

OUR
FREEDOM:
THEN & NOW

ARTIST



CALL OUT

Future
Arts
Centres

80
VE | VJ DAY



Libraries
Connected

OPEN
EYE
GALLERY



Supported using public funding by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



Funded by
UK Government

ABOUT LINCOLN ARTS CENTRE

Lincoln Arts Centre is the University of Lincoln's public arts centre with a focus on talent development, innovation and research. A home for new contemporary performance, the next generation of artists and new artistic ideas.

ABOUT FUTURE ARTS CENTRES

Future Arts Centres (FAC) is a national network of over 170 arts centres across the UK. FAC champions the role of arts centres as vital public spaces that foster creativity, community, and cultural expression. In 2023, FAC became a registered company and an Arts Council England IPSO, providing sector support and leadership.

ABOUT OUR FREEDOM: THEN & NOW

Our Freedom: Then and Now is part of a £2 million UK-wide creative programme marking 80 years since the end of WWII. Funded by the UK Government through Arts Council England, and delivered by Future Arts Centres and Libraries Connected, the initiative spans 80 community-led projects across the country exploring the legacy of VE and VJ Day.

Running from June to November 2025, the programme brings together artists, veterans, and communities to reflect on past and present freedoms through exhibitions, performances, and installations.

ourfreedom.org.uk

Photos by Richard Hall





Photos by Richard Hall

ABOUT LINCOLN'S PROJECT

We've collaborated with school groups, RAF youth groups, local communities, to explore Freedom: Then & Now using a digital archive of WWII-era letters, photos, and recordings, and through conversations about freedom and what it means. Together, we co-designed this creative brief, reflecting on the project's aims and outcomes. They, alongside Lincoln Arts Centre are inviting artists to shape a creative response.

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WHAT WE'RE HOPING TO ACHIEVE

We are looking for an experienced creative artist/s, with a proven track record of working at scale, of any discipline who can work with us to create:

- an ambitious, large scale, public, free art work or performance that reaches a minimum of 5000 people.
- an artwork that meaningfully incorporates **historical references** from the digital archive and explores what **freedom means** in today's world.
- an artwork that has **universal appeal**, that reflects, amplifies & celebrates **local** history & heritage



Photos by Richard Hall

THE STORY SO FAR

Community members have unearthed powerful stories and reflections, which we've captured through documented discussions. This work has been inspired by the International Bomber Command Centre's Digital Archive, owned and managed by the University of Lincoln.

As the artist, you'll have the opportunity to (1) explore the archive first-hand, alongside (2) a curated pack of community discoveries and reflections.

As part of this project UK Poet Laureate Simon Armitage has been commissioned to write Freedom Road, the centrepiece poem for Our Freedom: Then and Now.

You can read the poem on:

ourfreedom.org.uk

Watch



This poem has played a significant part in our conversations with the community participants, and is being used across the country as a single point of inspiration.

It should be used alongside the archive materials, and conversations spoken about on page 5.

OUTPUTS

- 1. Public Presentation:** Deliver a public-facing event, artwork, or performance that engages a minimum of 5,000 people. This needs to take place in Lincoln Arts Centre's immediate vicinity before the end of November 2025.
- 2. Evaluation Support:** Actively contribute to the programme's evaluation, led by Lincoln Arts Centre.
- 3. Photography Exhibition Contribution:** Collaborate with a commissioned photographer from Open Eye Gallery to contribute to a national exhibition responding to the themes of the project.

Photos by Richard Hall



OUTCOMES

- 1. Sustain Community Links:** Continue relationships with communities already involved in the programme. Show how you will include or re-engage them.
- 2. Spark Citywide Conversations:** Create work that prompts dialogue about freedom—then and now—with relevance to Lincoln’s past and present.
- 3. Student Collaboration:** Work in partnership with University of Lincoln to develop opportunities for students.
- 4. Be Welcoming and Open:** Let Simon Armitage’s line “Come as You Are”, from the poem *Freedom Road*, guide your approach. Ensure the work is accessible, inviting, and reflective of all.





Photos by Tom Morris

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

- £ £5K (this includes artist fees and materials).
- £ Additional budget for expenses.
- Project Manager Support.
- In-kind space, Lincoln Arts Centre has resources and staff to deliver marketing & technical activity.
- Access to IBCC Digital Archive + session/s with professional archivist.

KEY DATES

Deadline for Applicants

5PM on Thursday 31st July 2025

31 July

Community Shortlisting

A day for the community participants to review applications and provide feedback.

05 Aug

Provisional Pitch Session

Online or in-person.

14 Aug

Successful Applicant Informed

19 Aug

Commission Delivery Agreed

Final event/performance/artwork confirmed with Future Arts Centres

31 Aug

Project Concluded by

30 Nov

HOW TO APPLY

Applications are made using an online form. Click the apply now button.

To help you prepare, here are the questions we ask that you think about.

Apply Now



(1) Tell us about your practice; including key past commissions, notable collaborators, and any venues or festivals you've worked with. Real examples are helpful to understand your approach. [Approx 500 words max]



HOW TO APPLY CONTINUED

(2) What is your idea? How does your idea respond to this brief? Please consider how your work will be accessible, resonate with a wide audience, yet remain meaningful to local communities. [Approx 500 words max]

If you'd like to submit supporting documents or prefer to apply via a 4-minute video, please email your materials to our Project Manager, Simon, at simon@mrholly.co.uk.

GOT QUESTIONS?

Via telephone
Box Office: 01522 837600

Via email:
enquiries@lincolnartscentre.co.uk

Visit [Our Team](#) page to contact specific people.

ADDITIONAL READING ...

Reflections from Our Freedom: Then & Now

These reflections are drawn from archival discoveries and community conversations. Comments have been paraphrased for brevity and conciseness.

- We opened the archives and found stories stitched with love, loss, laughter, and longing.
- Freedom was folded into letters from prisoners of war. Whispers of resilience, hope, and homecoming.
- The Lancaster Bombers emerged not just as machines of war, but as messengers of liberation, bringing people home.
- One letter said: “VE Day was a blast of joy... but then came the long road to real freedom.”
- Freedom synonymous with dancing – both celebration but contemporary dance styles and choreographic freedom.
- Freedom meant different things, from drunken antics to the aching silence of forbidden love.
- Wartime fantasy cookbooks revealed cravings beyond rations: food as memory, comfort, and the freedom to imagine a feast.
- Archives uncovered Polish communities mantra: “For your freedoms. And ours!”—a reminder that liberation never arrives all at once or for all.



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- We uncovered the quiet testimonies of English civilians in Germany on VE Day—freedom blurred by borders, loyalties, and grief.
- A young person said: “Freedom means being who you want to be... but also not having to define yourself.”
- Some defined freedom in sushi rolls, crochet hooks, or simply the space to follow a curiosity or passion/hobby.
- Others said Trump, USA and guns represented freedom
- We heard from a participant: “If you’re not thinking about freedom, then that probably means you already have it.”
- Women stepped into new freedoms during wartime, only to have them snatched back when peace returned.
- For disabled people, freedom was largely absent – not part of the national story or narrative.
- Students at St Peter’s wrote of freedom in words like Friendship, Truth, Forgiveness, Peace, and Joy.
- And when they imagined the loss of freedom, they spoke of Slavery, Separation, Sadness, Betrayal, and Heartbreak.
- One woman said: “Feminism gave us the biggest freedom. Life now is unrecognisable from the 40s or 50s. Young people have never known a world without them.”
- We asked: What does it mean to live without freedom today? And imagined the voices of those from places of conflict & oppression.
- We reflected on what came after, in particular the Beveridge Report and the Welfare State.



How to search the [IBCC Digital Archive](#)

The IBCC Digital Archive contains 40,000 documents in 2,500 collections. It includes 1,200 interviews, 20,000 photographs, and 18,000 text items (letters, diaries, or memoirs etc.) All the interviews, and around 60% of text items have been fully transcribed and are key word searchable.

It is not Google! Start with Tags if you are searching for information about a [Squadron](#) or [RAF Station](#). Some concepts such as [Victory in Europe Day \(8 May 1945\)](#) or [demobilisation](#) also have a tag.

It is best to search transcriptions for key words such as 'freedom' or 'peace' using the [advanced search](#). (Click on the three dots by the search bar.) Here you can limit results to either text items:

Search Items

[Browse All](#) [Browse by Tag](#) [Search Items](#)

Search for Keywords

Narrow by Specific Fields

Transcription

contains

peace

×

AND

Type

contains

text

×

Add a Field

Or transcriptions of interviews:

Search Items

[Browse All](#) [Browse by Tag](#) [Search Items](#)

Search for Keywords

Narrow by Specific Fields

Transcription

contains

freedom

×

AND

Type

contains

sound

×

Add a Field

[The Help](#) page explains how different searches work and gives more hints on how to combine searches.

Ctrl + F finds a keyword on a page.

EXAMPLES OF ITEMS FOUND IN THE IBCC DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Click on any of the links below to explore the IBCC Digital Archive...

Newspaper Cuttings about VE Day

The Prisoner of War, Vol 3, No. 27, July 1944

Secret Telegram Advising of Cessation of Hostilities

VE Day No.2 Hangar, RAF Waddington

Peter Field – Memoir of Victory in Europe Day

Stonebow, Lincoln – Wartime Memories

"50 Years Ago" – Memoir Covering Sergeant Officer A. Yates