphold openness, transparency and ethical responsibility in everything we do, from welcoming diverse voices to investing in a greener, more sustainable future.

We supported important moments of Remembrance at both our sites, hosting services to honour the sacrifice of RAF personnel past and present.



This year, we were deeply honoured that His Majesty King Charles III accepted the role of Royal Patron of the RAF Museum. His longstanding connection to the RAF, having trained at Cranwell and flown one of our own aircraft, is a powerful symbol of continuity and pride.

▲ HM King Charles III, then Prince of Wales, being strapped into the cockpit of a Jet Provost aircraft in 1977. He was undertaking a flying training refresher course at the RAF College Cranwell.

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Our people have been central to this commitment. Staff across all departments undertook Inclusive Recruitment and Performance Management training, strengthening confidence and consistency in leadership. We also welcomed two new co-opted Trustees, Josh Chana and Hemma Gooljar, ensuring our governance better represents the voices of our diverse audiences.



“Barnet Climate Action Month is a brilliant example of culture, climate and community coming together.” Councillor Anne Clarke, Barnet Council

Sustainability remained a defining focus. We earned Bronze Accreditation from the Carbon Literacy Project and were awarded Silver in March 2025, with work now progressing toward Gold. At London, a £2.9 million Salix-supported project to replace gas heating in Hangars 3 and 4 is underway, while in the Midlands, we have aligned our goals with the RAF’s target to achieve Net Zero. Our participation in Barnet Climate Action Month, further demonstrated how we are embedding sustainability across all areas of our work.



“The RAF Museum’s support for carers has been incredible. The Carers Café has given us a much-needed space to connect and feel valued.” Carers Café participant, Marsh Award Midlands recipient

Recognition of our volunteers has been equally significant. The Marsh Award for Volunteering Excellence celebrated the contribution of many more individuals who continue to give their time to sustain our mission.





Thanks to our dedicated volunteers, we continue to care for our collection with rigour and respect.

SHARING

We believe our collections and stories should be accessible to all, and this year, more people than ever came to explore them.



Over 783,813 visitors joined us across both Museum sites

Marking one of our strongest years ever, even amid challenging trading conditions. Many returned for beloved annual favourites, while others discovered new themed weeks and school holiday events. Their incredible support helped us achieve a strong trading result.

▲ Our second Midlands Community Day supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, brought together local visitors, performers and exhibitors, strengthening relationships with the people around us.



“It was such a warm and welcoming experience. My daughter hasn’t stopped talking about it since.” Participant, Sisters’ Open Iftar

Community events were central to our spirit of sharing. At Midlands, we hosted our third Sisters’ Open Iftar, welcoming nearly 100 women and girls to mark International Women’s Day. The event combined community, culture, and faith, and many participants joined us at the Museum for the first time.



“The Museum is such a welcoming space–Open Week gave families in our community the chance to enjoy it together” Local Visitor, National Lottery Open Week

National Lottery Open Week also brought local communities to both sites, with thousands taking advantage of free access and discounted entry.



“Working in the Museum’s spaces inspired our performers and audiences alike—the setting gave our work an energy you can’t find elsewhere.”

Sarah Worth, Artistic Director, Highly Sprung

◀ Highly Sprung’s summer performance series engaged families across both sites in creative, interactive theatre.



Increased levels of engagement across our digital channels:

5.8 million visits to our website

162,000 Facebook followers, up by 10% vs previous year

49,000 Instagram followers, up 8%

14,000 You Tube followers, up 9%

6,300 LinkedIn followers, up 15.6%

4,100 TikTok followers, up 74.7%

A more focussed approach to social media targeting, content and messaging across our digital channels has resulted in more Likes, Comments and Shares. We have also seen improvements in the time our visitors spend on our website and the number of pages viewed.



Our Collaboration with Barnet Council on the Light and Flight Festival combined creative light installations with aviation history and further demonstrated how bold storytelling can open the Museum to new audiences.

We also partnered with Plasma of Hope, a Walsall-based charity supporting people living with Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemia, to deliver creative clay workshops inspired by our collection, resulting in a pop-up exhibition at the Museum, supported by Arts Council England.



Plasma of Hope

National media coverage included BBC's Who Do You Think You Are?, when Paddy McGuinness explored his grandfather's WWII story beside our Hampden bomber.



Above all, our visitors praised the warmth, knowledge, and helpfulness of our staff and volunteers. With free entry for all, the RAF Museum remains a place where everyone can feel part of the RAF story.



PASSION

We care deeply about sharing our collections and their stories, and this year, we have taken major steps toward transforming how future generations will experience the RAF Museum.



Progress on the Inspiring Everyone: RAF Museum Midlands Development Programme has been central to our work. Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England, our artist impressions of redeveloped spaces, designed with and by our communities, capture a long-term vision shaped by those who will use them.



Made possible with

Heritage Fund



LOTTERY FUNDED



Supported using public funding by

ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



“It’s about breaking down barriers into Museum work and showing young people the opportunities available.”

Sophie Millward, RAF Museum Apprenticeship and Skills Pathway Manager

Our people once again played a vital role. Apprentices and participants in the Movement to Work programme gained hands-on experience across conservation and visitor engagement.



“It’s inspiring to see young people experience what we do in such an interactive environment.” Ian Jones, Chief Executive of Midlands Air Ambulance Charity

Events such as the Midlands Air Ambulance Simulation Day blended heritage with emergency scenario training.

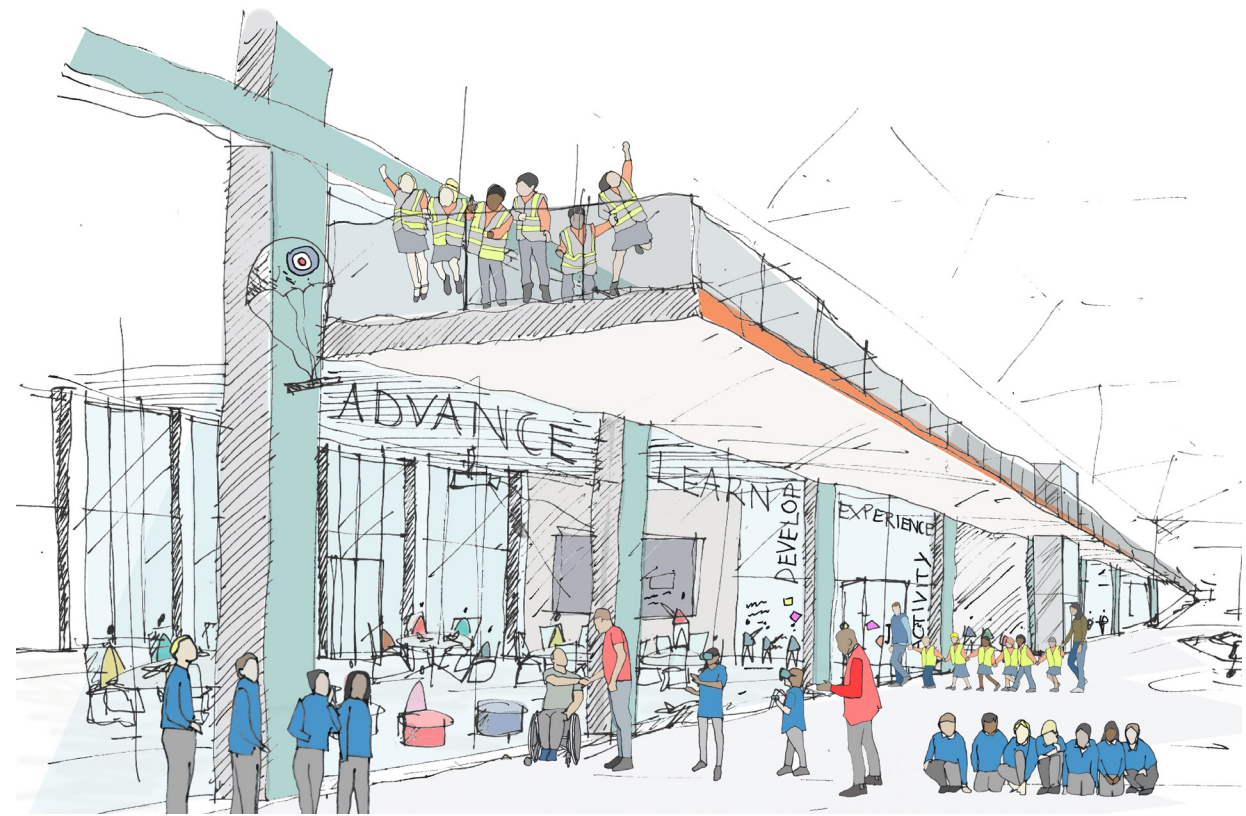


Our Collections teams continued essential conservation work, including the National Cold War Exhibition aircraft cleaning initiative, which helped maintain some of our most iconic aircraft.

This year we enriched our collection with powerful new acquisitions – from rare wartime documents and squadron memorabilia to evocative works by Alistair Morrison, Peter Kennard, and Graham Sutherland; each deepening our ability to tell the RAF's story through art and personal history.



At London, the historic colonnade building underwent a major £1.8m refurbishment, improving accessibility and the visitor experience.



“The best thing was being able to have my say and having new experiences that I would not have otherwise had.”

Youth Panel Member

As part of our ‘Inspiring Everyone: RAF Museum Midlands Development Programme’, we worked closely with our Schools and Youth Advisory Panels. A local school helped shape ideas for the new Learning Centre using LEGO, while our Youth Panel played an active role in shaping plans.

INNOVATION

We tell our stories and develop our business with creativity and imagination, and this year we continued to push boundaries in how we share the RAF's legacy.



In London, we delivered a display of Assistant Section Officer Noor Inayat Khan's posthumously awarded George Cross, on loan to the Museum sharing an inspiring Special Operations Executive story.



“The RAF Museum sets a fantastic example for cultural organisations working towards greener futures.” Barry Rawlings, Barnet Council Leader

Innovation also flourished through partnerships. Our involvement in Barnet Climate Action Month further explored how cultural organisations can contribute to sustainability storytelling.



“Sharing my story here makes me feel part of the RAF’s history in a way I never thought possible.” Alex Anderson

We also expanded our More Voices initiative, capturing 28 new oral history interviews, including that of Alex Anderson, one of the first adults with Asperger’s Syndrome to secure a role in the Royal Air Force.



Innovation in learning was also evident through our partnership with the Royal Aeronautical Society on a 'Cool Aeronautics' event. Primary school children took part in hands-on STEM workshops inside our aircraft, including robotics and engineering activities, showcasing new ways of inspiring the next generation.



The Exhibition and Interpretation team worked with Graphic Design students from University of Wolverhampton on a live project as part of the BA Graphic Design course. The project involves the co-creation of the concept design for a timeline that will feature in a new exhibition at RAF Museum Midlands opening in 2027.

RELEVANCE

We are proud to support young learners from all backgrounds, offering rich educational experiences that connect history, science, technology, maths and innovation with today's world and tomorrow's careers.



“An unforgettable experience that opened our pupils’ eyes to careers they’d never considered before.” Forces in STEM participant teacher

This year, our Learning and Engagement teams reached over 44,000 young people through outreach and on-site programmes. Forces in STEM days at both our London and Midlands sites welcomed more than 1,000 students each. Alongside these, our Year 6 STEM Days and Scout Air Activity Days remained hugely popular.



Our partnerships continued to grow. We were proud to be nominated by Movement to Work for the Best Newcomer Award at the Youth Employability Awards, recognising our efforts to create pathways into employment.

Apprenticeships expanded across conservation and visitor engagement, offering young people invaluable opportunities to develop skills.



“The RAF Museum serves as a bridge between nations, preserving stories that connect us all.”

His Excellency Mr. Vikram K. Doraiswami, High Commissioner of India to the United Kingdom

We were also honoured to welcome the Indian High Commissioner to our London site, strengthening cultural and diplomatic ties while highlighting the RAF’s international story.



Our dementia-friendly accreditation and autism awareness training underscored our commitment to making the Museum relevant and accessible to all.



Early in the year we launched our new brand and website, migrating key commercial pages and expanding team access for content updates. Ongoing work includes full page migration, CRM integration, and enhanced editing tools.

EXCELLENCE

Excellence remains at the heart of everything we do, from caring for our collections to delivering an exceptional visitor experience across both sites.



Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Awards



Thanks for your support!

**“The RAF Museum offers
an unforgettable day out
- the professionalism and
passion of the staff shine
through in every detail.”**
Tripadvisor review

We were honoured to receive a Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice Award, placing us in the top 10% of global listings.



The Museum’s commitment to dementia-friendly practice is sector-leading - it sets the bar for cultural venues.”

Dementia Friendly London

The RAF Museum Midlands was recognised with Visit England’s Best Told Story accolade, while our London site was re-accredited as a Dementia Friendly Venue.



Our commitment to accessibility was strengthened with new guides and resources, helping more people engage fully with the RAF story.



We hosted two major international research conferences in partnership with the Royal Aeronautical Society and the British Commission for Military History, welcoming delegates from across the world.





Behind the scenes, our Conservation and Collections teams carried out vital work. In the Midlands, a complex aircraft moves project was delivered to decant Hangar 1 in preparation for a new exhibition.



In May we launched our CRM strategy, automating visitor emails from booking to post-visit. We've since added event, retail, and re-engagement campaigns, with the next phase focused on unifying our data.

INSPIRING EVERYONE: RAF MUSEUM MIDLANDS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The RAF Museum is undertaking a transformative £28 million development programme - Inspiring Everyone - designed to engage communities across the Midlands, the UK, and beyond. This ambitious initiative is supported by National Lottery players through the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Other supporters include BAE Systems, the Garfield Weston Foundation, and a growing network of trusts, foundations, corporate partners and individual donors. Our public fundraising campaign, The Crate Escape, invites everyone to be part of this journey: rafmuseum.org/crate-escape.



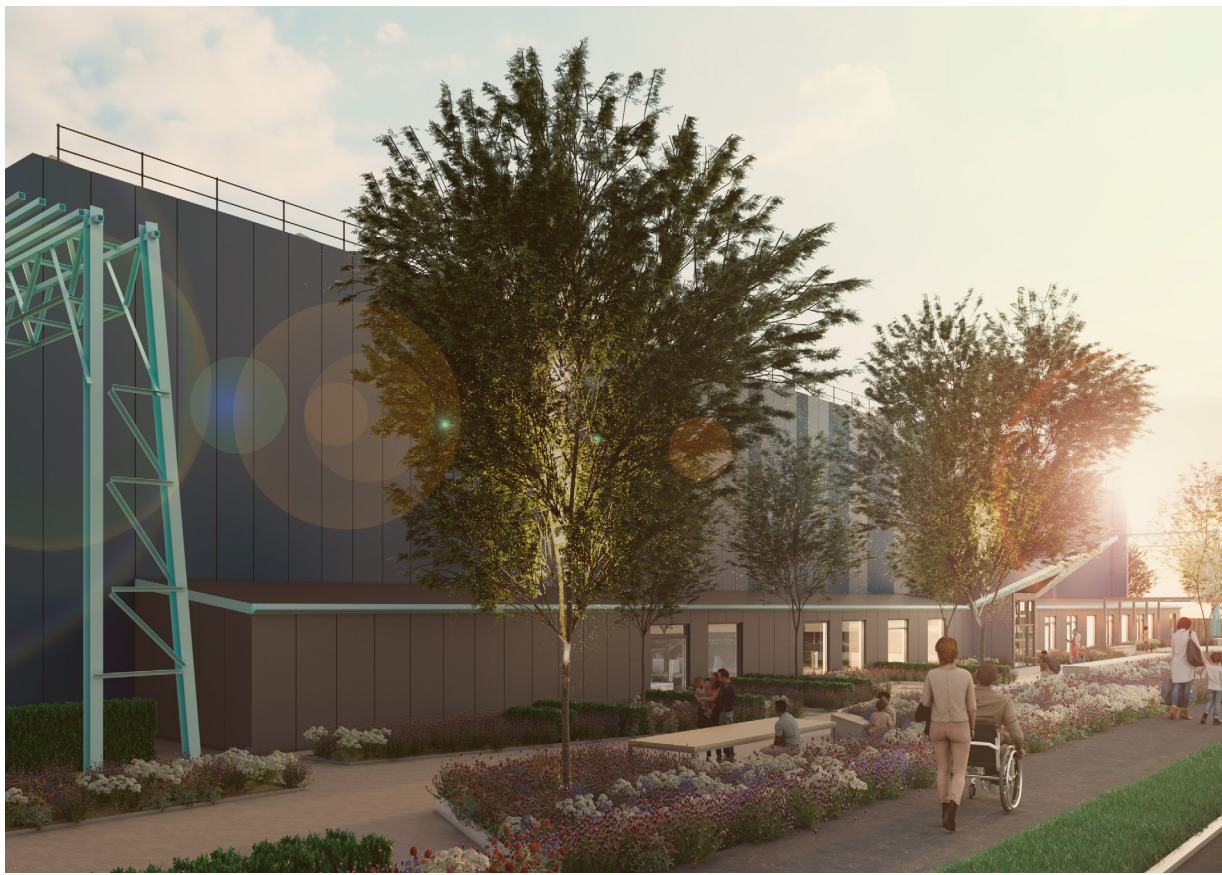
Celebrating Shared Heritage

The Midlands has played a pivotal role in shaping the RAF's story for over a century. From air bases and test sites to engineering breakthroughs and industrial innovation, the region's contribution is both historic and ongoing. Through the Inspiring Everyone Programme, we are uncovering and sharing these stories—working with communities to celebrate local heritage, foster pride, and strengthen identity.

Expanding Access and Inclusion

We are committed to making heritage accessible to all. This Programme is designed to reach audiences who may not have traditionally engaged with museums, addressing barriers related to socio-economic background, ethnicity, and disability.

Access and inclusion are central to our approach, ensuring that everyone can participate meaningfully and independently in shaping our spaces, collections, and activities.



Our Vision and Impact

- Become a valuable resource for our Midlands community and welcome more visitors nationally and internationally
- Work with partners to involve people in their local and RAF heritage, improving wellbeing and developing skills
- Work with our audiences to share RAF stories that are relevant to their lives and lived experiences, inspiring them to fulfil their own potential
- Ensure our collection will be better understood, cared for and more widely shared
- Move towards our target of being a Carbon Net Zero organisation
- Be a more resilient organisation and able to support our community in the future.



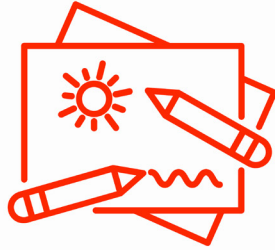
Programme Highlights

- The Inspiring Everyone: RAF Museum Midlands Redevelopment Programme will deliver a range of creative, wellbeing and skills development activities rooted in our unique collection
- An innovative, nationally relevant new exhibition sharing the critical role of the RAF over the last 40 years, explore its mission today and imagine its future
- A new Learning Centre providing bespoke facilities dedicated to the provision of lifelong learning programmes
- A new Collections Hub which will enable us to move our collection from inaccessible storage to our public site, opening it up to visitors for the first time
- Improvements to our outdoor spaces, offering areas for learning, discovery and contemplation while increasing biodiversity.



422

miles travelled by our Spitfire cockpit around the local area



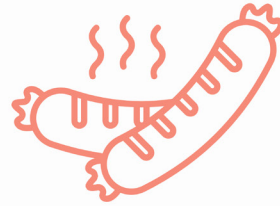
9,000

activity placemats produced for use in our onsite restaurant



6,044

members of the community engaged with in 2024/25



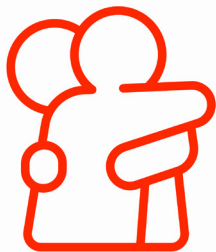
60

sausages consumed at our annual Carer's Café barbecue



169

hours donated to our Access Advisory Panel



268

carers engaged with at our Carer's Café and Carer's Café Social



559

volunteer hours donated to community



96

community events in 2024/25

The Inspiring Everyone: RAF Museum Midlands Redevelopment Programme is helping to shape a new kind of museum - one that is inclusive, community-focused, and forward-looking. With the support of our funders and partners, we are building a museum that belongs to everyone.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

The RAF Museum's Annual Report and Financial Statements 2024-2025 were approved by the Board of Trustees on 10 July 2025 and certified by the Comptroller and Auditor General to Parliament with an unqualified audit report. The full report was submitted to the Charity Commission and is available on the RAF Museum website.

The Museum exceeded its breakeven target, achieving an unrestricted operational surplus of £15,000 (excluding depreciation costs of property and permanent exhibitions). This was attributed to careful cost management in a challenging environment and strong support from fundraising.

RAF Museum Enterprises Ltd (RAFMEEL) had another strong year, generating a net profit after tax of £801,000, which was fully gift-aided to the Museum.

The Museum received £10,975,680 of Grant in Aid funding all of which is attributable to revenue funding.

Turnover for RAFMEEL was £3,885,000, reflecting sustained commercial activity across retail, catering, and events.

A total of £2,861,000 was received in grants and donations from industry partners, sponsors, trusts and foundations, and individuals.

INDIVIDUAL GIVING

Donations

We received £159,000 of visitor donations across both sites – £68,000 at the Midlands site and £91,000 in London. We took £5,500 in general donations which includes donations after RAF Stories Talks, website donations and donations through the online shop.

Donations

The Museum claimed £11,000 in gift aid over both sites and all our donations including regular giving and high net worth donations.

Challenge Fundraising

We have two volunteers training and fundraising for the RAF Museum. Neil Plumbley signed up to the London Landmarks Half Marathon, and Sylwia Dabrowska will be taking part in the Richmond Half Marathon. They hope to raise over £2,000 between them.

Challenge Fundraising

The RAF Rugby 7's undertook a challenge event at the London site in August 2024 where they used three fitness machines – skiing, cycling and rowing for 24 hours. They raised £2,000.

Challenge Fundraising

Spitfire 10K went virtual, but we still asked if our runners would like to fundraise and they raised over £2,277 with one individual raising most of that in honour of a Polish Battle of Britain Pilot.

Challenge Fundraising

The Royal Auxiliary Air Force 100 Challenge took place to mark the 100 year anniversary of the Reserves, we had 126 people take part and raise a total of £8,000.

Challenge Fundraising

The Tornado Challenge took place in February 2025 and had 185 participants who raised a total of £10,000.

Other activity:

The Development Team attended a number of events through the year, building awareness that the Museum is a registered charity, including RAF Cranwell Freshers Fayres, We Have Ways Festival, the RAF Festival of Football, RAF Northolt Night Shoot and the RAF Cosford Air Show. We are growing our team of volunteers to support events.

We also hosted a talk with Colin Bell DFC in partnership with the RAF Benevolent Fund, that raised money for both charities.

The Museum celebrated the 81st anniversary of 'Dambusters' – Operation Chastise – the legendary Dambusters raid, by hosting its annual clay pigeon charity shoot. Participants enjoyed a wonderful day out in the beautiful, Berkshire countryside while supporting the RAF Museum in its work to inspire everyone with the RAF Story. This was our third annual charity shoot in support of our 'Inspiring Everyone: RAF Museum Midlands Development Programme', the event raised over £60,000!

On 2 December at RAF Museum London, a new Noor Khan exhibit was unveiled at the annual Winter Reception. Noor Khan's cousin Shaikh-Al-Mashaik Mahmood, along with Shrabani Basu, Museum Ambassador and author of Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan, shared Noor's story with guests with a short in-conversation piece.

REGULAR GIVING

Adopt an Artefact

We had 28 donations worth just under £2,000, including donors from the US, Poland and Sweden.

Membership

In August 2024, we launched our Monthly Giving programme, which encourages our supporters to donate a small amount each month to help us build a reliable income source. We now have 30 donors giving monthly, including supporters from the Netherlands, Italy and New Zealand.

Our Donors

Corporate Supporters

BAE Systems
Northrop Grumman
Mars Wrigley
Babcock
Virgin Atlantic
Really Useful Box Company
Aviation Heritage United Kingdom
Airbus

Individual Donors

John and Adrienne Mars
Duncan Barber OBE
Brendan Connor
Stewart Holness
David Richardson – Giving Circles
Richard Holman – Giving Circles

Legacies

We launched our first active marketing programme for legacies in February 2025 which has resulted in five queries and one confirmed pledger.

Legacies received

From the estate of
Kenneth James Hodgson

Estate of
Paul Walter Woodburn Fletcher

Estate of
Douglas Wright Webber

Estate of
John Forster

Estate of
Margaret Nicholson Urquhart

Charitable Trusts, Foundations, and Statutory Bodies

Air Command
The National Lottery Heritage Fund
The RAF Museum American Foundation
Arts Council England
Salix Finance
Swire Charitable Trust
Garfield Weston Foundation
Wolfson Foundation
Shropshire Council

Our Board of Trustees

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GCB CBE DFC

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Josh Chana
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Jonathan Field
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