**PRESS RELEASE**

**Under strict embargo until 00.01 Tuesday 12 August 2025**

**William the Conqueror’s Norwich Castle Keep reopens its doors this August**

**Multi-million-pound redevelopment will transport visitors 900 years into the past**

* *Largest heritage project in the UK in 2025 opens its doors this August*
* *The Keep becomes The People’s Palace - the UK’s most accessible castle with visitors able to access all five floors for the first time ever - from basement to rooftop battlements*
* *Partnership with the British Museum creates spectacular medieval gallery, showcasing over 900 medieval artefacts and treasures*
* *Visitors will be able to step into the past in painstakingly researched and recreated room settings allowing them to explore what life was like in a Norman royal palace, alongside interactive and immersive digital experiences telling stories of medieval Norwich life like never before*
* *All visitors can experience spectacular views across the city from the newly opened rooftop*

On **Wednesday 13 August** one of the most spectacular palaces in medieval Europe **is fully reopening its doors** as it turns back the clock 900 years to the heyday of Norman England following a multi-million-pound redevelopment.

This has been made possible thanks to National Lottery Players through a grant of over £13 million from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The overall project budget is £27.5 million, with £12 million contributed by Norfolk County Council and the remaining funding provided by other sources.

The Grade I-listed Norwich Castle Keep, in the historic city of Norwich in the heart of East Anglia, was originally commissioned by William the Conqueror and completed by his son King Henry I in 1121. Its mighty walls, built with Caen limestone shipped from Normandy, stand as a timeless testament to Norman power and grandeur.

The splendour of its medieval past has now been recreated, offering visitors a unique and immersive experience like never before. For the first time in the Keep’s 900-year history, visitors can now access all five floors, from basement to battlements, including spectacular views across Norwich from the rooftop. Whether visitors are exploring with a pushchair, mobility aid or with curious children, the Castle has been recreated with everyone in mind.

**Royal Palace Reborn: Welcome to the Twelfth Century**

Original medieval floors and rooms have been meticulously – and sympathetically – reinstated and are furnished to create an authentic sense of what life was like in a Norman royal castle. To those that have visited previously it will seem almost unrecognisable as it takes visitors back to how it was in 1121. They will be able to step into the past as they move through these beautiful rooms where they can sit on a throne, dress up like a Norman noble or just enjoy the space and sense of grandeur.

Immersive storytelling is also at the heart of the new experience, with specially commissioned audio visuals which will run throughout the day using the walls of the huge Great Hall, creating a sense of spectacle appropriate to a royal palace which in twelfth-century England was at its height as a centre of power.

To bring the Keep’s fascinating history to life and create its authentically styled furnishings and details has taken the talents of an amazing team of people - from curators to archaeologists to academics and architects, experts, skilled crafts men and women and volunteers. One of the highlights includes the Norwich Friends’ Tapestry. Inspired by the Bayeux Tapestry, this beautiful 19-metre-long embroidery now hangs in the King’s Chamber. This extraordinary tapestry narrates two rebellions in the East of England against William the Conqueror and has been meticulously created by a team of 50 dedicated local volunteers. The Tapestry is one of many hand-crafted textiles which also include banners, wall hangings, costumes and other textiles produced by volunteers in over 30,000 hours of dedicated work.

Across the project the changes and interventions have been implemented with the utmost sensitivity, in order to protect this hugely significant Grade I-listed building sited on top of a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Working with architects Feilden+Mawson, experts in the restoration and adaptation of historic buildings, alongside skilled engineers, contractors and conservation experts this sympathetic recreation will bring the Castle alive for future generations.

**The Gallery of Medieval Life: A British Museum Partnership**

A new atmospheric medieval gallery showcases exceptional artefacts from across the medieval period - from the Norman Conquest to the reign of Henry VIII. Developed in partnership with the British Museum, the permanent Gallery of Medieval Life explores three key aspects of medieval society – workers, the nobility and the Church. Over 900 treasures, with more than 50 on long-term loan from the British Museum, bring visitors closer to the experiences of those who lived in this fascinating period.

The range is phenomenal: from personal items such as an exquisitely carved ivory bobbin, discovered in the Castle’s drains, to elaborate scientific objects such as an astrolabe, used to make astronomical measurements. There are Treasure finds recently discovered by local metal detectorists and recorded through the British Museum’s Portable Antiquities Scheme, as well as specially conserved artefacts that were previously too fragile to display.

It will be the British Museum’s first medieval gallery outside of London, and its seventh Partnership Gallery to open around the UK.

**The People’s Palace: From basement to battlements**

Following the redevelopment, Norwich Castle is proudly now the most accessible castle in the UK. A new lift ensures wheelchair accessibility, accommodating those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) on every floor, including the rooftop battlements, while also supporting the access needs of families with pushchairs.

Multisensory elements allow visitors to interact with every space, from dressing up and sitting on a restored throne as a Norman king or queen, to experiencing the sounds of medieval life while a tactile map supports visitors with visual impairments to explore the spaces. Visitors also have the chance to ‘get to know’ some of the people who lived in or visited Norwich Castle in the 1100s, via character panels which bring each individual’s story to life – providing a human connection with the period which help make it accessible to all ages.

Alongside the stunning displays of original artefacts and architecture, new interactive and immersive experiences throughout the Keep enable visitors to step into the medieval world. Audio visual projections in the Great Hall draw on the drama and imagination of medieval art to bring the walls alive, a bespoke Early Years space will support the youngest visitors’ learning for pre-booked groups while a range of digital displays allow visitors to explore further – from the story of the Norwich Friends’ Tapestry to how to dress in the medieval period.

In the basement the remains of the impressive medieval pier bases – on which the arcade of arches which supported the principal floor above once rested – have been newly interpreted with a beautiful light sculpture installation outlining these lost arches, enabling visitors to better understand this atmospheric space.

**Dr Simon Thurley CBE, Chair of The National Lottery Heritage Fund**, said: ‘The National Lottery Heritage Fund is very proud to have supported this ambitious and exciting project. Norwich Castle Keep is one of the most important Norman buildings in England which has, with the help of National Lottery players, come alive in an exciting and inspiring way. Based on meticulous research, with leading experts, and in partnership with the British Museum, the Norfolk Museums Service have shown how to make a great historic monument and world class collections come alive for a new generation of visitors.’

**Cllr Kay Mason-Billig, Leader of Norfolk County Council,** **says**: ‘Anyone who has visited the Keep at Norwich Castle previously and now comes to see this wonderful redevelopment will be amazed. It now looks and feels like the medieval castle it once was following a painstaking and authentic redevelopment. Multisensory elements and interactive exhibits also bring medieval Norwich to life, fostering a deeper connection to the past for visitors of all ages. We are so proud to have created such an accessible visitor attraction offering spectacular views across our wonderful city, and to have worked with so many supportive partners to launch the largest heritage development project opening in the UK this year.’

**Dr Nicholas Cullinan, Director of the British Museum, says:** ‘Norwich Castle Keep was one of the most spectacular medieval palaces in Europe, so I can think of no more fitting place for the British Museum’s first medieval Partnership Gallery to be hosted.

We are really proud to be part of this transformative project, which restores the Keep to its former glory. It has been wonderful to collaborate so closely with Norfolk Museums Service, and to complement their nationally significant collections with a wide range of objects from our collection - on long term loan. This is our seventh Partnership Gallery to open in the UK, and further demonstrates our commitment to ensuring the British Museum collection is accessible to audiences everywhere.’

This major redevelopment also now boasts many additional and improved facilities. A new entrance to Norwich Castle includes a magical light-filled atrium adjacent to the Keep which opened in phase one of the redevelopment in July 2024, which helps set the scene and orientate visitors on their arrival. Affording spectacular views of the Keep’s long-obscured east façade this showcases the impressive structure that has become such an icon of Norwich. There is also a brand-new café, gift shop and additional toilets to accommodate all visitors.

Norwich Castle's redevelopment has inspired an exciting new range of events, plus additional diverse education programmes for all ages.

To find out more about Norwich Castle Keep, opening times and visitor information, please visit: [www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk)

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**For further information, interviews, images or b-roll footage, please contact:**

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**Notes to Editors**

**About Norwich Castle: A Palace Reborn**

One of the city’s most famous landmarks, Norwich Castle’s mighty stone keep was built by the Normans as a royal palace over 900 years ago and spent at least 500 years as the county prison. Today the Castle site – which sits atop the largest man-made motte in England and Scheduled Ancient Monument – incorporates both the Grade I-listed medieval keep and a museum and art gallery housed in the converted buildings of the Georgian-era prison. The museum is home to some of the most outstanding collections of fine and decorative arts, archaeology and natural history, not only in the region, but the country.

The centrepiece of the Museum is the medieval Keep, newly transformed after a major £27.5million redevelopment funded with a grant of over £13million from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and £12million contributed by Norfolk County Council – the largest heritage project opening in the UK in 2025. The first visitors were welcomed to the Keep on 7 August for a soft opening, with the Keep fully reopening on 13 August.

A documentary made by Eye Film and narrated by Sir Stephen Fry, *The Castle Rebuilding History,* follows the project. The film will air on Channel 4 on Sunday 24 August at 19:30 and is showing in Cinema City Norwich until 23 August.

Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery is part of Norfolk Museums Service (NMS), a multi-award-winning service comprising ten museums and a study centre. NMS is a partnership between Norfolk County Council and Norfolk's district councils, funded through council tax, earned income and grants.

[www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk)

It is regarded as one of the leaders in the museum sector and since April 2018 has been a National Portfolio Organisation for Arts Council England.

**About The National Lottery Heritage Fund**As the largest dedicated funder of the UK’s heritage, The National Lottery Heritage Fund’s vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future as set out in the strategic plan, [Heritage 2033](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/about/heritage-2033-our-10-year-strategy).

Over the next ten years, the Heritage Fund aims to invest £3.6billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to bring about benefits for people, places and the natural environment.

The Heritage Fund helps protect, transform and share the things from the past that people care about, from popular museums and historic places, our natural environment and fragile species, to the languages and cultural traditions that celebrate who we are.

The Heritage Fund is passionate about heritage and committed to driving innovation and collaboration to make a positive difference to people’s lives today, while leaving a lasting legacy for future generations to enjoy.

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#NationalLotteryHeritageFund  [www.heritagefund.org.uk](http://www.heritagefund.org.uk/)

**About Medieval Norwich**

Medieval Norwich thrived, becoming the second city in the UK to London. The construction of Norwich Cathedral began around the same time as Norwich Castle and was an enormous undertaking. A canal was dug from the River Wensum at Pull’s Ferry to bring in limestone from Caen in Normandy. It took 200 years to complete the build.

A wealth of other medieval buildings were constructed in Norwich around the same time, including the Guildhall, Dragon Hall (a medieval trading hall and now the National Centre for Writing), Strangers’ Hall (now a museum of domestic life) and St. Andrew’s Hall (a former Dominican priory which is now a concert venue). The medieval city walls were begun in 1297 and encircled 2.5 miles of the city, with 12 defensive gates fortified with great catapults. The ruins of the walls can still be seen today.

Norwich has long had ancient bonds with the Netherlands, which flourished through trade and cultural exchange during the sixteenth century. The persecution of Protestants in the Spanish Netherlands led to the Norwich authorities endorsing immigration to Norwich. These refugees from Europe were known as ‘Strangers’, and were mostly weavers bringing their valuable skills with them. They also brought us the famous yellow canaries.

For further information please visit: <http://www.visitnorwich.co.uk>

**About Norwich Castle: Royal Palace Reborn’s funders**

We are very grateful to all our generous supporters who have made this extraordinary project possible:

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