



NEWS RELEASE

Thursday 15 June 2023

Last chance to save Carter's Steam Fair

Carter's Steam Fair is a nationally-important vintage funfair and the finest example of the endangered craft of fairground art in the UK. There is now a very significant risk of the collection being broken up if it can't find a new owner and a permanent home.



The Steam Fair is a traditional British vintage funfair featuring rides and side stalls from the 1890s to the 1960s, which have been lovingly restored using traditional techniques and heritage crafts. It is an iconic fair that has featured in many films and TV productions including *Paddington 2* and *Rocketman*.

In May 2023 Heritage Crafts gained national media coverage when it listed fairground art as endangered on the *Red List of Endangered Crafts*, and the breaking up of the Steam Fair would be a significant loss both to the craft and to the cultural heritage of the UK.

Joby Carter and team have always taken an authentic approach to restoring fairground art, using traditional techniques and materials to preserve or replicate the work of iconic British fairground artists such as Fred Fowle. When his original ride artwork which features on various their rides became worn through wear and tear, the Carters team replicated it using traditional signwriting and fairground art techniques, unlike many modern Showmen who may have taken the opportunity to update the artwork.

The Carters family have toured the fair and added to the collection of rides since 1977, but in April last year the family announced that the 2022 tour would be their final one and, for the fair to flourish into the next generation, it needed an alternative future. The difficult decision was made to put the fair up for sale.

The fair is currently in storage to ensure that the rides and vintage vehicles are in optimum condition, but this is not a long term solution. If they cannot find the right home for the fair as a whole collection, they will be faced with no other option than to auction the rides off individually, something they have always been so keen to avoid.

The sale of Carters Steam Fair also represents a rare investment opportunity. Typically, vintage fairground rides are bought when they are in need of restoration and vintage rides are rarely sold as a collection. This is the first time an immaculate vintage funfair has been sold ready to operate. The collection includes 13 vintage fairground rides and a selection of side stall games which date from the 1890s to the 1960s. They have all been faithfully restored using traditional techniques and are in pristine condition.

With the Carters' blessing, Gary Rivers, a loyal fan of the fair, has set up a campaign and petition to help keep this rare collection of vintage rides together.

Joby Carter, fairground artist, signwriter and manager of Carter's Steam Fair, said:

"We're really keen that the collection stays together and that our one of a kind collection of vintage rides are preserved in an indoor environment. This is about the next chapter and someone else breathing life into the collection and for it to be operated by a new team rather than being managed by us"

Gary Rivers, fan of the fair and creator of the petition said:

"I've been a fan of the fair my whole life. I grew up in Reading and used to visit at Woodley and Reading so this is a head and heart"

thing. It's such a brilliant opportunity to do something fantastic. It's not just a 'product' that you can commodify or see somewhere else; there is really nothing else quite like it. With a bit of imagination and the right investor, there's potential to make something fantastic out of this, such as a living museum to teach people about energy and engineering. I hope that this petition helps raise awareness and ultimately means we can find an investor or organisation that appreciates the intrinsic values of the fair including its heritage and aesthetic value and over time it can become a viable business for them."

Mary Lewis, Heritage Crafts Endangered Crafts Manager, said:

"Fairground art is an endangered heritage craft that is of particular cultural significance to the UK. The loss of this important collection of craftsmanship would permanently damage public awareness of the rich cultural heritage of fairground art and funfairs and will further endanger the transfer of endangered crafts, skills and knowledge to the next generation."

- Find out more about the sale of Carter's Steam Fair: www.carterssteamfair.co.uk/this-is-our-final-tour-carters-steam-fair-is-for-sale
- Sign the petition: www.change.org/p/project-carters-steam-fair-a-unique-piece-of-cultural-history
- Anyone with an interest in finding out more about buying the Fair can contact Carters via email at sales@cartersfair.com
- For more information about the *Red List of Endangered Crafts* email Heritage Crafts Endangered Crafts Manager Mary Lewis at mary@heritagecrafts.org.uk

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Photo caption:

- Carters Steam Fair

About Heritage Crafts

Founded in 2009, Heritage Crafts is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) registered as the 'Heritage Crafts Association', the advocacy body for traditional heritage crafts. Working in partnership with government and key agencies, it provides a focus for craftspeople, groups, societies and guilds, as well as individuals who care about the loss of traditional crafts skills, and works towards a healthy and sustainable framework for the future. Its

aim is to support and promote heritage crafts as a fundamental part of our living heritage.

www.heritagecrafts.org.uk

About the *Red List of Endangered Crafts*

The Red List of Endangered Crafts, created by Heritage Crafts, was the first to rank traditional crafts in the UK by the likelihood they would survive the next generation. The 2021 edition of the Red List, funded by the Pilgrim Trust, assessed 244 crafts to identify those which are at greatest risk of disappearing, of which four have been classified as extinct, 56 as critically endangered, 74 as endangered and 110 as currently viable.

The Red List shows that the craft knowledge, skills and practices that form an important part of our shared cultural heritage are – for a number of reasons – at risk of being lost. Heritage Crafts believes that these cultural assets are as important as unique heritage buildings and ancient beautiful landscapes and could provide future generations with fantastic opportunities to enrich their lives and the lives of others.

<http://redlist.heritagecrafts.org.uk>