

Public Houses: What makes civic custodianship of historic house museums in Britain different and where next?

Wednesday 9 & Thursday 10 October 2024

Temple Newsam, Leeds



Call for Papers

Local authorities care for some of the UK's most significant historic house museums. While these are often a source of pride and a resource for the local population, museums managed by local authorities are subject to the vagaries of changing civic priorities, unique governance structures and the perpetual challenge of continued levels of funding. Often without the clear mission of historic houses run by conservation and heritage charities or privately owned counterparts, houses owned and run by local authorities have multiple responsibilities, from accountability to local voters to the management and governance of the buildings and contents, as well as the greenspaces that often surround historic houses. Alongside these stewardship pressures, local authority historic houses navigate a complex, changing landscape of priorities, which require new forms of expertise, new modes of presentation and interpretation. With increasing emphasis on partnership working, more sustainable alternative uses, 'public

entrepreneurship’, community engagement, and heritage driven regeneration, the purpose and practice of civic custodianship is being redefined and reimagined.

This interdisciplinary conference, a collaboration between Leeds City Council and the University of Leeds, supported by the Paul Mellon Foundation, is hosted by Temple Newsam House, itself recently celebrating 100 years as a museum run by a local authority. The conference aims to bring together practitioners, scholars, and policy makers to explore what it means to be a publicly owned and managed historic house museum in the 21st century, and what the future might hold.

It is hoped that the conference will open a wider discussion about the challenges and opportunities for historic house museums in civic custody and highlight and share areas of good practice. We envisage that conference outcomes will be published in a report.

We welcome a broad range of papers and participants. The ‘Public Houses?’ conference invites proposals for papers, presentations, or interactive dialogues of no more than 20-minutes. Papers and Presentations might address (not exhaustive):

- The role and purpose of the historic house in civic ownership
- The history of civic ownership of historic houses
- Governance of historic houses
- Case studies of historic houses
- The future of the historic house in civic ownership
- Visitors and visiting historic houses
- Creative models for new forms of engagement with historic houses

- The role of expertise, specialist skills and specialist knowledge in historic houses
- Funding and sustainability of historic houses
- The relationship between historic houses and local publics
- International case studies of civic custodianship

Submission information and deadline

Please submit an abstract or outline presentation of no more than 200 words by using the form below. The deadline for submissions is 5pm, 10 May 2024.

Successful submissions will be informed by 31 May 2024.

To submit, please [complete the form](#) on the conference webpage or email temple.newsam.house@leeds.gov.uk.