**What is the need for this project?**

The Forge has its origins in the the late 1700’s and in 2011 we took a lease and converted the building to be a living museum. It opened its doors in 2012 and has been open for 10 years, this work was funded by HLF. During the 10 years we have been on a fantastic journey. The Forge has had to earn its living and our Blacksmiths and volunteers have delivered including online local history, blacksmithing and involving the community through tasters, art events and training.

However, we have identified a number of threats that we are trying to address by this investment.

1. The Forge currently burns anthracite in the hearth. Only one mine is left in the uk producing anthracite and its already saying its life is limited causing supply issues and increased cost. The alternate is to buy from Russia. This is compounded by potential climate change legislation which will potentially limit or ban the use of fossil fuels. We have conducted research and identified induction heating as a replacement, but this doesn’t sit well in a 1700s building.
2. Our success has also presented problems of combining a heritage attraction and a working Blacksmith workshop. This project will provide new space for the Blacksmith to work away from the general public if needed and also allow us to expand restoration work and training for the community.

**Describe what you will do during the project**

The project will create a new building next to the Forge. The building will emulate a building called the “Black Granary” which sat approximately 100 metre south of the Forge in times gone by. The building will employ recycled shipping containers clad in weatherboarding. This new building will offer the following a new workshop for the Blacksmith, storage area, a new workshop for a jeweller/silversmith, meeting room and a digital workshop. It will employ solar energy and river movements to generate electricity to power it.

This new building will enable us to grow the blacksmithing business enabling us to take on large restoration work, expand to develop the inclusion of jewellery/silversmithing and create a seating area on the riverbank for visitors.

The project will also see the redevelopment of our digital Blacksmith enabling us to offer Blacksmithing online using the much cheaper Oculus Quest system. It will also enable the output to be physically realised using a 3D printer. This could be the start of an online craft village offering a range of online craft learning.

The project will also look to use Metaverse as the delivery channel and evaluate how museums might take advantage of this new technology.

**Do you have a title for the project?** – ECO Workshop

Tell us about the heritage of the project

HLF funded the initial conversion into a living museum back in 2011. The Forge managed by the Friend’s of the Forge maintain the building and a significant local history collection available online [www.heritagesouthholland.co.uk](http://www.heritagesouthholland.co.uk) and [www.chainbridgeforge.co.uk](http://www.chainbridgeforge.co.uk)

Today we have a young, trained blacksmith Ryan Atkin. Ryan is building a reputation for conservation, repair, commissions and passing on his knowledge through tasters. The blacksmith craft is a traditional rural craft and although seeing some resurgence through television programmes like “Forge with Fire” which has a huge following. Ryan is traditionally trained, delivering traditional work and this type of Blacksmith is hard to find.

**Outcomes to be achieved.**

* [A wider range of people will be involved in heritage](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/wider-range-people-will-be-involved-heritage)

The Forge has always tried to be inclusive and has attracted a diverse cross section of volunteers and visitors. However due to the physical size of the forge it struggles. This project opens up new spaces and potential new audiences, This can be summarised as follows:

* 1. **Increase Blacksmithing** - Our online booking system for tasters already reaches out to a potential audience of 49000 people. (National Trust Mosaic data) However with a single hearth our capacity is limited. The new workshop and using modern techniques increase our capacity and we hope to have 4/5 hearths operational using induction heating. We also offer a Blacksmithing Club that offers a low-cost option so that once a month people can use our facilities under supervision. Clearly with increased capacity this will extend the number of people we can include.

We are developing a brand around the excellence of Ryan Atkin our Blacksmith and the Forge’s new workshop will enhance this capability. Already this year we have attracted TV’s “Bargain Hunt”, and this has brought in new work,

**New Facility** - The new facility will also offer a new workshop which can be used by silversmiths to develop their business and increase the range of people involved in our offering.

**Space** – Being a building that was erected in the late 1700’s and is full of equipment that has supported the work over 200 years of its use and at times it isn’t easy to give access to visitors. Also, induction heaters are bulky and wouldn’t sit well in the Forge. The new facility means a considerable increase in our footprint. We would move our commercial work to the new workshop and return the 1700’s forge to a visitor attraction. Freeing up space and giving better accessibility.

**New Digital Offering** - The Forge would also like to re-engineer our virtual blacksmith solution which demonstrated its capability back in 2007. (Lincoln Uni project and funded by HLF) This project was ahead of its time but with COVID remote working has become more acceptable. Therefore, we would propose to re-engineer the solution so that it could be delivered on the Metaverse platform. Metaverse already supports about 50 Minecraft inspired solutions which don’t offer the functionality that we achieved with the original work. <https://www.heritagesouthholland.co.uk/project/virtual-blacksmith/>

Metaverse and Oculus offers a cheaper solution and therefore potentially a larger market. (Headset and computer combination can be sourced for £300 rather than £2500) Metaverse offers a worldwide audience and the option to monetise the virtual blacksmith offering the opportunity to earn income which will make it more resilient.

Build on our existing digital offering [www.heritagesouthholland.co.uk](http://www.heritagesouthholland.co.uk) and www.chainbridgeforge.co.uk to improve accessibility.

**Diversity**- Increase capacity will also offer the opportunity to offer our services to the Eastern European communities who represent approximately 20% of our local community.

**Learning Skills –** Blacksmithing is a practical way of enjoying our heritage so attracts both people who are suited to that way of learning but also offers a new experience to the office worker who would not normally experience this way of working. They all go home with the produce of their efforts. Particularly successful has been our “couple tasters” where a couple work together often compliments their different skill sets and cause much merriment in the process. But clearly there is an opportunity to offer team building events.

* 1. [the funded organisation will be more resilient](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/funded-organisation-will-be-more-resilient)

**Background** - The Forge is not subsidised by a local council or any other benefactor. Therefore, we are run as a commercial organisation earning our income and the benefit of this, we are able to preserve the Blacksmith’s craft in a practical way and ensuring skills are not lost. It also means we are tuned to the needs of the community. It also means we are seen to be preserving our heritage.

**Blacksmithing** - Ryan our Blacksmith has increased our technical capability, and this means we can take on larger projects including heritage restoration of railing and gates. This causes a space issue within the current Forge, and we anticipate this new workshop will reduce this problem and expand our business making us more sustainable and give us greater capacity to meet the needs of our community.

* 1. [people will have greater wellbeing](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/people-will-have-greater-wellbeing)

The Forge have developed arts and heritage programmes which work with the community. This worked particularly well during COVID using artists to work online and encourage them to participate creating input.

<https://www.heritagesouthholland.co.uk/project/flower-power/> This resulted in an excellent outcome and huge community involvement. We would continue this approach particularly with increasing our online local history collection.

* 1. [people will have developed skills](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/people-will-have-developed-skills)

South Holland is historically a low wage and skills community which blights its growth. The Forge tries in a small part to address this by offering opportunities for the community to become involved both in project work and blacksmith training.

**Blacksmith Tasters** - These are a good way for us to give the community new skills and as our marketing is improving so is our reach.

**Blacksmith Club –** Once a month an opportunity for the community to get involved in the Forge under supervision. With increased space we can give more opportunity to get involved.

**Working with Employers –** We have found that we can offer the experience of working with hot metal and team building to our local employers. Before lock down Perkins Diesel sent all their apprentices to events that we organised giving them an experience of blacksmithing and virtual reality. Extra space means we could expand this work.

**Volunteers –** TheForgewelcomes volunteers, but we are limited by space to get people involved, again this development will address this problem. Currently our volunteers are working in our innovation area using our CNC machine, 3D Printers and our other digital projects. Again, we will be able to expand this work with additional space.

**Schools –** LimitednumberofSchools are also interested in what we can offer opening the possibility for us to go to schools and provide skills training.

**Work Placement -** We are also offering work placements for Peterborough College, and we have just successfully finished our first placement. The young man is enrolling for future Blacksmith training at Hereford College.

**Local History projects-** The Forge is part of Spalding history for at least the last 220 years. People come into the Forge and share their memories this spurred us on to create [www.heritagesouthholland.co.uk](http://www.heritagesouthholland.co.uk) The HLF All our Stories funding programme enabled us to get started and today it has 16000 artefacts and is regularly viewed by more 150 people daily. During lockdown this stayed available and meant the community had access to this collection. We also created projects to involve the community <https://www.heritagesouthholland.co.uk/projects/>

These projects used the local press and social media to engage the community and then display the evidence on our website. We intend to continue this approach and expand our online involvement with the community. Employing artists enhanced this capability and meant we were to capture information in a visual format making easier to understand and engage with.

**Digital** – This gives new opportunities for young and old to get involved in new technology. The extra space will enable us to develop this activity.

* 1. [the local area will be a better place to live, work or visit](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/local-area-will-be-better-place-live-work-or-visit)

Studies like Legatum have shown that South Holland is an area needing investment. This project would be another element in changing the outlook for the local community through arts and heritage.

* 1. [the local economy will be boosted](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/local-economy-will-be-boosted)

Heritage contributes to local economies: the money spent on the project and the people attracted to the area as a result of the project, can generate money and opportunities for local businesses supporting local jobs.

The Forge has already created employment for the Blacksmith and brought in £150k of inwards investment to the local community. This project will continue that process.

* 1. [heritage will be in better condition](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/heritage-will-be-better-condition)

The new workshop will ease the pressures on 1700’s Forge and enable us to better explain the work of the Blacksmith and the community it served.

* 1. [heritage will be identified and better explained](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/heritage-will-be-identified-and-better-explained)

Exploring Metaverse will give us a new platform to promote our work and local history. This will expand <https://www.heritagesouthholland.co.uk/>

* 1. [people will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions](https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/outcomes/people-will-have-learned-about-heritage-leading-change-ideas-and-actions)

Covered above.

**Who will be involved in the project?**

The project will be volunteer lead employing Prince Project Management methodologies and employing experts to do specific roles in the building process. The Forge will also work with the Sunderland University which is now the home of Professor John Murray Academic Dean of the Faculty of Technology who will redevelop the Virtual Blacksmith and advise on Metaverse implementation.

The project will also build links to schools and local colleges.

**How long do you think the project will take?** – 18 months

**Tell us an estimated start and end date if you have them**. September 2022 to March 2024

**How much is the project likely to cost?** - £180k

1. Build costs have been calculated using typical build cost of £1250/sq. metre this would indicate a build cost of £134k
2. Equipment costs
   1. Blacksmithing £15k
   2. Silversmith studio – £10k
   3. Digital Studio – £20k

These costs will be refined if the Expression of Interest is approved.

**How much funding are you planning to apply for from us? £162K**

The Forge will make this through a combination of the following:

1. Volunteer time
2. Blacksmith time to do the metal construction
3. Reserves
4. Fund raising