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## **Tullie's Community Garden In Blooming Good Shape After Successful Project With Carlisle-Based Asylum Seekers**

A Carlisle museum and cultural hub has praised the long-term positive impact of its popular community garden on a special volunteering project involving asylum seekers living in the city.

Tullie created an accessible, courtyard-style community garden within its grounds in 2017 which is looked after by a small team of volunteers and enjoyed by thousands of local people every year.

After the opening of two hotels in the city which housed asylum seekers, Tullie's community team recognised a desire among many of the hotels' residents to work outside and use their horticultural skills, as well as the importance of providing a welcoming outdoor space in which they could spend some time.

The museum used a £2,000 grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland to bring in experienced project leader and keen gardener Chuck Whitehead to set up and run a project which gave asylum seekers the chance to volunteer in the garden, and to pay for the equipment that was required to undertake it.

Over 100 men and women have since been taking part in fortnightly sessions at the garden throughout the past year, with some of the volunteers spending several additional days working there each week.

The project is now winding down, with a couple of wrap-up sessions set to take place in the coming weeks.

Originally opened in 1893, Tullie hosts a wide range programme of special exhibitions and events, and cares for an almost one million-strong collection of objects that tell the story of Carlisle and Cumbria.

It is also home to the Cumbria Biodiversity Data Centre, which holds over two million wildlife records and is the oldest record centre of its kind in the country.

The venue is currently starting on the latest phase of its ongoing Project Tullie redevelopment programme, with the main building now closed until summer 2024 to allow building work to take place safely.

Lindsey Atkinson, community engagement producer at Tullie House Museum, says: “The community garden is always in demand, but with only a small team available to work on, we can’t always give it all the attention it deserves.

“Many of the asylum seekers living in our city had horticultural skills that they were keen to share, while the opportunity to get out into the open air and be part of a constructive community project in a safe environment was very much welcomed by everyone that took part.

“Alongside the garden improvements, the project has also had a positive impact on participants’ mental health and well-being, has helped to tackle social isolation and has enabled us to make Tullie a more welcoming and inclusive place to be.

“We have loved getting to know everyone and many members of the group are now our good friends.

“We simply couldn’t have made this project happen without Newcastle Building Society’s invaluable contribution and local people will be enjoying what it’s helped to deliver for a long time to come.”

The Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation Tyne & Wear and Northumberland offers grants to charities and community groups located in or around the communities served by the Society’s branch network.

Emma Dixon, customer service advisor at Newcastle Building Society’s Carlisle branch, who recently visited the charity, adds: “The Tullie team’s vision has made a much-loved community asset even more attractive and the fantastic work of its volunteer team throughout this year will deliver benefits for a long time to come.”

Since its launch in 2016, Newcastle Building Society's Community Fund at the Community Foundation has also contributed over £2.3m in grants and partnerships to a wide variety of charities and projects across the region, including the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation and the Prince's Trust.

The grants are so far estimated to have had a positive impact on more than 151,000 people.

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### **About Newcastle Building Society**

Newcastle Building Society\* is the biggest building society in the North East, with a network of 31 branches and assets of more than £5.3bn. We've been here for our members for over 160 years.

As a leading local employer, we're committed to growing our region's talent and being a great place to work where people can realise their potential. We hold Platinum IIP and won the Excellence and Positive Impact Award at the 2022 CIPD North East of England HR&D Awards. We were named Company of the Year in the Northumberland and Tyneside category of the North East Business Awards 2022.

We help people to own their home, to save and to plan their finances through our range of products and services. We believe in the role of the high street at the heart of our communities and are proactive in making financial information and financial advice accessible across our region.

Our Financial Advice is provided through our Newcastle Financial Advisers Limited division\*\*.

We're dedicated to helping our North East communities make positive changes; since 2016 the financial support through grants and donations from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation to benefit local causes has surpassed £2.3m

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### **About Tullie**

Set in the heart of Carlisle's historic quarter on the border of England and Scotland the award-winning museum and gallery is one of the region's most popular cultural attractions. Tullie has one of the largest purpose-built art galleries in the north of England and hosts exhibitions of regional, national and international importance.

Tullie is the lead member of the Cumbria Museum Consortium, a Band 3 National Portfolio Organisation for Arts Council England who, along with Cumberland Council, is one of the organisations core funders. As well as enabling the museum to care for their varied and unique collections, this funding supports an ambitious programme of exhibitions and activity delivered with and for a wide range of people in the community.

Tullie has been inspiring visitors for more than 125 years and in 2021 celebrated its 10th year as an independent charitable trust. In 2022, it was named Large Visitor Attraction of the Year at the Cumbria Tourism Awards.

[www.tullie.org.uk](http://www.tullie.org.uk)