



Historic Environment Overview 2023-24

A report by the Historic Environment Forum

Heritage Counts

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Foreword: The Historic Environment in 2023-24

2023-24 is a year in which we can reflect both on the triumphs and challenges within the heritage sector. Despite ongoing global and domestic difficulties, creative and promising strides have been made towards ensuring that heritage is resilient and relevant for the future. Key initiatives, such as building capacity in the face of climate change and creating better and much needed connections with young people and communities, highlight the significant contribution that heritage can make in creating cohesive, inclusive communities for people from all backgrounds.

Guidance on managing contested heritage assets, published in October 2023, supports decision-makers in navigating debates around controversial historical elements. Additionally, the UK's commitment to the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage marks a significant step in recognising the value of lived experiences and cultural practices, including the arts and crafts.

Programmes like the Future Talent Programme and the Heritage Buddies and Connectors emphasise community involvement and workforce diversity, ensuring broader participation in heritage practice. Environmental initiatives integrating

heritage conservation with nature recovery further demonstrate the value of a holistic approach to safeguarding the past while addressing contemporary issues.

This document outlines these and many other significant developments, showcasing our collective efforts to preserve, celebrate, and adapt the historic environment for current and future generations.

We acknowledge the dedication and resilience of everyone involved in preserving heritage. Their efforts ensure that the historic environment remains a vibrant, accessible, and integral part of our daily lives.

In this edition of the Historic Environment Overview, the Historic Environment Forum shares some of the key highlights of the last financial year under the following headings:



Policy, Legislation & Guidance



Wellbeing & Social Benefits



Funding & Investment



Diversity, Inclusion & Youth Voice



The State of Heritage & Survey Results



Place & Engagement



Skills, Capacity & Resilience



Stories of Discovery & Sustainable Conservation



Climate Change & the Environment



An Update on Heritage Crime

The three themes of Historic England's Heritage Counts series have also been used throughout this report to identify and highlight some of the positive outcomes achieved across sector activity this year:



Heritage and **Society**

News and outcomes which relate to how the public connects with heritage and the value of heritage to society.



Heritage and the **Economy**

News and outcomes which relate to how the historic environment contributes to the national economy and local economies.



Heritage and the **Environment**

News and outcomes which relate to how the historic environment contributes to environmental outcomes considering climate change, energy efficiency and carbon emissions.

These themes are referenced with symbols across the content of this report, with many updates showcasing positive outcomes that relate to multiple themes.

The content of this report was compiled in early 2024 and represents only a snapshot of the wide-ranging activities and changes that took place across the year. The updates featured cover the period relating to the financial year 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

The main contributors of this report are organisations within the membership of the Historic Environment Forum, with additional updates shared by colleagues in the wider heritage sector.



Policy, Legislation & Guidance

Heritage Policy Highlights from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)



2023-2024 continues to be a challenging year for the heritage sector, with determination to tackle ongoing global and domestic challenges. There have, however, been positive steps forward in making heritage fit for the future.

In September 2023, Lord Parkinson announced the launch of the nationwide Blue Plaques scheme run by Historic England, building upon the existing London Blue Plaques scheme managed by English Heritage. This was done to create one cohesive Blue Plaques scheme across England, celebrating links between notable figures from the past and buildings where they lived and worked – showing that people who went on to leave their mark on the world are drawn from every corner of the country, and all backgrounds. In February 2024 the first national plaque was unveiled to Daphne Steele - the first black matron in the NHS. Nominations have opened to the public this summer.

The [guidance for custodians of contested heritage assets](#) was published in October 2023. The Department had the support of a Heritage Advisory Board made up of heritage experts, academics and stakeholders in the development of the guidance. The guidance offers heritage decision-makers a tool to support making considered decisions with confidence when determining how to deal with a contested heritage asset which may have become the focus of debate.

The UK announced its intention to ratify the 2003 UNESCO Convention on Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in December 2023,

and launched a consultation with an online survey and sixteen roundtables to discuss how the UK Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) – a key first step of implementing the Convention – should be created. DCMS, as State Party to the Convention, is continuing to work with the Devolved Administrations and stakeholders to develop plans and is looking to publish a response to the consultation in due course, ahead of launching a call for submissions to the Inventory later this year.

Also in December, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) announced that ten struggling high streets would be taking part in a new government pilot – the High Street Accelerators programme – to create partnerships that empower residents and community organisations to work together on long-term regeneration plans. Overall funding of £7 million will help communities partner with local authorities and businesses to address some of the biggest challenges facing their high streets – building on wider action to tackle empty shops, anti-social behaviour and a lack of visitors. These ten High Street Accelerators – including in Stoke-on-Trent, Hull, and Tendring – will each receive an initial £237,000 to kickstart their partnerships.

They can also apply for a share of up to £5 million to improve their high streets' green spaces and create more pleasant environments for residents to meet and socialise.

The Energy Efficiency Review into Adapting Historic Homes for Energy Efficiency was published on 3 January 2024. The review was conducted by DLUHC, the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and DCMS with support from Historic England. It acknowledged the range of barriers that homeowners face when installing energy efficiency and decarbonisation measures in historic properties and sets out a range of actions the Government will take to address these barriers across planning, skills, finance and guidance.

The [Agricultural Transition Plan Update](#) was also published in January, and updated in March. The Plan lays out proposals around heritage, and the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' (Defra) commitment to tailor non-detrimental action for heritage assets. Since then, Historic

England has been working with Defra on a series of SMART (Specific, Manageable, Accurate, Realistic, Timescale) objectives to embed the heritage agenda within the Farming and Countryside Programme across Defra.

Separately, DCMS has been advising Defra on its response to the [Independent Dartmoor Review](#) regarding historic environment.

There have been two Heritage Council meetings in 2023/24, both chaired by the Minister for Arts and Heritage. The first convened in June of 2023, to consider the findings of the Heritage and Carbon report and provide updates on the Energy Efficiency Review of Historic Properties (EER). The [minutes](#) for this meeting are available on the gov.uk website. The second was in February 2024 to discuss the challenges and opportunities for railway heritage and underwater and maritime heritage. [Minutes](#) for this have also been published on the gov.uk website.

The Spring Budget 2024



In the Spring Budget 2024, the Government confirmed the allocation of £100 million from the Levelling Up Fund round three for local culture projects, recognising the important role that culture and pride in place play in levelling up. This includes investments in a range of nationally significant projects, a number of which are significant for heritage and historic buildings: £15 million to the National Railway Museum in York and County Durham and £10 million to the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool's Grade I-listed Royal Albert Dock, as well as £10 million to safeguard the extraordinary Temple Works building in Leeds – a Grade I-listed flaxmill with Egyptian Revival architecture. This investment, alongside the funding already provided by Historic England, will help to bring the site into public ownership and explore its potential to become the new northern home of the British Library.

The Spring Budget 2024 also included £15 million of funding for the West Midlands Combined Authority to support culture, heritage and investment projects in the region, subject to a business case. This will provide £10 million of funding to support culture and heritage projects, and £5 million to drive inward investment in the region.

Lastly, as part of the Budget, it was announced that the Government is providing £6 million of funding over the next three years for a pilot with the King's Foundation to explore how community-centred regeneration projects anchored around heritage assets and sustainability considerations can complement the Government's wider place-based initiatives for levelling up.

The Levelling up and Regeneration Act



The Levelling up and Regeneration Bill received Royal Assent on 26 October 2023. A range of heritage related measures were included in the Act. These include:

- The removal of the ability to claim compensation when a Local Planning Authority (LPA) issues a Building Preservation Notice (BPN) on a non-listed building (if it is then not listed within the six month life of the notice), and a duty for LPAs to consult Historic England before issuing a BPN. The latter was negotiated during passage of the Bill through the Lords following concerns that BPNs could be issued unchecked by LPAs, adding delays and burdens upon owners.
- LPAs having the power to issue 56 day (up from 28) Temporary Stop Notices on unauthorised works, with the new measure now including listed buildings.
- The strengthened powers to enable Urgent Works to be carried out to listed buildings when

occupied and in use; and, similarly, to strengthen the Secretary of State's power to enable Urgent Works to be carried out to unlisted buildings in Conservation Areas when occupied and in use, plus provisions to support cost recovery.

- The new statutory duty for LPAs to maintain Historic Environment Records (HERs) will be commenced in due course.

Government increases support for Places of Worship

The Heritage Alliance has been supporting its members, including The Church of England, the Churches Conservation Trust and the Historic Religious Buildings Alliance on several amendments to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. Following productive conversations with sector advocates, this included success in the Government bringing forward an amendment enabling Parish Councils to fund the renovation of historic religious buildings.

Commitment to the World Heritage Convention



In the last 12 months, World Heritage UK (WHUK) and its members – the 33 UK World Heritage Sites (WHS) – have assisted DCMS (the State Party focal point for World Heritage) and Historic England in addressing various key processes required by the UK's commitment to implementing UNESCO's World Heritage Convention.

A revised Tentative WHS List was announced by the Government in 2023. Representatives from WHUK were part of an independent panel of cultural and natural experts, chaired by the UK National

Commission for UNESCO, to assess the suitability of site application for future WHS status. Seven cultural and natural sites were selected to be taken forward for nomination over the next ten years.

UNESCO's Third Cycle of World Heritage Periodic Reporting (every six years) took place in the UK during 2023. All the UK WHSs self-assessed their governance, positive and negative factors affecting the WHS, effectiveness of WHS protection and management, contribution to sustainable development, capability for capacity-building and engagement, and the state of site conservation. Coordinated by DCMS, the reporting was forwarded to UNESCO's World Heritage Centre (WHC). Both for the UK and UNESCO, the report offers an opportunity for reflection and evaluation of changing circumstances of WHSs at a strategic and local level.

Most significantly, the State of Conservation review is focused on the maintenance of the Outstanding Universal Value of each WHS. Some UK WHSs have

been the subject of continued scrutiny during 2023 following concerns by the WHC about the impact of proposed development or changes in WHSs or their buffer zones. Often at variance with UK planning decisions, these include, for example, Stonehenge (proposed road scheme and tunnel), Derwent Valley Mills (new housing), Lake District (agricultural change and tourism facilities), and Cornwall Mining (new housing and mineral extraction).

WHUK has welcomed the clauses in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act that will provide a legislative underpinning for the protection of WHSs and their settings as statutory designated heritage assets for the first time. This significant milestone means WHSs will in the future have the same level of statutory protection as Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments.

Embedding Heritage into Nature Recovery



Environmental Land Management Schemes and Landscape Recovery

As the [new Environmental Land Management \(ELM\) schemes](#) are developed, Natural England's Historic Environment experts continue to work with colleagues in Natural England, Defra and Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) to seek opportunities for the historic environment and ensure that it is afforded protection.

The [second round of Landscape Recovery](#) closed to applications in September 2023 with a total of 34 successful projects. Round 2 focussed on net zero, protected sites, and wildlife-rich habitat. In addition to these themes, all projects are required to provide extra benefits, including:

- improved water quality;
- help for threatened species to recover;
- improved soil health;

- increasing resilience to natural hazards (e.g., flooding, drought, erosion, fire);
- social benefits (e.g., physical access, participation, and engagement with nature).

Nature Recovery and the Historic Environment

In July 2023, Natural England published [Nature Recovery and the Historic Environment](#), hosted for external partners on the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO) website. The guidance, supported by a series of case-studies, sets out the value of integrating heritage into nature recovery objectives and the range of additional opportunities an integrated approach can deliver.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), a requirement under the Environment Act 2023, are one of a suite of tools designed to deliver the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) targets.

LNRSs are a system of spatial strategies that enable priorities for nature's recovery within a defined geographic area. In coastal areas, strategies will extend into the intertidal zone, and some Responsible Authorities are voluntarily extending their LNRS into marine areas. Each strategy will map the most valuable existing habitat and make proposals for creating or improving habitat to deliver for nature and for wider environmental goals. There will be 48 strategies in total, each led by a Responsible Authority, and together they will cover the whole of England with no gaps nor overlaps. Natural England is developing guidance for the consideration and integration of the historic environment into LNRS, aimed at Responsible Authorities, Natural England advisers and other partners. Developed in partnership with Historic England, the guidance will encourage Responsible Authorities to scope heritage into LNRS from the outset. Within Natural England, the historic environment network is engaged with and contributing to nature recovery projects across the country.

Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became mandatory in February 2024. Through site selection and layout, developers should avoid or reduce any impact on biodiversity and deliver ten per cent BNG, as measured by the [statutory biodiversity metric](#).

There are three ways a developer can achieve BNG:

1. Enhance and restore biodiversity on-site, within the red line boundary of a development site.
2. Deliver through a mixture of on-site and off-site alternatives, should developers not be able to achieve all their BNG on-site. Developers can either make off-site biodiversity gains on their own land outside the development site or buy off-site biodiversity units on the market.
3. If developers cannot achieve on-site or off-site biodiversity net gain, they must buy statutory biodiversity credits. This must be a last resort.

Natural England is selling statutory credits on behalf of Defra. Funds from the sale of statutory credits will be invested in habitat creation or enhancement. Natural England will be buying the habitat creation and enhancement from a wide variety of businesses. Several sites have been working with Natural England as pilots since 2020. They have also been involved in the development of criteria for the integration of the historic environment and landscape in the design of these projects for multiple benefits.

The Control of Bracken

Asulox is a chemical widely used for the control of bracken for agriculture, conservation, and on historic sites. The use of Asulox was banned in 2012 due to its toxicity but has been approved each year on emergency authorisations. In Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland the last legal use was in 2023, and from 2024 there will be no emergency approval in England. Natural England recognises the need for up-to-date evidence and advice on the control of bracken without chemicals. In March, a group of species, habitat, historic environment, and land management specialists met to discuss bracken control methods for archaeological sites and at a landscape scale. Work is in progress to provide best practice guidelines for balancing multiple interests.

Climate Change Policy



Historic England continues work to advise on the development of national and local climate change policy to consider heritage early and account for the positive role it can play in climate action.

Key areas of work over the past year include informing the Government's Third National Adaptation Programme, its review on adapting historic homes for energy efficiency, and advising the Climate Change Committee on accounting for historic buildings in the Seventh Carbon Budget.

In 2023, Historic England contributed to the [Third National Adaptation Programme \(NAP3\)](#) by successfully embedding actions to address risks to heritage from climate change. For the first time, the Government has acknowledged that action needs to be taken to develop a better evidence base to plan for and respond to risks to heritage. The process to inform the next national risk assessment, expected in early 2026, has already begun.

Over the past two years, Historic England has supported DLUHC, DCMS and DESNZ to review the barriers to [adapting historic homes for energy efficiency](#) and to develop strategic policy solutions. This work has helped to raise awareness that heritage policies are not in themselves a barrier, and that opportunities exist to improve the processes, systems and resources to deliver them across five themes: the planning system; information for homeowners; local authority skills, training and capacity; industry skills, training and capacity; and cost and affordability. Historic England continues to work with departments to implement commitments made in the review. Alongside the review, Historic England submitted written evidence and gave oral evidence to the

Energy Security and Net Zero Select Committee inquiry on 'Heating Our Homes', demonstrating the

positive role historic buildings can play, and advised how to enable a more efficient transition to Net Zero for historic buildings.

Historic England is also working with the Climate Change Committee to provide assistance on how to better account for historic buildings in modelling to determine the Seventh Carbon Budget (2038-42), which will be recommended to government in 2025.

In 2023, Historic England launched its revised Climate Change and Net Zero Programmes to deliver against the organisation's new [corporate priorities](#). It is also committed to supporting other heritage sector organisations to reach their sustainability goals. During 2023-24, Historic England initiated several research projects and began the development of a decision framework for heritage asset owners to better understand, mitigate, and adapt to climate change. An energy efficiency marketing campaign, which ran between October and November 2023, resulted in more than 270,000 individuals accessing Historic England's improved advice on [how to make historic homes and buildings more energy efficient](#). After consulting the sector to identify the specific needs of heritage enterprises on their journey to net zero, Historic England also published [webpages](#), featuring information and links to resources, advice and support to help organisations of all sizes reduce their emissions and enhance biodiversity. Following public consultation, Historic England is finalising a Climate Change Advice Note, with plans for publication in 2024 alongside case studies showcasing successful adaptation work on historic buildings.

Coastal and Marine Heritage in England



In 2023, to mark the 50th anniversary of the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973, Historic England funded several projects including a seminar hosted by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) which looked back on the successes and failures of the last 50 years, and to make suggestions for how we can improve marine protection in future. Historic England also funded a [short film](#) by underwater filmmaker Michael Pitts, which has been shortlisted for multiple awards.

Historic England has developed an inventory of surviving harbour infrastructure across 146 separate coastal locations across England. The inventory supports the [Heritage Harbours](#) scheme [announced in June 2022](#) by The Maritime Heritage Trust, National Historic Ships UK and Historic England.

Historic England successfully used exciting new technology as part of the collaborative [Protective markings for Protected Wreck Sites Project](#), to protect vulnerable underwater archaeological material. Historic England have also collaborated with the French marine heritage agency, Drassm, in surveying wrecks sunk during 'Operation Dynamo'.



The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded [Unpath'd Waters Portal](#) has also been making digital waves, facilitating novel access to a shared, cross-searchable online catalogue of UK marine data. Further offshore, delivery of the UK's ambition to connect 50GW of offshore wind by 2030 continues to drive extensive archaeological work associated with consenting and construction of offshore wind farms.

In November 2023, the [#Rooswijk1740 project](#), led by the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands in collaboration with Historic England and MSDS Marine Ltd, [returned 2,560 objects](#) recovered from the protected 18th century wreck of the Rooswijk to the Netherlands. The conservation aspect of the project, managed by Historic England's Investigative Science Team, has been nominated for the [Museum and Heritage Award](#) as Restoration or Conservation Project of the Year.

In partnership with the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust, Historic England has completed a Conservation Management Plan for the wreck of Sir Ernest Shackleton's Endurance lost in 1915 the Weddell Sea in Antarctica. The Plan, with recommendations, will be submitted at the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting in May 2024.

Speaking at [Heritage Day](#) in March 2024, Lord Parkinson confirmed that DCMS is continuing to pursue the ratification of the 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage.

Providing a Local Government Viewpoint from the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers



Members of the ALGAO are local authorities of all tiers, who are usually represented by their most senior professional archaeologist. The Association has national executive committees in England, Scotland and Wales as well as specialist committees for areas such as Planning and Legislation, Urban, Historic Environment Records, Maritime and Countryside, who work with key organisations within and outside of the heritage sector to further local government aims regarding heritage. The England executive committee acts as a Special Interest Group for the Local Government Association.

Two of ALGAO England stated objectives are *to improve the sustainable management of the historic environment, and to develop the role of local government historic environment services in the delivery of local, regional and national policies*. The Association has continued to respond regularly to consultations on evolving policy and sector-wide guidance, including on initiatives such as National Planning Policy Framework updates, extensions to permitted development rights, and strengthening planning policy for brownfield development and hedgerow protection. This is all with a view to ensuring the protection of undesignated

archaeological assets, in particular, is not weakened and areas of concern are flagged up to local government.

More proactive collaboration with other sector organisations has been essential as the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act continues its legislative journey, with major implications for local authority archaeological services. ALGAO welcomes the principles encapsulated within the Act, in particular section 230: Historic Environment Records (HERs), which will put HERs on a statutory footing for relevant local authorities. The Association is working closely with partners across the heritage sector (e.g., Historic England, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, Heritage Alliance) and civil servants from DLUHC to provide expert input into the process and secondary legislation, when section 230 comes into force. Active support for, and promotion of, initiatives such as Historic England's HER Audit Programme and the Heritage Information Access Strategy, as well as the ClfA's ongoing updating of sector standards and guidance, are key to ensuring best practice in the curation and provision of historic environment datasets in line with national policy and future statutory requirements.

The Gardens Trust Joins Shared Database of the Joint Committee of National Amenity Societies



As a statutory consultee in the English planning system, the Gardens Trust must be consulted by local planning authorities (LPA) on planning applications that may affect sites listed at Grades I, II* and II on the Register of Parks and Gardens of

Special Historic Interest. To deliver this work, the Gardens Trust's conservation team works closely with volunteers in the County Gardens Trusts (CGT) who help its resources stretch further and provide invaluable local expertise.

Wherever appropriate, the Trust also liaises with the National Amenity Societies who also have a casework load as, although not statutory consultees, they must be notified of listed building consents by LPAs.

For several years now, the National Amenity Societies have managed their casework via a shared database known as the [Joint Committee of National Amenity Societies \(JCNAS\) database](#), hosted by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA). Through this they receive and process casework from the LPAs, ensuring a robust and streamlined centralised system.

The Gardens Trust's own digital casework log has been in service for over two decades, and so this year the time came to rebuild it to meet the demands of today. Thanks to grant support from Historic England, the Gardens Trust has worked through 2023-24 to migrate its own casework to the shared JCNAS database, supporting CGT volunteers along the way, and completing the process in April 2024. This move improves both administrative efficiency and collaboration on casework responses. A leaflet explaining the position of parks and gardens in the English planning system and the process of consultation with the Gardens Trust is available [online](#).

Historic England Case Studies on Contested Heritage



England has a rich and complex history. Some buildings, monuments and places bring us face to face with parts of our history that conflict with today's standards and can provoke strong and sometimes conflicting views.

To illustrate public engagement, creative commissioning and planning practice on contested heritage, Historic England commissioned British Future – an independent, non-partisan thinktank and registered charity – to compile a set of case studies from the UK and internationally. In addition to looking at examples of where heritage has become contested, the case studies present reinterpretation (or interpretation) in places where stories have been hidden or not fully told. They are designed to help owners and custodians of heritage assets navigate an approach to interpreting and reinterpreting shared pasts. They support good



practice and inform the process of researching, consulting on, interpreting, and reinterpreting shared heritage in a thoughtful, long-lasting and powerful way which allows us to develop a deeper understanding of the past. These [case studies](#) were published in October 2023, and are intended to complement [government guidance on commemorative heritage assets](#) published at the same time.

Portable Antiquities Scheme and The Treasure Act



In 2023 to 2024 the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) recorded 73,667 archaeological finds made by the public in England and Wales, the vast majority being found by metal detectorists, most on arable land. This brings the total on the PAS database to over 1.7 million finds, a growing resource for archaeological research. Such research initiated in this period includes the AHRC-funded Medieval Ritual Landscape (MeRit) project – led by the University of Reading with the British Museum – which is using PAS and other archaeological data to explore medieval lived religion and ritual activity. This adds to almost 1000 projects, including 200 PhDs, that have used PAS data as a major component.

On 30 July 2023, reform of the Treasure Act 1996 saw the addition of a new significance-based definition for Treasure. This seeks to protect metal objects over 200 years old that provide an [‘exceptional insight into an aspect of national or regional archaeology, culture or history’](#), by virtue of their rarity, location or region, or connection with a particular historical person or event. The change was designed to ensure that items like the Crosby Garrett Helmet or Ryedale Hoard – both not covered by the Treasure Act when found – can be acquired by museums for public benefit. To coincide with the change, the British Museum with the Amgueddfa Cymru-Museum Wales who run PAS in Wales, produced a new Advice for Finders leaflet covering both the mandatory and voluntary reporting of finds.

The Heritage Alliance’s Heritage Manifesto 2024



Last summer, the Heritage Alliance published its Heritage Manifesto 2023 following an extensive consultation of the asks and needs of the heritage sector.

The Heritage Alliance was uniquely placed to distil asks from around the breadth of heritage, and from over 200 members, into a coherent message for policy and decision makers. The release of the Manifesto received over 56,000 interactions on social media, over 100 re-tweets and saw dozens of heritage organisations endorsing it on social media. This was followed up by an ‘advocacy toolkit’ for the sector to utilise the Manifesto and more effectively advocate with local MPs.

A refreshed version was later published in Spring 2024, [The Heritage Manifesto 2024](#), that highlighted new data from the latest iteration of Heritage Counts and updated sector priorities in a number of key areas.

Key priorities include:

1. Support community cohesion and put heritage at the heart of regeneration by investing in and empowering councils and communities so they can protect and make the most of heritage locally. This should include support for targeted regeneration schemes, removing permitted development on demolition, incentivising reuse, and embedding culture-led regeneration and community ownership in future housing and community strategies.
2. Embed the historic environment in nature recovery and net zero strategies by: ensuring Environmental Land Management (ELM) schemes provide robust long-term funding to land managers of at least £4.4bn a year – delivering heritage outcomes on an equal footing, reforming Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs), and bringing forward skills training, funding, standards, and advice in a National Retrofit Strategy.
3. Reform the tax regime to promote long-term sustainable growth by: equalising VAT on repair and maintenance with new build, simplifying and reducing the burden of business rates, and continuing support for the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme.
4. Harness cultural learning and skills at every age and help the workforce thrive by: encouraging youth visits to heritage sites in the curriculum through subsidised entries, implementing cross-subsidised shared apprenticeship schemes, reforming the Apprenticeship Levy, and offering unsponsored conservation skill-oriented visas for heritage.
5. Futureproof heritage institutions at both a national and local level by: ensuring the adequate funding and continued stability of Arms-Length Bodies, delivering a new Culture Growth Fund, protecting the 20 per cent share of lottery funding for the National Lottery Heritage Fund, supporting local authority arts and conservation teams with ringfenced investment, and safeguarding the uncertain futures of mobile and archaeological collections.

The Manifesto has proved an important tool in The Heritage Alliance's advocacy efforts with politicians and policymakers across the political spectrum to demonstrate that heritage is part of the solution for places, people and the environment.

Update from the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists



The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) is the leading professional body representing archaeologists working in the UK and overseas. Work led by CIfA on the 21st Century Challenges for Archaeology Partnership (21CAP) action plan has recently delivered a review of the archaeology sector's advocacy objectives and is now implementing a new approach for advocacy coordination and accountability through The

Archaeology Forum (TAF). CIfA is also delivering a strategic review and redesign of the sector's standards and guidance and a suite of CIfA's standards and guidance are being revised. A project is also underway to examine threats and opportunities facing local authority historic environment services in the context of current political and fiscal challenges. Other work under 21CAP is being delivered by other bodies.

Conservation Professional Practice Principles



The [Conservation Professional Practice Principles](#) was first published in 2017 by the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC), Civic Voice, and the Historic Towns and Villages Forum. It is an overview of built and historic environment practice for conservation professionals and describes the skills and specialisms necessary to properly manage, conserve and develop historic places and buildings. It is a cross-sector statement on practice principles for specialists working in built and historic environment conservation roles. Working with historic places and buildings involves a diverse and complex range of specialist skills across different professional disciplines. It is essential to employ professional teams from the necessary disciplines, with historic and built environment expertise.

The Principles define the typical scope of activities and diverse disciplines of conservation professionals. Identifying and understanding the values of heritage forms the basis for offering conservation advice and making judgements. They help with understanding and reconciling these values to promote sound advice and solid judgement. As the Principles recognise international, national and devolved UK legislation, policy and statements, and how they operate in the real world, it puts practice standards at the heart of how to deliver successful conservation outcomes. Printed copies have been extensively distributed amongst partner organisations and wider, and are available freely [online](#). They are currently being updated and enhanced.

Historic England's Industrial Heritage Strategy



Work continues on developing and implementing [Historic England's draft Industrial Heritage Strategy](#). Those Heritage Action Zones with a strong industrial heritage component have now concluded, but many retain an important legacy. For example, research carried out for the Stockton and Darlington Railway Heritage Action Zone has led to a better understanding of its significance, resulting in new and improved designations such as the upgraded listing to II* of the Heighington and Aycliffe Railway Station, thought to be the [world's first railway station](#). A number of sites are also benefiting from major investment in the run up to the [2025](#)

[bicentenary](#) of the railway, including the [Darlington Railway Heritage Quarter](#) and [Locomotion](#), part of the Science Museum Group at Shildon.

Historic England also has recently published [Textile Mills: Introduction to Heritage Assets](#) to help improve the understanding of textile mills. It considers the history and development of the building type encompassing spinning, weaving and integrated mills, together with the provision and supply of power. Due consideration is given to the potential of archaeological evidence and the transformative potential of these sites for reuse.

The important work of the [Industrial Heritage Support Officer](#) (IHSO) hosted by the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust and funded by Historic England continues. With its emphasis on industrial sites preserved as heritage attractions, the IHSO facilitates meetings of the ten [Industrial Heritage Support Networks](#) that cover England, and arranged two national seminars on industrial heritage and climate change, and heritage crime.

Historic England has a strong record in preparing publications on England's industrial heritage, including its recent 2023 book, [The Buildings of the Malting Industry – The Production of Malt from Prehistory to the 21st Century](#), authored by Amber Patrick and published in 2023. This complements a number of other publications such

as [Oats and Hop Kilns – A History](#) and [Built to Brew – The History and Heritage of the Brewery](#). Further information on recent Historic England industrial heritage publications can be found in [issue 26 of its Research Magazine](#).



Historic Houses for the 21st Century



In 2023, Historic Houses celebrated 50 years since its founding. To mark the occasion, Historic Houses produced a new report, *Changing Times, Valuing History: historic houses for the twenty-first century*, which set out not only the importance of independent heritage and its achievements over the last 50 years, but their policy priorities moving forward to ensure that this heritage goes from strength to strength for the next 50 years and beyond.

These are that:

- Existing fiscal reliefs are critical for saving heritage and must be protected and enhanced.
- A cost-effective VAT-relief scheme should be made available to heritage businesses operating in listed buildings open to public access.
- The planning system for heritage needs reform and that a smarter system of heritage protection is needed.

- The use of EPCs in relation to historic buildings needs urgent review.
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund should lift its cap on grants to publicly accessible heritage in the private sector.
- DCMS should recognise landscape design as one of the UK's thriving creative industries.

Historic Houses were delighted that in February 2024, the National Lottery Heritage Fund raised the cap on grants to publicly accessible heritage in the private sector to £250,000, which will enable Historic Houses members to think bigger, and to do more.

The full report, and accompanying video, can be seen [here](#).

Image: Railway goods shed, Darlington. Thought to be the oldest surviving example in the UK, the goods shed has benefited from an Historic England grant to fund repairs and help transform the building into the main entrance to the Darlington Railway Heritage Quarter. © Historic England



Funding & Investment

EU Funding for Cultural Heritage Research and Innovation



Horizon Europe is an EU research and innovation programme. It has a budget of €95.5 billion and runs until 2027.

As of 1 January 2024, the United Kingdom became an associated country to Horizon Europe. UK researchers and heritage organisations have been significant award holders of EU funding. Recent examples include the [Tate](#), [University of Southampton](#) and the [Archaeology Data Service](#).

In Pillar I (Excellent Science), there are opportunities for cultural heritage proposals to be submitted through the [European Research Council](#) and [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#). Pillar I also includes research infrastructures and UK heritage researchers and organisations should seek involvement in [European research infrastructure for heritage science](#) (E-RIHS).

[Cluster 2: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive society](#) of Horizon Europe (Pillar II: Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness) has specific cultural heritage funding opportunities which aim to promote better access to and engagement with cultural heritage and improve its protection, enhancement and restoration. Signing up to the Cluster 2 newsletter or contacting the [UK National Contact point](#) are useful ways to find out more about these [funding opportunities](#).

Cultural Heritage innovation opportunities will be available through Horizon Europe Pillar III - addressing innovation performance, transfer and scale up - including via the European Institute of Technology's [eit Culture & Creativity partnership](#), which is funded by the European Union.

Specific opportunities related to the new initiative - [the European Collaborative Cloud for Cultural Heritage](#) - can be found online, to develop new digital infrastructure that will connect cultural heritage institutions and professionals across the UK and the EU. In 2024, there will be funding opportunities related to the development of specific digital collaborative tools for the sector.

A new co-funded partnership is being developed on Resilient Cultural Heritage. This partnership will deliver funding opportunities on cultural heritage and climate change. This builds on the [Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage and Global Change](#) (JPICH) and the new EU-funded [Alliance for Research on Cultural Heritage in Europe](#). Please sign up to the ARCHE newsletter and join the stakeholder forum.

Outside Horizon Europe, activity can also be funded through [European Cooperation in Science and Technology \(COST\) Actions - UKRO](#).

Heritage 2033: The National Lottery Heritage Fund 10-Year Strategy



In March 2023, The National Lottery Heritage Fund (henceforth, Heritage Fund) published a new ten-year vision for UK heritage to be valued, cared for, and sustained for everyone, now and in the future.

Over the life of this strategy, Heritage 2033, the Heritage Fund aims to invest £3.6 billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players.

Over 4,000 stakeholders and members of the public shared their views on heritage and the Heritage Fund's future direction which, together with external research and analysis, helped to inform the strategy and its four investment principles:

1. Saving heritage: conserving and valuing heritage for now and the future.
2. Protecting the environment: supporting nature recovery and environmental sustainability.
3. Inclusion, access and participation: supporting greater inclusion, diversity, access and participation in heritage.

4. Organisational sustainability: strengthening heritage to be adaptive and financially resilient, contributing to communities and economies.

The Heritage Fund is continuing to offer open funding programmes – from small grants up to multi-million pound projects – for all types of heritage with most decisions made at local level. In January 2024, the new National Lottery Heritage Grants was launched with a streamlined and simplified process for applicants and a higher investment threshold of £10 million.

[Heritage 2033](#) outlines a set of strategic interventions, designed to address long-standing heritage issues at scale, support coordinated cross-territory approaches, and accelerate new ideas and innovations.

Published in July 2023, the first three-year Delivery Plan sets out the initial interventions which are being developed such as targeted place-based investment, including urban greenspace, a commitment to supporting large-scale projects that revive landscapes, support nature recovery, and enhance connectivity for people and wildlife. In October 2023, the Heritage Fund announced the first nine of up to 20 Heritage Places across the UK where it will invest £200 million to boost pride

in place and connection to heritage across whole places rather than individual projects.

Enabling flexibility and the ability to respond swiftly when required, other initiatives include targeted funding for heritage that is at risk, supporting acquisitions of exceptional heritage, marking significant events, or supporting heritage areas and organisations dealing with an unforeseen emergency.

Funding Highlights from Architectural Heritage Fund



During the past year, the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) has continued supporting projects through its DCMS-funded high streets programme, [Transforming Places](#), to complete their grant-funded activities.

Many such projects represent partnerships with and within High Street Heritage Action Zones and other area schemes and are becoming new centres of place-making and regeneration through the adaptive reuse of historic buildings; this includes places such as Harlesden, where a derelict bank has become a charity hub supporting disadvantaged children, and Gateshead, where a Victorian church is nearly complete as a community dance centre.

Thanks to new core funding from Historic England and The Pilgrim Trust, the AHF has also been able to award grants outside town centres, and nearly £1 million was awarded last year in early-stage grants for projects throughout England, with a particular focus on areas of deprivation and those lacking in social infrastructure.

Additionally, thanks to a £5 million partnership investment by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the AHF has awarded 12 new Heritage Development Trust grants (six in England), bringing the total cohort of these Trusts to 19 across the UK. These Trusts are varied in structure and longevity, but

all are committed to working as multi-building, heritage-focused developers who seek to conserve not only historic buildings but also community access to, and interest in, them. The grants offer revenue and project funding, capacity- and resilience-building support, and peer-learning opportunities. The AHF received dozens more strong applications that it was able to fund and hopes to make the case for future investment.

The AHF's Heritage Impact Fund and Endowment made ten loan offers totalling more than £1 million, and established partnerships with two key social investors to offer blended finance products for growth and energy resilience for the first time. The £6 million Thrive Together Fund led by Social Investment Business awarded its first blended finance to Leigh Building Preservation Trust for Leigh Spinners Mill, and the partnership on the £5 million pilot Energy Resilience Fund led by Key Fund awarded energy audit grants to nine organisations for viability works related to energy saving adaptations.

The Heritage Alliance's New Special Interest Network for International Interests



In July 2023, The Heritage Alliance launched a new special interest network, thanks to the sponsorship of Heriot-Watt University, for organisations with international interests. It followed a successful model they use for organisations with an archaeology focus.

The group garnered a lot of attention from The Heritage Alliance's members (with 63 participants signing up) keen to connect with others in the sector who are engaged internationally. Discussions enabled the mapping of current concerns and opportunities around international working and subsequently the creation of a content programme with speakers for the other quarterly sessions this year, covering topics ranging from funding to cultural diplomacy.

In January, The Heritage Alliance also published the evaluation of their [International Travel Grant Scheme](#), a collaboration between The Heritage Alliance and the British Council, which took place in 2019. The report, through case studies, reflections and recommendations highlighted the benefits of unlocking international connections to enhance the resilience of UK and partner organisations, providing new creative opportunities, and helping to grow audiences.



Insights from the Rebuilding Heritage Programme



The [findings](#) from the Heritage Fund-funded [Rebuilding Heritage Programme](#) were published in May 2023, strengthening the insight available from the programme with very practical steps and pathways for the sector to navigate the cost-

of-living crisis. Divided into three sections, the Rebuilding Heritage programme concluded with a round-up of resources on Communications, Fundraising, and Business Planning during the cost-of-living crisis.

Spotlight on UK Heritage Pulse Surveys



UK Heritage Pulse is a collaborative data and insight project for the UK's heritage sector informing policy, recovery and reinvention in a highly challenging time for the sector. Historic England and DCMS have partnered with the National Lottery Heritage Fund on this initiative since 2021. Currently there are 1,462 panel members from 923 organisations. The panel covers a wide range of topics, which in the last year have included [Skills](#), [Governance](#), [Artificial Intelligence](#), [Partnerships](#) and [Budget Pressures](#). In 2023, surveys moved to monthly, with approximately five open questions per survey to be more time-efficient for respondents, providing the option for more detail and depth.

Results from the Partnerships and Collaboration survey show:

- A desire for greater collaboration and partnership working both within and outside of the sector.
- Benefits from increased partnerships, particularly for smaller organisations.
- Limited capacity as the main reason organisations do not work in partnership, though many recognise long-term opportunities.
- Challenges with recruiting volunteers alongside a perception that the sector is over-reliant on a voluntary workforce.
- One in four think the sector should make more use of volunteers.

Results from the Budget Pressures survey found:

- Four in five (78 per cent) heritage organisations say they are currently facing budget pressures, particularly due to energy and utility costs and increases in supplier prices.
- The majority (92 per cent) expect budget pressures to worsen in the next 12 months.
- The impact of budget pressures is yet to be fully felt, with organisations making more cuts to planned programmes, services, access and facilities.
- The majority (80 per cent) of organisations have not been forced to reduce their paid staffing, though one in five have.

UK Heritage Pulse has established itself as a mechanism for garnering insights from the heritage sector and is growing in reputation. In 2023, it was referenced in a parliamentary response, and informed the Heritage Fund's policy and strategy development.

Taking the Temperature on the Health of UK Archaeological Groups & Societies



Led by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA), the Taking the Temperature rapid survey of archaeological groups and societies took place between October 2023 and January 2024. The final report summarises the research carried out with 257 groups and societies representing the grassroots archaeology sector, 133 of which are organisational members of the CBA, 121 of which are non-members, and three of which are no longer operating. The research took the form of online surveys, one-to-one discussions, and group discussions through a series of webinars.

The aims of the research were to:

- Understand the current state of community and grassroots archaeology;
- Facilitate further research into the state of grassroots archaeology;
- Draw from the findings to understand the implications for the CBA and the wider grassroots archaeological sector.

Findings were:

- Membership numbers, largely, are either staying the same or going down.
- Demographically, the groups' membership is above the age of 60 and largely White.
- Collectively, the groups' activities are many and varied, contributing significantly to the wider archaeological sector. However, the level of activities has gone down in recent years, with the ceasing of more costly activities, such as digs and some types of fieldwork.
- There is a heartening number of groups undertaking activity in partnership of other heritage sector bodies, such as museums, local HERs, and archives.
- Strongly held aspirations to work with youth, health and arts sectors are encouraging, However, these aspirations are not yet being realised, with a lack of capacity being the most cited reason for this.
- The groups' challenges may be summarised as: an aging membership; an aging volunteer cohort; insufficient volunteers to sustain a healthy level of activity; a lack of expertise and access to equipment; a lack of training in several relevant areas; and in many cases, a lack of funding. Feeling siloed from commercial and academic archaeology sub-sectors is another finding from the one-to-one discussions.
- The groups' challenges may be extrapolated as being: a narrow, representational, demographic leading to entrenched attitudes and practices; a lack of understanding of how cross-sector working can lead to a potentially younger membership and routes to a wider reach generally; a need for training in specific areas; and a need to shift the perception of archaeology away from activity-led practice (digs and fieldwork) to more accessible, less expensive ways to engage with the heritage.
- There is clearly a lack of understanding the relationship between developing audiences and attracting new members, given the low priority indication most groups allocated to 'audience development'.
- Support required is commensurate with the challenges faced, and clearly falls into four main areas: reaching a younger audience to attract a younger membership and volunteers; more members; more volunteers; and funding/ fundraising.
- Factors that drove groups to close include: not enough volunteers; a lack of confidence and expertise, and in one case, a shift in strategic direction by the group's 'host body', which no longer saw a match to the group's own activities.

Report Recommendations

A set of strategic themes has emerged that need addressing to help support the vitality and growth of grassroots archaeology, prevent further loss in numbers, and better understand how the CBA can act as the sector support lead for grassroots archaeology.

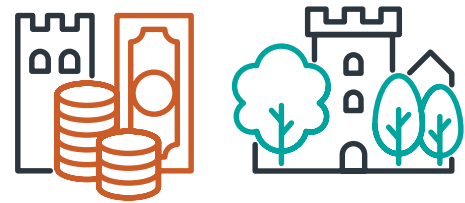
The themes are below, in no particularly order, with notable theme-intersections:

- Audience research and development;
- Engaging younger people;
- Creating a live network of groups and societies;
- Supporting the sector through training;

- Promoting inclusivity and diversity;
- Working towards a carbon net zero future;
- Fostering cross-sector working;
- Shifting the perception of archaeology;
- The role of the CBA in transforming the sector, including advocacy and funding.

The report will be made available via the CBA website and will help inform ongoing work to reimagine our networking role via the Heritage Fund project Reconnecting Archaeology, which commenced in April 2024.

Historic Houses Annual Survey Results



Historic Houses regularly surveys its member properties. Some of the findings from their members for 2023 were:

- **65 per cent** of respondents said their turnover/revenue had returned to or surpassed pre-pandemic levels.
- **48 per cent** of respondents had noticed a change in visitor behaviour since the cost-of-living crisis.
- **87 per cent** of respondents thought reducing their carbon footprint was 'very' or 'quite' important, but only **10 per cent** of respondents had a Net Zero plan.
- Respondents identified the two main barriers to reducing their carbon footprint as upfront costs (67 per cent) and planning consents (48 per cent).
- **61 per cent** of respondents reported that they do **not** have plans in place to meet the proposed government requirements for Minimum Energy Efficient Standards.
- **41 per cent** of respondents did not have reliable access to superfast broadband.
- **36 per cent** of respondents did not have a reliable mobile signal at their property.

Measuring the Impact of Community Heritage



As a membership body for charities and social enterprises rescuing, restoring and re-using historic sites, Heritage Trust Network has always had some great stories to tell about its members and the impact they have on their communities, local economies and conservation. However, it has always lacked data to quantify that impact. A plan to address this deficiency was included in the Essential Networks project, supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

On advice from members, the [Impact Survey](#) was issued in the new year. Over 550 surveys were sent out to the Network's non-profit organisation members. It was anticipated that getting responses would be difficult given how busy community heritage organisations are, and how many are volunteer run, but six weeks and several reminder emails later, 20 per cent of members had responded. The challenge was then to extrapolate national results from that sample while removing any bias due to larger trusts being more likely to respond.

Results from this first survey paint a compelling picture of Network members' impact.

They indicate that Network members completed **191 heritage restoration projects during 2023.**

Spending £25 million and restoring 32,000 square meters of space and 65 hectares of land.

This removed 35 properties from the at-risk register.

During the year members **also acquired 58 more sites for future restoration.**

There are 552 homes on sites managed by Network members.

Between them, Network members employ over 3,500 people with a further 3,900 employed on the sites they manage, and engage 17,850 volunteers.

The total turnover of Network members was £123 million: £54 million of their income was from trading activities; £6 million from donations; and £38 million from grant funding.

Other aspects of impact were also covered by the survey. The Network plans to issue a more comprehensive infographic document in 2024.

The Impact Survey will be repeated next year and in subsequent years, building up a picture of the sector's growth and change over time.

A Park Friends Group Survey



In June 2023, with the help of the National Federation of Parks and Green Spaces (NFPGS), the Gardens Trust sent out [its 2023 Survey of Friends of Parks and Green Spaces](#) to Green Space Forums asking them to share it with the open green space Friends groups in their areas.

116 volunteers responded, representing 111 sites from 19 counties or metropolitan boroughs, covered by more than 20 Green Spaces Forums. Most respondents (79 per cent) were from Friends groups supporting publicly accessible, designed parks or gardens; the remaining 21 per cent represented cemeteries, publicly accessible woodlands, community gardens/allotments/orchards, nature reserves, sports-/play-grounds and the grounds of country houses.

Findings included:

- **A quarter of respondents** said they formed a Friends group themselves in response to a perceived threat to the site; another quarter was recruited by existing Friends or local word of mouth.



Image: Volunteers from the Friends of Lordship Rec recently clearing vegetation in the Moselle River channel.
©Friends of Lordship Rec

- Friends' top reasons for volunteering include to help look after a green space, to enjoy being outside in nature, and to contribute to the community.
- The volunteers undertake a great range of crucial tasks, from practical work such as gardening and litter picking, to working with other groups, organising events, making management decisions, fundraising and campaigning.
- Alongside the positive experiences of volunteering, many of the respondents reported problems. The three main issues are: not enough new volunteers coming forward to help; the lack of a good relationship with their local parks department or local councils; and a lack of funding even to cover basic costs like water supply and public liability insurance. Many wrote that they did not feel valued by their local authority.
- **Although only five per cent** ranked spending time in an historic landscape as one of their favourite things about volunteering, 65 per cent of respondents said they felt very aware of the history of their landscape, and 22 per cent thought that this was one of the most significant things about it.
- **Nearly 60 per cent** would like more knowledge of their landscape's heritage to help them protect and manage it more effectively.
- Although Friends' existing knowledge of the Gardens Trust and County Gardens Trusts was relatively low, around 70 per cent of respondents were interested in connecting with the organisation.



Skills, Capacity & Resilience

Heritage Sector Resilience Plan



The [Heritage Sector Resilience Plan](#) was published by the Historic Environment Forum in June 2022 with support from Historic England. The Plan proposes a way for the heritage sector to work together to become more resilient, ensuring it remains capable of playing a full part in helping the country to deal with the major challenges of our times.

The Plan is structured around five themes which taken together will significantly strengthen the resilience of the heritage sector in England.

Under each theme a series of priorities for action are identified, both suggestions for Government action, and priority activities for members of the heritage sector. The five themes are:

- Skills
- Strong governance, business models and capacity
- Climate change
- Diversity and inclusion
- Embedding heritage in wider public policy

Over the course of the last year, many of the priority actions defined for the heritage sector have been successfully completed (many of them are described elsewhere in this document). Work is now underway to produce a new updated version of the Plan, which will be published in late 2024.

An Update from the Historic Environment Skills Forum



The Historic Environment Skills Forum continues to grow, with around 150 individual members in its dedicated online community.

In summer 2023 the Skills Forum published a Strategic Statement of Intent, outlining a set of aims that members of the Forum agree to work on collaboratively to achieve. It also includes a route-map to developing a cross-sector skills and careers action plan, with activities divided into four workstreams:

1. Enabling knowledge sharing around skills across the sector;
2. Developing the evidence base;
3. Showcasing initiatives that illustrate success and transferability;
4. Preparing the Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England.

The Skills Forum has been showcasing existing skills development initiatives, sharing information about government schemes such as Skills Bootcamps, and launching their own webinar series on skills issues. Topics have included research into apprenticeship barriers for employers and a showcase of York Minster's Centre for Excellence in Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management.

Historic England has led the creation of an online Resources Hub for the Heritage Sector Resilience Plan, focusing first on Skills. This Hub, launching in Spring/Summer 2024, will be a repository for materials around skills development such as case studies, guides, research, and templates that can be shared publicly across the sector.

To develop the skills evidence base, Historic England and the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) are working with Harlow Consulting

to produce a 2024 Skills Needs Analysis for the repair, maintenance, and retrofit of traditional buildings. The research is exploring the skills supply and demand for on-site construction with a view to enabling the sector to work collaboratively on prioritised action.

Historic England has also commissioned Preservation Matters and The Heritage Alliance to undertake an analysis of recruitment in 2023 to provide a picture of the job market in the historic environment sector. This report is due in early summer 2024.

The Skills Forum held its annual workshop in February 2023 to further define skills challenges and prioritise collaborative activity. The outputs of this workshop alongside the research noted will directly inform the Skills and Careers Action Plan for England, which is now set to be published in summer 2024.





Historic England's Heritage Building Skills Programme



The [Heritage Building Skills Programme](#), launched in June 2021, is a major in-work training and apprenticeship programme that will provide more than 40 heritage construction placements to individuals based in the North of England over five years.

The Programme is managed and delivered by Historic England. Its core objectives are to reduce shortages in heritage construction skills, improve the condition of Heritage at Risk sites, and create viable career opportunities for young people from less advantaged backgrounds. More recruitment took place in 2022-23, with 35 apprentices and trainees now having benefitted from the programme and 29 formal qualifications having been achieved to date.

Following the highly successful 2022 event at Wentworth Woodhouse, in 2023 Historic England ran a two-week summer school at Hopwood Hall where the trainees participated in a number of courses and hands-on activities including wood

carving, lead frame glass panelling, and plastering, alongside volunteers from the Hall and National Trust apprentices. In preparation for the 2024 summer school, a grant has been given to the venue, the St. John the Evangelist Church in Lancaster, for this year's event.

The next cohort of participants will include trainees specialising in thatching and stained glass, as well as college construction students who will gain exposure to heritage construction through participation in a nine-week training placement with host firms working at important sites including Chester Cathedral, Carlton Towers and Lancaster Castle.

Skills Update from the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists



CIfA has continued work on rolling out archaeological apprenticeships, launching CIfA Qualifications, bringing its national vocational qualification (NVQ) and apprenticeship end-point assessment operations under one banner, with funding support from Historic England. Apprenticeship assessment has further strengthened with preparations to start assessing the first cohort of Level 7 Archaeological Specialists in 2024. The Level 7 Historic Environment Advisor standard will be added later this year as well.

CIfA will also shortly be launching The Arc, an online hub for registers of specialist professionals from CIfA, the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technologists, the Institute of Conservation, and Chartered Institute of Building. The Arc's launch is

the culmination of work to stimulate the demand for accredited historic environment sector specialist skills within client sectors.

Work to make CIfA and the archaeological discipline more diverse and inclusive – an integral part of CIfA's Strategic Plan – is also underway, with funding from Historic England. CIfA published its [Qualitative inequalities research for the archaeology report](#), sharing research which explored people's experiences of archaeological careers, including recommendations for the archaeological discipline to address the barriers which are preventing more positive outcomes. CIfA will now review where adjustments can be made to our professional accreditation processes.

Highlights from the Conservation Profession



The past year has been a busy one for the Institute of Conservation (Icon) focusing on understanding big challenges impacting the conservation profession in the UK.

Launched in April 2023, the [Icon Conservation Skills Strategy](#) was developed in consultation with stakeholders across the conservation professionals to guide work and enable the profession to focus time and resources on the most pressing workforce challenges impacting the sector. Through this work, Icon has outlined six key areas for action to enable them to support the change that is needed to ensure that there is a resilient, vibrant and thriving training offer, supporting a dynamic conservation workforce.

Industrial heritage collections represent a significant part of shared cultural heritage in the UK. However, it is widely recognised that the skills required to conserve and restore these collections are at risk. Icon was successful in securing the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Heritage Innovation Fund to investigate the workforce challenges that exist in this part of the sector, and from that identify what actions should be undertaken to resolve these important issues. [The Industrial Heritage Conservation Skills – a plan for action](#) is accessible online.

Icon will continue to deliver on the priorities outlined in their Conservation Skills Strategy, particularly work around stimulating demand for highly skilled conservation-restoration professionals, raising the profile of professional

conservators and actively promoting advocating and for the positive impact of accreditation to employers, funders, clients and commissioners of conservation-restoration services.

The Future Talent Programme



Historic England's Future Talent Programme is making an important difference to the diversity of Historic England and the sector workforce.

The programme is built around a tiered model for employability and skills development and consists of: both virtual and in-person work experience; a range of apprenticeship opportunities; funded Emerging Talent Placements which take place over eight to 12 weeks each summer; and paid six-month Step Up placements. The latter two initiatives particularly focus on providing opportunities for individuals from under-represented demographics in the sector; particularly people with Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic heritage; people with disabilities; and people who are disadvantaged by their social and/or economic background or circumstances.

The largest percentage of participants from their Emerging Talent placements in 2023 were in the 20 to 21 age group (41 per cent) and were of Black-African ethnicity (29 per cent). All placement participants (100 per cent) are now interested in a career in heritage and all staff who hosted (100 per cent) feel encouraged to host other early careers placements in their team in the future.

Historic England were pleased to receive funding from the Company of Mercers to start hosting Emerging Talent placements with sector partners in summer 2024. Step Up placements are the newest element of the programme, providing a much-needed stepping stone into a paid trainee role for young people. These placements, also funded by the Company of Mercers, provide new entry points into a career in heritage and are developing the essential skills that research has shown as being in short supply by over 40 per cent of heritage employers.

For an event at Mercers Hall in February 2023, a group of placement participants joined a panel discussion to share their experiences, what the placements had meant to them, and where they think the sector needs to focus its efforts to help build a more inclusive, with invited guests from across the sector.

Historic England is actively seeking future funding and partners to allow them to expand their Future Talent Programme across the sector in 2024 and beyond.

Digital Skills for Heritage



The National Lottery Heritage Fund (the Heritage Fund) £4.2 million [Digital Skills for Heritage](#) initiative ran from 2020 to 2024, raising digital skills and confidence across the UK's diverse heritage sector. The initiative included £1 million DCMS Cultural Recovery funding.

- The initiative has supported 53,000 unique individuals working, volunteering, or leading the heritage sector, from 6,400 unique organisations.
- Participants accessed over 242,000 hours of live, highly rated training and development opportunities led by 64 heritage sector support organisations and experts.
- Over 880 high-quality, highly rated, openly licenced, accessible English and Welsh online learning resources, guides and toolkits were produced, many of which are available on the initiative's online learning site, the [Digital Heritage Hub](#).

Inspiring the Next Generation of Heritage Craft Specialists



In 2023, English Heritage began work on the development of a new heritage skills programme – to support the sustainability of specialist heritage craft and building skills.

The programme is being aligned to the requirements of the charity's ongoing conservation work across the historic sites they care for, while ensuring they collaborate with partners to support the skills needed for the future across the heritage sector.

English Heritage cares for over 400 historic places on behalf of the nation, spanning the length and breadth of the country and over six millennia. As guardians of the National Heritage Collection, they recognise they are in a unique position to support the sustainability of dwindling traditional craft skills, by giving trainees the opportunity to help conserve the remarkable historic properties they look after and to develop their knowledge and skills in doing so.



Working together with sector colleagues, English Heritage wants to play their part in ensuring heritage skills not only 'survive', but 'thrive'. A central building block for their approach is to help 'inspire' the next generation of heritage professionals. The Conservation in Action van and project continued to tour the country last year, giving families and communities the chance to try their hand at specialist heritage skills and to understand what it takes to look after the historic sites in our care. At Pendennis Castle specialist contractors joined English Heritage staff in giving visitors the opportunity to try their hand at lime plastering, making handmade clay tiles and slate cutting at an event in September. There were also

demonstrations of some skills essential to their conservation work, including how abseiling and new technology like 3D scanning helps them monitor the condition of historic sites.

In 2023, English Heritage continued to play an active part in discussions across heritage organisations about how we can collectively address the skills gaps we are facing and facilitate new career paths into the sector. They believe developing regional heritage skills networks, new shared apprenticeship models and closer working with further education colleges will be key to this and look forward to contributing more to this important work as their skills programme develops.

The National Trust Supporting Heritage Skills



With approximately 29,000 buildings, including 500 significant country houses, castles and mansions, in its care, the National Trust has long promoted heritage building skills; having hosted multiple apprentices and helped train many craft and trade professionals.

In 2022, in recognition of the growing issues around heritage building skills, the Trust set up ten Specialist Crafts Centres in England to provide a dedicated craft skills resource for their more significant places. The vision of these Centres is to 'create recognised centres of excellence for the provision of crafts skills across the National Trust, preserving and championing traditional skills and developing new and existing talent to provide the highest level of care for our buildings and engagement with our supporters.'

The Purpose of the Specialist Crafts teams is to:

- deliver high standards of building conservation by promoting a skilled workforce exercising the highest levels of traditional building crafts.



- commit to heritage building skills training including the development of apprentices, and providing training opportunities to others, especially young people.
- create social value through engagement and sharing their skills and passion to promote the benefits of the heritage environment, as well as to encourage others to develop careers in the heritage sector, especially young people.

The Specialist Crafts teams provide stonemasonry and joinery/carpentry specialisms and work regionally, forming a national community of skilled building conservation professionals, collaborating and sharing on good practice.

The Specialist Crafts Centres are supporting a heritage skills apprenticeship programme, with each apprentice benefitting from a post-apprentice year with the Trust to further develop their skills learning. They are also delivering exacting standards of building conservation (including repairs to mansions, castles, manor houses, dovecotes, water and donkey wheels and bridges)

and delivering engagement activities (including open days, CPD training, hosting volunteers and offering placement and taster-day opportunities for young people and early learners).

Expected public benefit outcomes include:

- Promoting cultural heritage and a commitment to conservation.
- Encouraging participation in the heritage environment, to widen the benefits in wellbeing it brings.
- Developing and supporting a new pipeline of heritage skills talent.
- Raising the profile of building crafts to diverse audiences, for increased engagement with heritage skills and traditional building techniques.
- Encouraging more young people to consider heritage skills, and the sector more widely, as a career.

Learn more about the Specialist Crafts teams' activities via the [webpage](#).

Specialist Craft Centre locations

1. **Fountains Abbey**, North Region
Masonry

2. **Dunham Massey**, North Region
Joinery/Carpentry

3. **Clumber Park**, Midlands and East of England Region
Joinery/Carpentry

4. **Hardwick Hall**, Midlands and East of England Region
Masonry

5. **Attingham**, Midlands and East of England Region
Joinery/Carpentry

6. **Park Farm, Wycombe**, London & South East Region
Joinery/Carpentry and Masonry

7. **Lacock**, South West Region
Joinery/Carpentry

8. **Montacute**, South West Region
Joinery/Carpentry and Masonry

9. **Cotehele**, South West Region
Joinery

10. **Lanhydrock**, South West Region
Joinery/Carpentry and Masonry



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Accessing Business-Support Information



In October 2023, The Heritage Alliance shared the [findings](#) of its Heritage Fund Innovation: Explore Grant where they delved into the heritage sector's access to business-support information, looking specifically at signposting behaviour by sector support organisations, and how The Heritage Alliance can help to make sharing and finding trusted information easier. The project

tested whether a regional approach was needed as a solution, and mapped barriers to access. It articulated six key design principles important to our sector. These findings were shared with sector-support bodies and the wider sector to enable them – individually and as a community – to support the wider sector's sustainability through easier wayfinding of available support.

Insights on the Cost-of-Living Crisis for Better Decision-making



Since autumn 2022, The Heritage Alliance has been conducting ongoing research into the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on the heritage sector. The Cost-of-Living Data Desk, funded by Historic England, provided valuable insights on how the crisis was affecting the sector. In January 2023, equipped with this data, The Heritage Alliance and Historic England successfully led a campaign for heritage sub-sectors to be classified as higher energy industries, entitling them to enhanced financial support.

After successfully campaigning for heritage sites to be included in the list of high intensity industries, the Energy Bills Discount Scheme (EBDS) criteria continued to exclude many heritage organisations by relying on a registration with a specific Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code which many sites – such as cathedrals, museums and stately homes – did not have. Following consultation with their members, The Heritage Alliance supplied feedback via DCMS teams to recommend changes to the application process. The scheme was amended so that organisations with the incorrect SIC code could supply additional evidence to prove eligibility. The Data-Desk concluded in mid-2023, and ultimately produced 19 reports with 400 entries.

In addition to the Historic England-funded Data Desk, The Heritage Alliance independently conducted two sector surveys in March and December 2023, which received a combined total of 202 responses (115 from Heritage Alliance members and 87 from non-members). The evidence collected via these surveys mapped the evolution of a range of challenges for the sector. The autumn results revealed that the biggest issue was overwhelmingly reported as funding, with a 'cost of giving' crisis being cited across the charity sector. Further evidence-gathering took the form of roundtable discussions and focus groups, one-to-one interviews, written testimonials, and monitoring analysis published by sector partners.

The outputs of this work have been shared with funders, and decision makers, equipping them with valuable case studies and insights into how the sector is feeling about the challenges ahead. A final report, [On the Brink: Heritage in the Cost-of-Living Crisis](#), including a set of recommendations was published in May 2024.

Conservation Knowledge and Skills Needed for Works at Historic Royal Palaces



The iconic Chimneys of Hampton Court Palace are largely Victorian reconstructions in a Tudor style. There are 241 at the Palace and they require cyclical monitoring, maintenance and repair. Following an inspection, urgent works were identified for two chimneys on the north side of the Tudor Kitchens.

In January 2024, work commenced on site to dismantle Chimney 1 (three shafts) and Chimney 2 (four shafts) located above the Tudor Kitchens. Specialist heritage contractor, Simpson Brickwork Conservation (SBC) led by Emma Simpson, has been carefully recording and dismantling the chimneys. Each brick course is drawn on tracing paper, dimensions are taken from each required angle to create a record of what was there before, used to rebuild the chimneys. During the dismantle it was discovered that some of the shafts did not have flue liners, but had bricks stood on end in a soldier course. They were a different type of brick and had a different mortar. It is likely this contributed to the decay of the chimney fabric. These works completed in March 2024.

Building recording has been undertaken alongside the work and regular coordination meetings held with our in-house Buildings Curator and Archaeologist, and the Historic England Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments. A review of the brick condition during dismantling has required a greater percentage of replacement during re-build than originally anticipated. As a result, the chimneys will be rebuilt with entirely new stock.



SBC will focus on cutting and rubbing replacement bricks over the spring and summer. Hand-made brick 'rubbers' are sourced from Bulmer Brick & Tile Co. who have been supplying bricks for Hampton Court Palace's chimney conservation projects for many years. Brick cutting and rubbing takes several weeks for each chimney shaft – constructed of approximately 240 bricks, not including the bases and crowns. Wood cutting templates are created for each unique chimney, and each brick is hand-cut and shaped using a wire saw and files. The chimney re-build works will start in Spring 2025 and form part of the Tudor Kitchens Conservation Project.



Image 1: The poor condition of the chimney bricks and mortar was discovered during maintenance work nearby, giving the opportunity to see the chimneys more closely. Image 2: Camilla Finlay, HRP Trustee and Architect, visits site with Emma Simpson to see project progress. Image 3: Project Team discuss the chimney condition prior to works commencing.
© Historic Royal Palaces

Supporting Historic Houses Member Places' Work



Historic Houses was delighted to pilot a new Small Projects Grant Scheme for Historic Houses member places to support members developing new projects and initiatives that would not otherwise be able to go ahead. Four Historic Houses places received funding in the first round of the scheme: Camden Place, Chawton House, Harvington Hall, and Penpont.

Historic Houses continues to run regional education and engagement meetings across the UK to facilitate discussions and peer-to-peer support amongst those involved in this side of member places' work – including days at Wentworth Woodhouse, Abbotsford, Tiverton Castle and Berkeley Castle. A webinar series in late spring 2023 also touched on a variety of education and

engagement work, including contested histories, opening up archives, schools work and accessibility.

Historic Houses also recruited new advisers to its Learning Advisory Panel in December 2023, to help support individual historic houses with tailored advice towards their learning, engagement, and community programmes. The full panel can be seen [here](#).



UNESCO UK's Local to Global Helps to Build a Resilient Network of UNESCO Sites in the UK



Over the last two years the [UK National Commission for UNESCO \(UNESCO UK\)](#), has been delivering its project 'Local to Global'.

Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (thanks to National Lottery players), the Local to Global project aims to build a resilient network of UNESCO sites in the UK. Working with consultants and UNESCO sites in three key areas - audience development / stakeholder mapping, fundraising / financial sustainability, and digital transformation - the Local to Global project has also brought together site coordinators from different designation types to form regional clusters. The whole UK UNESCO designated site network has

been further supported by a series of monthly 'Talk Shops' addressing key themes and subjects suggested by the sites themselves. Output from the project will include toolkits and practical resources that will help promote skills and capacity building across all UNESCO sites in the UK.

For more updates and information on this project and the wider work of UNESCO UK, visit www.unesco.org.uk, or sign up to the Network Link Newsletter.



Climate Change & the Environment

Climate Change Risk Assessments for Heritage



The Heritage Adaptation Working Group of Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland, Cadw, Northern Ireland's Department for Communities, English Heritage Trust, National Trust, and National Trust for Scotland continue to develop understanding of the risks posed to heritage assets from climate change by examining climate hazards and assets' vulnerability to such hazards.

A six month collaborative project between Historic England, University College London and the above group has developed a [climate hazard vocabulary for heritage](#). The vocabulary is based on recent international climate science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change ([IPCC AR6](#)). Climate hazards are potential natural or physical events that may cause damage or loss. The project took an international approach and defined over 50 hazards for heritage which are connected to the climatic processes that drive them.

The creation of these standardised terms allows heritage professionals to consistently record climate change risks. This can inform assessments of climate change impacts on both single heritage sites and the wider historic environment. The project has also created a mechanism for local HERs to use the vocabulary through the ARCHES for HERs software. This climate change module is in development and will allow users to link both individual sites

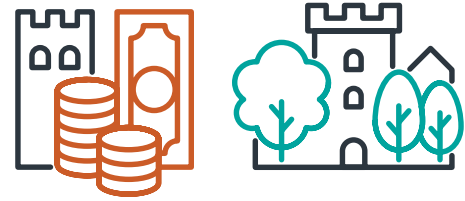
and entire areas to relevant climate hazards. Historic England has also published a connected [research report](#) collating climate data and tools for hazards within the vocabulary.

Historic England is now developing a package of information to help sector organisations use available data to understand the climate change risk to their assets. These projects will also inform our response to the next national Climate Change Risk Assessment. This work is supported by two recent projects. One is the review of recent and current research into climate change and heritage, which will allow Historic England and the sector to make use of research into adaptation options and climate change risk, and to identify research gaps. Historic England will publish the final report on its website. The second is the publication by Historic England of a [literature review](#) of global approaches to climate change risk assessment for heritage assets.



Image: The bridge over the River Thames at Kemble, showing the dry riverbed in drought conditions.
©Historic England Archive (DP348124)

The Historic Environment Forum's 'Green Skills in Heritage' Task Group



In recent years, the cultural sector has increasingly voiced the need to engage with environmental sustainability policies and practices.

Following the success of the report [Heritage Responds](#) in 2021, the HEF created the HEF Sustainability and Climate Change (S&CC) Task Group, which finished their work in June 2023. The Task Group brought together HEF and non-HEF heritage organisations to share learning on the path to carbon net zero, and created an expert-led online [webinar series and key net zero resources for heritage organisations](#).

To capitalise on this investment, the Forum agreed to continue to collaborate effectively on environmental sustainability and created the 'Green Skills in Heritage' Task Group in November 2023. The aims of the Task Group are to:

- Understand the breadth of green skills needed in the heritage sector to progress the work towards environmental sustainability, and ensure that the sector is able to harness the potential of funding streams related to environmental sustainability for the benefit of the historic environment;

- Coordinate with other working groups to gather evidence on the green skills needed in the heritage sector and assess gaps;
- Explore how to stimulate demand of these specific skills.

Task Group members have started [mapping](#) the green skills/jobs needed to support work around sustainability in the historic environment sector. The data resulting from this mapping will be crossed with research that the group commissioned to Kerbside Collective on the level of investment needed in the sector to support work around environmental sustainability.

The findings will inform future conversations with trade bodies, recommendations for further work in the sector (e.g. relating to training provision), and advocacy.

Environmental Management for Collections and Climate



The Institute of Conservation (Icon)'s [Guidance note on environmental management for collections and climate](#) was prepared by a group of committed Icon accredited conservators and conservation scientists in response for the need for cultural heritage

institutions to operate in a more sustainable manner in response to the climate crisis, rising energy costs and local and national carbon reduction policies.

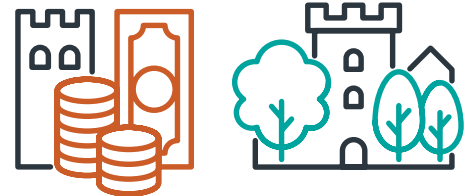
CIfA's Climate Change Working Group



CIfA's Climate Change Working Group is raising awareness of the ways archaeologists can reduce their impact on the environment and respond to the climate crisis. The Group welcomed the publication of new fieldwork Standards and the introduction of a specific reference to environmental protection policy (including carbon reduction plans) in accompanying good practice guidance for project

designs. With funding from Historic England, CIfA is also running heritage carbon literacy training to support small to medium organisations in gaining awareness of the causes and impacts of climate change and carbon emissions. CIfA has also updated its carbon reduction guide table with further suggestions for eco-friendly fieldwork. The [table and other information](#) are on CIfA's webpage.

Sector to Net Zero Project



The year 2023 to 2024 saw the beginning of phase two of Historic England's Sector to Net Zero project which is supporting heritage organisations on the preparatory phase of the net zero journey. This support is focused on micro, small and medium sized organisations, including those which are volunteer led. The project has set out a series of steps to support organisations through raising awareness of climate change impact on heritage and increasing carbon 'literacy' and carbon accounting (measuring carbon footprints and setting carbon reduction targets). The aim is to help organisations establish carbon reduction plans and increase their confidence to take next steps towards reducing their carbon emissions.

The focus this year has been on developing and rolling out the Heritage Carbon Literacy (CL) course. Building on the course, created by the museum sector's Roots and Branches project, the Heritage CL course has been created in partnership with Heritage Buildings and Places. Carbon Literacy training is the foundation level and first step on the journey to net zero, supporting organisation process and behaviour change.

The course was accredited by the Carbon Literacy Trust in November 2023 and training began in December, earning Historic England recognition as a Bronze Carbon Literate Organisation. This large-scale training programme is being rolled out to heritage organisations through several partner support bodies, including ICON, CIfA, Historic Houses, The Heritage Alliance and the Heritage Trust Network. By the end of March 2024, representatives from over 100 organisations were trained. Training will continue throughout 2024/25, with 600 more individuals scheduled to complete the training. The course is also shareable and available to organisations to use to train their own staff.

A set of webpages accompany the carbon literacy course. These provide advice and guidance to organisations on different aspects of decarbonisation and environmental sustainability. These can be accessed on the Helping Your Organisation Towards Net Zero [webpages](#).

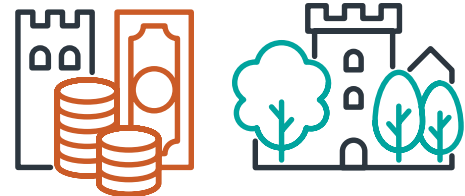
Historic England's Journey to Net Zero



Historic England remains committed to continuing action to reach Net Zero carbon emissions (tonnes CO₂e) by 2040, annually decreasing Scope 1 and 2 emissions by 5.75 per cent from their Scope 1 and 2 baseline emissions (assessed in financial year 2019 to 2020) and reducing their Scope 3 emissions by 46 per cent by 2030. Steps have been taken to improve data in this area in 2023 to 2024.

On their journey toward net zero, Historic England has also been working alongside the Government Property Agency to make their office estates more energy efficient, starting by upgrading lights and ventilation systems. Initiatives have also been implemented to make the organisation's technology, travel, and procurement more sustainable to fulfil Historic England's Greening Government Commitments.

The Climate Change & UNESCO Heritage Pilot Project



In autumn 2023, the [UK National Commission for UNESCO \(UNESCO UK\)](#) and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) were awarded £1.8 million from HM Treasury's [Shared Outcomes Fund](#) to deliver the groundbreaking pilot project, **Climate Change and UNESCO Heritage**.

Taking a cross-sectoral and community-led approach, the pilot is working with government partners and stakeholders at three UNESCO sites to co-design, develop and test models of improved joint-working, alongside the production of new tools and templates that will help organisations to analyse and share climate-related data more effectively, and interpret its impact on natural and cultural heritage. The pilot builds on [world-leading research](#) by the UK and Canadian National Commissions for UNESCO (2022), which demonstrated that UNESCO sites are not only ideal test beds for developing participatory approaches for addressing the threats posed by climate change, but are also well-placed to support genuine, on-the-ground collaborative action with communities and partners that will help to achieve sustainable development outcomes aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

Whilst the pilot will test approaches tailored to specific sites in the UK, it is envisioned that project results will be relevant, adaptable, and useful to natural and cultural heritage sites places more widely both in the UK and internationally.

Working closely with a Steering Group representing key government departments and public agencies, UNESCO UK has now assembled a project team and recruited expert consultants to help deliver the approach in collaboration with teams at three UK UNESCO locations.

The three participating UK UNESCO sites include a UNESCO World Heritage Site, a Biosphere Reserve, and a Global Geopark. News on the selected sites will be announced in early summer 2024.

Working Internationally to Adapt to Climate Change



As part of the International National Trusts Organisation's [Withstanding Change](#) project, National Trust sites are twinning with heritage organisations in the Middle East and East Africa.

The twinned sites are all impacted by climate change, and are learning together about how best to adapt their sites and safeguard them for future generations.

These discussions are helping to inform capital works at overseas sites, as well as the National Trust's own approach to climate change adaptation. Alongside this, all the project partners are delivering a range of community engagement activities to help raise local stakeholders' awareness of climate change impact to the places they love.

The five twinning partnerships are:

1. The Egyptian Heritage Rescue Foundation are working to restore and adapt Bayt al-Razzaz, a late 15th century private palace in the heart of historic Cairo. Bayt al-Razzaz and its twinned site, Blicking Estate, are increasingly affected by intense rainfall and flash floods.
2. The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda are working on the Semei Kakungulu Lwakirenzi heritage site, located near Mbale. Their partnership with Stourhead focuses on managing soil erosion and flash flooding, as well as restoring the natural landscape.
3. Partners at Heritage Watch Ethiopia are restoring a historic rose garden in Addis Ababa. They are partnering with Mottisfont, home to the treasured National Collection of pre-1900 roses, and nearby Hinton Ampner, to discuss climate-resilient planting.
4. The team at Petra National Trust (PNT) are working to restore Bayt al-Jaghbeer in As Salt with the aim of using the space for climate engagement activities. Working closely with the team at the Buscot and Coleshill estates, PNT are developing a new programme to engage young people with climate and heritage.
5. The teams at Penrhyn Castle and the Llŷn Peninsula in Wales are learning, together with Zanzibar Stone Town Heritage Society, how to delivery appropriate adaptations to coastal sites increasingly affected by sea-level rise and increased storm activity. New interpretation and engagement activities will be delivered at twinned National Trust sites during the summer and autumn of 2024.

The Withstanding Change project is managed by the International National Trusts Organisation and funded by the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund, in partnership with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Coastal Connections



English Heritage and the World Monuments Fund (WMF) launched the [Coastal Connections](#) project in 2023 and are continuing to develop a global network to share knowledge about managing the impact of climate change on coastal heritage sites.

The project was established after Hurst Castle was included on the World Monument Fund's Watch list of vulnerable heritage sites, following a 2021 storm that caused part of the castle to collapse. English Heritage has been working to stabilise the site, located on an exposed shingle spit that extends over a mile out to sea, but the development of long-term strategies to address climate challenges facing Hurst Castle and other coastal sites will require a broad range of experience and expertise.



The Coastal Connections project provides online resources and discussion forums so organisations across the globe can come together to share knowledge and experience to support the sustainable management of coastal heritage sites. In January 2024, the project began a series of online workshops where speakers – including managers of different coastal heritage sites around the world – share their experiences of implementing practical solutions to the challenge of climate change. Case studies have included the raising of the Keepers' Quarters at Okracoke Island Lighthouse in North Carolina, the introduction of vegetation terraces at Nelson's Harbour in Antigua, the dismantling and rebuilding of the watchtower at Bude in Cornwall, and the installation of the MOSE project in Venice. The talks are followed by roundtable discussions associated with the theme of each workshop, determined following consultation with site managers.

Factsheets and digital resources produced for site managers and other interested stakeholders explain different approaches to addressing the challenges posed by the impacts of climate change on coastal heritage. The resources and tools which form this virtual classroom are being developed to include shared principles to guide decisions about the management of coastal heritage, from decisions around sea defences to engaging communities where the protection of a heritage asset becomes unsustainable.

Insights from the project are already informing the development of new interpretation at Hurst Castle, to help visitors understand the challenges of its conservation amidst a changing climate.

Peatland 'Time Capsule' Reveals Prehistoric Woodland Habitat and Insects Which Still Exist Today



An area of buried prehistoric woodland, plant and insect remains has been discovered on land cared for by the National Trust on Exmoor in Somerset. The findings were unearthed during a year-long peatland restoration project at the charity's Holnicote Estate in partnership with the South West Peatland Partnership (SWPP) to improve the health of degrading peatlands across the South West.

The SWPP received funding from Natural England's Nature for Climate Peatland Grant Scheme (NCPGS) in 2021, with match-funding provided by South West Water, Duchy of Cornwall, National Trust, and Cornwall Council for work across Exmoor, Dartmoor and Cornwall.

The work included constructing leaky log dams to help slow the flow of water through the valley and to improve water quality. This higher, more stable water table within the peat will also help to reduce carbon emissions and to increase the resilience of the landscape to climate change, and preserve the archaeology.

Woodland and insect remains dating between the Neolithic and Bronze Ages were found preserved in the peatland 'time capsule', providing a snapshot of when and how the peat formed, as well as the kinds of species of plants

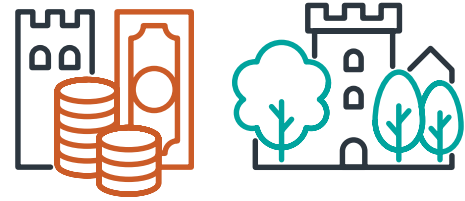
and insects which lived in the landscape, many of which still live in similar wet woodland areas today.

Discoveries included over 100 fragments of *Hydraena riparia* beetles, a semi-aquatic beetle that flourishes in damp conditions and still exists today, and prehistoric samples of dung beetles, rove beetles, moss mites and water scavenger beetles. Remains from a prehistoric woodland floor composed of fragments of trunks, small branches and twigs were found, dating to around 4,500 to 3,500 years ago during the late Neolithic and middle Bronze Age (2860-2570 cal BC to 1400-1220 cal BC). These fragments revealed the presence of tree species including alder and willow, with evidence of birch growing nearby indicated by seeds.

These discoveries provide a unique and tangible way of connecting with Exmoor's past, and they illustrate the changing nature of landscapes that reveal how this impressive landscape came to be. The information can be used to develop a 'baseline' for peatland restoration studies which can extend back centuries, if not millennia. This long-term view enables the Trust to look beyond many of the significant changes in peatland land-use practices which have occurred over the last few centuries.

The peatland restoration work will allow the peat to continue its role preserving valuable archaeology and paleoenvironmental remains to help build an understanding of the past environment and human interaction with it over thousands of years. Climate change is threatening to destroy untold treasures buried in the UK as the soils that protect them dry out, so peatland conservation is vital for preserving our past as well as our future.

Historic England Commissioned by Defra for Two Capital Projects



Historic England has been commissioned by Defra to manage two capital grant-funded projects.

The first commission is the Historic Buildings Restoration Grant (HBRG) scheme – standalone capital grant funding for buildings under the ‘Place’ theme – available through the Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) programme as part of Defra’s Agricultural Transition Plan. HBRG is a successor to the successful Countryside Stewardship traditional farm buildings restoration pilot that ended in 2023. FiPL is now available in all 44 protected landscapes, rather than just five National Parks as before. The application window opened in October 2023, and by its close in March 2024, 127 applications covering 161 buildings had been received. Following checks and feasibility studies, works must be completed by the end of March 2025.

The second commission is to develop a Heritage Service to support applicants in delivering Countryside Stewardship capital projects for historic and archaeological features, using Countryside Stewardship options HE1 (Historic and archaeological feature protection) and PA2 (Feasibility study). The Heritage Service staff are now in place and have begun their work regionally in conjunction with Historic England’s Partnerships staff.

Revitalising Nature Through the King’s Meadows Programme



To celebrate the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III in May 2023, English Heritage made a ‘coronation pledge’ to create and enhance one hundred meadows at the castles and abbeys, prehistoric stone circles and palaces in the charity’s care.

Over the next decade, English Heritage will be working with Plantlife to create a natural legacy at one hundred of its historic sites, establishing flower-rich grasslands right across England. From Stonehenge on Salisbury Plain to the Jewel Tower in the heart of Westminster, they will be reviving natural meadows which have been lost, and revitalising those that already exist.

Since the 1930s and the advent of post-war modern farming practices, the UK has lost 97 per cent of its meadows. Prior to this, much of England’s grassland – from meadows, road verges, and lawns – would have been home to a much more diverse flora than we have today.



Whilst the English Heritage estate is relatively unusual in not having been subject to changing agricultural policy, the grassland surrounding its historic monuments has become 'municipalised' over the past century; diminishing the botanical diversity enjoyed by earlier generations. There is an abundance of sites where – with the right management – meadows (both big and small) can be created and flourish. The creation and enhancement of wildflower-rich grasslands across England will not only benefit nature, but healthy grasslands are proven to tackle pollution and permanently lock away atmospheric carbon below ground.

A key component of the initiative is to involve and engage with local communities around each of our meadow sites. Working with wildlife groups and volunteers local to each site, English Heritage is sourcing seed from existing meadows in the area to ensure the reintroduction of viable, local species of wildflower to each site.

The King's Meadows programme combines two of His Majesty's passions – nature and heritage. English Heritage is creating more natural spaces at the heart of its historic properties, ensuring that wildflowers and wildlife can flourish there once again, and helping its visitors to step back into history and experience something with which the sites' historic occupants would have been familiar.

Field Names and Landscape Futures in the Shropshire Hills



A history of the landscape, ancient and modern, is written into the names of its settlements, fields, and features.

These place names – or toponyms – record interactions with the landscape that may not otherwise find their way into the historical record. They provide valuable information about land management and responses to environmental challenges over time. They also represent a helpful starting point for discussions about landscape custodianship.

A recent collaboration between the National Trust, the Institute for Name-Studies (INS) at the University of Nottingham, and Shropshire Hills National Landscape has explored this potential with farmers in the Shropshire Hills. Building on the work of the Stepping Stones project, this pilot project was inspired by maps drawn by George Foxall (1911 to 1989) in the late 20th century. Foxall redrew mid-19th century tithe maps to scale, adding in field names from the accompanying schedules. These beautiful maps led one farmer to propose a modern-day exercise to ‘record our own traditions and marks on the landscape before they are lost’.

Thirteen farms participated. INS researchers met the farmers and their families to explore their farms’ historical names and to map the field names currently used. Site visits were both multi-generational events (one even uniting four generations), and intangible heritage-based exercises. Parents, children and grandchildren shared name-stories, often for the first time. A hand-drawn map of the modern field names was produced for each farm and the compiled data informs a web app, allowing users to interrogate

map layers and view both historical and modern fields, their names and associated information.

The 19th century names provide a snapshot of the historic environment, indicating former woodland, moor, heath and wetland, as well as detailing past flora and fauna, coppicing and farming regimes. Viewed alongside current names, they track changes in land-use but can also trigger important conversations. The participants’ fine-grained landscape knowledge fed into discussions about changes in land-use over time, and – crucially – future farming directions. Across the project area, it was clear that field names could influence future land management practices and are currently informing hedgerow and pond restoration plans. A field name such as Snipe Bog can encapsulate information about the conditions favoured by particular species. On one farm, an understanding of field names led to plans to support biodiversity through the reinstatement of habitats, demonstrating how this kind of knowledge has the potential not only to inform but also to inspire regenerative action.

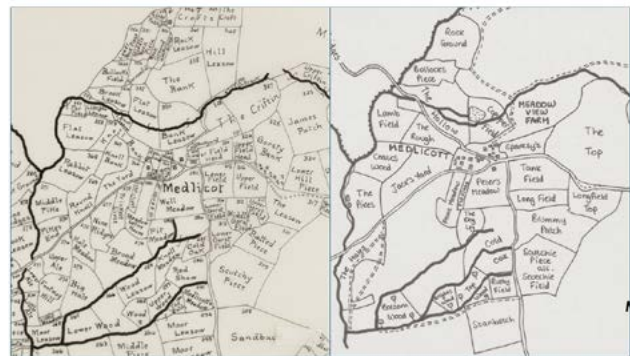


Image: Excerpts from maps by George Foxall (left, courtesy of Shropshire Archives) and Susan Kilby (right, Institute for Name-Studies) showing both change and continuity in field-naming over time. The names evidence many aspects of the historic and present-day landscape, including flora (gorse in Gorsty Bank, couch grass in Scutchy/Scutchie Piece), farming practices (e.g. Batted Piece ‘land pared and burned to improve grazing’, Nine Ridges, perhaps referring to ridge and furrow), and livestock (Bullocks Field/Piece, Lamb Field). ©Courtesy of Shropshire Archives and Institute for Name-Studies

Seabirds Flock Back to Lundy



Lundy Island, off the north coast of Devon, is just three miles long and home to 41 Scheduled Monuments and a host of rare flora and fauna.

Since 1969, it has been run by the Landmark Trust and owned by the National Trust, who together have safeguarded its many historic buildings and unique natural environment. The island has been closely associated with seabirds for millennia – Lundy means Puffin Island in Old Norse – but numbers had dwindled alarmingly, so that just 13 Puffins and 600 Manx Shearwaters were recorded in the year 2000.

In 2023, a coordinated and sustained campaign to improve habitats on the island devised and implemented by the Landmark Trust, the National Trust, Natural England and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) was shown to have borne remarkable results. Measures have included the removal of rats and rhododendron from the island, and biosecurity arrangements to prevent the re-entry of predators that feed on the seabird eggs.

The results have been dramatic. In summer 2023, Puffin numbers were shown to have risen from 13 to 1,335 and Manx Shearwaters

numbers more than quadrupled to 25,000. Over 40,000 such seabirds are now found on Lundy, the highest number recorded since the 1930s, demonstrating the impact that direct conservation can have in protecting and restoring species. Lundy today supports 95 per cent of England's breeding Manx Shearwaters.

The project has highlighted how coordination between natural and historic environment bodies to tackle a complex issue, sustained over a long period of time, can reap remarkable results. It also demonstrates how human habitation and tourism can happily coexist with nature recovery. The successes of the project saw Lundy admitted to the Bird Observatories Council network in 2023. The ongoing partnership will ensure Lundy makes a significant contribution to national and international ornithology, especially in relation to migration studies and seabird conservation, and supports the development of young birders, naturalists and conservationists.

Abundant Pastures at Manchester Cathedral



Manchester Cathedral's south precinct is alive with the buzz of honeybees and the scent of spring flowers from which they take pollen and nectar.

The work of volunteer beekeepers and gardeners has transformed a bleak and often water-logged area of grass below, and the leaden roof of the south aisles above, into a place of joy and repose for all comers. The project, which has been ongoing for the past two years, will continue to develop, ensuring that the planting of perennials and more transitory bedding flowers delight the eye while attracting tens of thousands of the tiny insects residing in their rooftop colonies. Of course, the bees fly all over most of central Manchester in their search for vital supplies, but they can be seen dipping into the herbaceous borders along Cathedral Square, and the shrubs and flowers around the central memorial cross in the garden.

The beekeepers and the gardeners are given expert training and supervision under the auspices of Volition Community, a charity within Manchester Cathedral set up in 2012 that supports people returning to paid employment after long periods of being out of work, and those experiencing a wide range of personal obstacles and difficulties. The skills they acquire give the volunteers greater self-confidence in the way they present themselves to possible employers and help them work in teams, sharing the responsibility of caring for a valuable open and well-tended space that is so scarce at the heart of a rapidly expanding major city.



The honey is harvested each autumn and marketed as Heavenly Honey, providing an additional source of income for the charity, and an outward and visible sign of the hard work of the myriad insects and their human guardians. The project contributes significantly to the environmental sustainability of the Cathedral as it moves towards the target of net zero carbon by 2030, improves skills in the local community, and is volunteer led.

Former Minster School Transformed with Sustainability at its Heart



Originally built in the 1830s, York Minster's former Minster School has been given a new lease of life as it has been restored and transformed into a new restaurant with sustainability at its heart.



The York Minster Refectory restaurant was formally opened by Their Majesties The King and The Queen Consort, as part of their visit to York for the Royal Maundy Service at York Minster in April 2023.

Following extensive restoration works by Chapter of York, the former Minster School site was handed over to GEM construction in late 2022 to convert the Grade II listed building into a refectory-style restaurant with extensive public realm. The joint project was between GEM Construction, The Star Group of Restaurants and interior designer Rachel McLane. It involved sensitively converting the former song school, into a destination restaurant in York. All partners worked together to ensure the outcome would pay homage to the building's former life as a school, from its décor to its menu choices. The project formed part of York Minster's Neighbourhood Plan, an ambitious masterplan

to secure a sustainable future for York Minster and its Precinct. It was a successful collaboration between several parties to repurpose a historic building and transform it into a vibrant destination for both the local community and visitors to enjoy with a commercially sustainable future.

The delivery of the project has also secured the first retrofit on a listed building in the Precinct as York Minster begins its journey to net zero. State of the art solar slates were installed on the roof generating 11,000 kWh of power each year together with air source heat pumps which heat the building. The success of these interventions resulted in an EPC rating of B – a first for the Precinct properties.

The extensive public realm, including a new public park (Minster Gardens) and living wall, seeks to increase biodiversity in the Precinct and provide further green lungs in the city centre for residents and visitors to enjoy.



Image 1: The restaurant's décor pays homage to the building's former life as a school, originally opened to educate York Minster's choristers. ©Olivia Brabbs. Image 2: Photo of Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York and HM King Charles III outside York Minster Refectory. ©Duncan Lomax.



Wellbeing & Social Benefits

The First Wellbeing and Heritage UK Conference



The [Wellbeing & Heritage Working Group](#), set up by Historic England and the Council for British Archaeology in 2021, has been collaborating throughout the last twelve months to organise and deliver the first public Wellbeing and Heritage conference in the UK.

The heritage sector has done a lot in the last two decades to deepen its community engagement, widen access to its sites and activities, and support people's wellbeing. However, there are still many issues around how it can maximise its social and wellbeing value, and how it can make itself visible, relevant, accessible, and useful to everyone in our communities.

The Wellbeing and Heritage Working Group felt that an in-person conference would provide an opportunity for the heritage sector to reach out to new partners and communities and share evidence and data about the wealth of work that it has been doing, whilst opening a frank conversation about the opportunities and challenges that it holds for supporting individual and community wellbeing and for addressing health inequalities.

Thanks to the hard work of the sector-wide Wellbeing & Heritage Working Group and the support of Historic England, the Council for British Archaeology, Southampton Institute for Arts and Humanities and Delapre Abbey, the Conference took place over two days, held at Delapre Abbey in Northampton on the 20th to 21st March 2024.



Free and open to all, it gathered more than 120 heritage practitioners and partners from the health, arts, nature, and other sectors, including the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) organisations, as well as local and national government representatives. The attendees heard from professionals and participants from a range of heritage wellbeing projects, and discussed issues on evaluation, policy, social prescribing, mental health, equality, diversity and inclusion. They also organised a series of workshops and networking sessions that helped colleagues and people with lived experiences to learn from each other's involvement in heritage wellbeing programmes and activities.



Most presentations were live-streamed and recorded, which facilitated the participation of those who could not attend in person, but also created recordings that will contribute to the growing Wellbeing and Heritage hub of resources, hosted on [Historic England's](#), [CBA's](#) and [National Academy for Social Prescribing](#) (NASP)'s websites.



The event attracted a lot of interest and overwhelmingly positive feedback, as well as very useful recommendations for the future of heritage and wellbeing.

Heritage Connectors and Heritage Buddies



Heritage Buddies and Heritage Connectors are innovative pilot schemes, funded by Historic England, that trialled two approaches for delivering social prescribing and wellbeing through place-based heritage between January and November 2023.

The Connectors and Buddies models are important elements of the '[whole-community approach to social prescribing](#)', promoted by the [National Academy for Social Prescribing](#) as a way to support a well-functioning social prescribing ecosystem.

The Heritage Connectors project, delivered by [Frome Medical Practice](#) and their social prescribing service [Health Connections Mendip](#), tested [the Community Connectors signposting model](#) - previously successfully for connecting people to social prescribing in Frome (Somerset) - to help link individuals and communities in need of local heritage wellbeing activities.

The Heritage Buddies project, delivered by [Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service](#), was based on Natural England's [Nature Buddies scheme](#), which helps people in need of access to green social prescribing activities locally, by befriending and supporting individuals to find what works for them. Heritage Buddies tested what this approach looks like for local heritage and how Buddies can help people discover and benefit from heritage activities around them.

Heritage Buddies and Heritage Connectors' [evaluation report](#), externally conducted by [Wavehill Ltd](#), showed that the two pilots contributed to increased understanding of the links between heritage and wellbeing, and that the models has the potential to increase individual and community wellbeing, taking account of lessons learned and the [relevant toolkits](#).

There is potential for the Heritage Buddies model to be embedded in Voluntary and Community, Faith and Social Enterprise organisations themselves. Meanwhile, the offer of heritage social prescription as an option by a social prescribing service (hosted by a Primary Care Network) demonstrates how the Heritage Connectors model can be embedded in existing health and social prescribing structures. The Heritage Buddies and Connectors toolkits can be used by communities and organisations across the country and more widely. They are not prescriptive and could be amended depending on local needs and conditions.



Project Rejuvenate



Historic England's [Project Rejuvenate](#) explored how heritage-based activities can deliver sustained positive outcomes on the wellbeing of young people.

As reported last year, the project ran in the summer of 2023, with results now available. Wessex Archaeology and Isle Heritage delivered parallel programmes working with a School and Youth Justice team respectively. The projects were evaluated against five criteria that were known to support self-determination and help understand the value of the programme.

Within the Youth Justice context, a youth justice worker described it as the best reparations project they had seen in their 40-year career. The children showed an increased ability to demonstrate positive attributes such as perseverance and openness to learning, ability to complete a task or follow instructions, and enhanced motivation to build a positive future. The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) modules gave formal recognition to their learning. Being a valued part of a team with a common goal was integral to success and the young people said the programme had helped them have a different perspective on life and that they had moved away from negativity and negative thoughts. In the school context, 89 per cent of the young people had shown signs of being more in control of their behaviour at school. School attendance for those on Rejuvenate increased by 4.5 per cent compared to their attendance at the start, which was 6.9 per cent more than comparable young people in their year group, and a ten per cent improvement was seen in those with the lowest starting point.



Form tutors agreed that for 67 per cent of those evaluated, engagement within lessons had increased. The cohort recorded an increase in various wellbeing measures with an uplift of 28 per cent in their feelings of being proud, a 22 per cent increase in feeling recognised for their achievement, and a 24 per cent increase in feeling their voice heard.

The project has demonstrated the specific power of a heritage-led approach which incorporated skills, outdoor activity, creativity and archaeology in a non-didactic environment when matched with a person-centred design. A repeat of the youth justice pilot is going ahead in 2024 and Historic England is actively expanding the programme in new areas to respond to local contexts.

Worcester Life Stories



There are key wellbeing and social benefits from visiting heritage sites, but what if the physical environment is not accessible or dementia friendly?



Life story work is one avenue for addressing this barrier: the [Worcester Life Stories project](#), funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, developed two online platforms combining digital technology and heritage in order to promote inclusion and connect community networks through reminiscence and life stories.

Know Your Place Worcester, hosted by Worcester City Council, is a free website where people can see how areas of Worcester have evolved over the years through maps, and records uploaded by others, as well as digitised photographs and Historic Environment Records. Users can upload their own photographs and memories for others to access.

Life Stories Herefordshire and Worcestershire, hosted by Herefordshire & Worcestershire Care and Health NHS Trust, enables people to use a free online platform to create their own digital life story books. Each book contains customisable chapters where users can upload their own photos, text, audio and video. Sharing

these enabled carers or family members to get ideas of how to engage with someone by finding out about their hobbies, interests, and background, and learn about what is important to them such as past events or routines. Historic England funded an evaluation of the approach and the products. The platforms are relevant and important not just for individuals but also care, education and heritage sectors. Current use indicates that they are important resources in schools as a means of enabling children to learn more about their local area over time. The platforms are particularly important for the heritage sector as they offer opportunities to share digital resources more widely and provide structured, but flexible, ways to engage with different audiences. The heritage aspect can also make engagement a more positive experience for people living with dementia, taking the focus away from reminiscence and memory loss, and helping them feel part of a bigger initiative instead. A suite of videos and podcasts is available via [Worcester Life Stories' YouTube channel](#).



Diversity, Inclusion & Youth Voice

Heritage Trust Network's Journey Towards an Accessible and Inclusive Network



Representing hundreds of community heritage organisations, Heritage Trust Network shares the same challenges that most of the heritage sector face when it comes to diversity and inclusion. However, in 2020 three factors jump-started the Network's commitment to accessibility and inclusion. First, the appointment of Beverley Gormley as Programme Manager, a disabled woman, limb-different from birth, Beverley was acutely aware of how inaccessible much of society is. Second, resources for the Unlocking the Power of Communities project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Finally, the pandemic forced a focus on digital accessibility.

Four years on there is still much to do. Membership has grown by around 400 per cent and has become more diverse and more accessible to a wider group of people. The Network has been most successful in engaging young people, including recruiting three young people to the Board, two of whom were trainee trustees and now full trustees. The development of a thriving Youth Forum has greatly helped to include and engage young people in the early stages of their careers, while the Digital Heroes project engaged young volunteers with digital skills to help member organisations. Closer ties have also been forged with universities and national heritage bodies, who now call on the Youth Forum to help with their events and research.

Avoiding agonised debate and policy discussion, the Network's approach has been action-orientated and based on continuous improvement, including:

- Delivering events such as Addressing Racism in Heritage, Rendered Invisible (focusing on LGBTQ+ stories), Easy Access to Historic Buildings and workshops on contested heritage and accessibility at the Network's annual conferences.
- Sending out accessibility guidelines for speakers preparing presentations for events and checking them in advance.
- Joining the Disability Confident Employer scheme and running inclusive recruitment campaigns.
- Delivering the 'Welsh first' Caernarfon conference in 2022' with Welsh-speaking presenters and live translation.
- Via the Outreach Project in 2023, engaging many community organisations that do not have 'heritage' in their remits but have chosen to operate from historic buildings. This includes several ethnic-minority-led organisations.

The Network still has a long way to go, but this year has proved promising.

Encouraging Inclusion Alongside the 1000th London Blue Plaque Unveiled



In September 2023, English Heritage unveiled the 1000th Blue Plaque in London. As an integral feature of the Capital's streets for over 150 years, the London Blue Plaques Scheme celebrates the links between notable figures of the past and the buildings in which they lived and worked within the city.

The 1000th blue plaque marks the former London headquarters of the suffragist organisation, the Women's Freedom League (WFL). One of the few parts of Robert Adam's Adelphi development to survive, this three-storey building at number 1 Robert Street in Westminster was the WFL's bustling base of operations for its longest and most active period. The WFL's aim – to secure total emancipation for women – was underlined by their 1908 motto: 'Dare to be Free'.



The plaque recognising the WFL was one of seven new blue plaques in London commemorating women in 2023 and in 2024 more plaques will be unveiled to individual women than in any previous year of the scheme's long history. This follows the 'plaques for women' campaign launched by English Heritage in 2016, with the specific aim of encouraging the public to nominate more remarkable female figures from the past – this initiative now bearing fruit on the streets and buildings of London.

English Heritage has also been working to encourage more nominations for Black and Asian figures from history, who currently only account for around 5 per cent of the plaques within the London scheme. Since 2016 the charity has commemorated – amongst others – the footballer Laurie Cunningham; Bob Marley; anti-racism activist and 'founding spirit' of the Notting Hill Carnival, Claudia Jones; the eighteenth-century author and anti-slavery campaigner, Ottobah Cugoana; the suffragette Princess Sophia Duleep Singh and the building that housed the Ayah's Home – for displaced nannies and nursemaids from south and east Asia.



Expanding Access to Heritage Through New Collaborations



In 2023, English Heritage began working with the Trussell Trust, which supports a national network of foodbanks, to give those struggling financially the opportunity to benefit from free admission to their local English Heritage site.

As a charity, one of English Heritage's core purposes is to ensure as many people as possible can enjoy the remarkable historic sites in their care. Most sites English Heritage look after are free to enter, but where they do need to charge for admission to support their work, they acknowledge that a day out at one of these sites can be out-of-reach for some people.

In the summer of 2023, English Heritage partnered with the Trussell Trust on a pilot scheme to help address this. Food banks who took up the offer to support free admission for their users included those nearest to some of their most popular sites, including Stonehenge, Dover Castle and Osborne on the Isle of Wight. Over 600 people were able to visit one of their sites for free as a result.

In March 2024, English Heritage confirmed the expansion of the initiative to more than 100 different food bank centres in the Trussell Trust network, across 25 English Heritage sites around

the country (although this has since expanded to 37 sites to date following work with additional independent foodbanks). The current programme runs until the end of November 2024 and, over the course of the year, it is hoped more food banks and historic sites will be able to take part.

Other actions English Heritage is taking to widen access to the historic sites in their care include a pilot initiative with Good Journey, to provide 20 per cent off the walk-in ticket price at 11 of their sites where people arrive by public transport. The pilot, which began in September 2023, aims to make it easier for people without a car to visit their sites and to support sustainable travel.

During 2023 to 2024 English Heritage also continued their scheme to offer free visitor access to those with refugee status or leave-to-remain in the UK as a displaced person. Between April 2023 and February 2024, they welcomed over 9,000 visitors to their sites as part of this initiative.

The Council for British Archaeology's Youth Advisory Board and Young Associate Network



The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) are keen to embed young people's insights into their organisation and outreach projects. Their goal is to remove barriers to young people's participation and facilitate a youth-led approach through the development of their Youth Advisory Board.



With funding support from Historic England and the Headley Trust, CBA were able to successfully recruit their first cohort of Young Advisors. The Board consists of 12 people, aged 18 to 25, representing young people from different backgrounds and lived experiences across the UK. Their Young Advisors are passionate about making a change in society, eager to upskill, and use their voice to make a difference at the CBA, in the archaeology and heritage sector, and beyond.

As an organisation, there is much to learn from young people, and equally, CBA want to support their own personal development too. CBA invite the sector to find out more about each of the CBA Youth Advisory Board, and what they are interested in [here](#).

To support the Young Advisors, CBA worked with youth governance specialists, Participation People, to deliver a series of on-boarding sessions for their board members and facilitation training for CBA staff. The CBA is keen to embed youth governance

throughout the organisation to ensure their Youth Advisors voices are heard and acted on at every level of the organisation, including at senior management level and by the board of trustees, so they also provided awareness training for CBA Trustees, senior staff and stakeholders to ensure they are all well equipped to create a welcoming and inclusive space for the Young Advisors.

CBA had such an overwhelmingly positive response to their Youth Advisor recruitment that they decided to create their Young Associate Network. As a Young Associate, members receive the monthly CBA Youth Newsletter with articles, jobs and volunteering opportunities from the CBA and beyond. There are also opportunities to participate and contribute to projects being run by the CBA and their partners. This is a rolling sign up and they currently have 70 or more members. Join the Young Associate Network [here](#).

The Young Advisors have been in post for six months and their impact is being felt across the organisation, their presence on focus groups and sector panels, their contributions to national digital and print media, and their advocacy across their

own networks have already demonstrated the benefits of youth voice and the power of youth governance to the sector. Roll on the next 12 months!

Empowering Youth Voices in the Heritage Sector



Heritage Trust Network's Youth Forum has just entered its third year and recently welcomed its 100th member.

Founded in 2022, and comprising of 18- to 30-year-old early career and aspiring heritage professionals, the Forum strives to achieve four key goals:

1. Be the youth voice for the Network.
2. Improve engagement with heritage for young people.
3. Produce resources for the heritage sector.
4. Be inclusive: Heritage is for everyone.

Over the last 12 months, the Youth Forum has worked hard to support its members and other young people looking to join the sector through the expansion of its Advice Library, blogs, hosting online events focusing on heritage skills and careers, and negotiating funded Heritage Carbon Literacy training for members.

Committed to providing members with opportunities to develop skills and have experiences that will enhance their CVs, as well as making their voice heard in the sector, Youth Forum members have been actively working to engage heritage organisations in conversation. In November 2023, the Forum had a representative at the Heritage Alliance discussion, *Careers at a Crossroads: how can we futureproof the future heritage sector workforce*, making the case for early careers. It also 'took over' Historic England's online platform 'Heritage Connects'. Forum members also invited the sector to ask them questions about



being a young person in heritage, recording the highest engagement on the platform.

Spurred on by this success, the Forum members have been looking for new ways to make their voice heard in the sector and have started offering consultations. So far, they have been consulted on subjects including branding, engaging young people, starting a youth group, career progression, and increasing engagement.

Guided by the 14 volunteers that make up its new steering committee, the Forum is currently exploring new ways to make the voice of young people heard. They are currently working on manifestos focusing on placemaking, equality, diversity and inclusion, and working on a new podcast.

Supporting School Trips and Learning and Resources



In autumn 2023, English Heritage, one of the UK's largest providers of free school trips, undertook research that highlighted regional disparity in the number of school trips taken across England.

Historic sites cared for by English Heritage in the South East were found to receive considerably more school visits than those managed by the charity in other areas of the country, despite other regions containing more historic sites. On average in 2022 to 2023, historic sites in the South East welcomed almost eight times the number of schoolchildren as those in the North West, almost seven times as many school visitors as historic sites in the North East and five times as many school visitors compared to sites in East Anglia.

The analysis identified that the number of school trips remain 28 per cent lower than they had been since the Covid-19 Pandemic, although this is thought to reflect current cost of living challenges rather than the result of any enduring effects of Covid-19. With rising costs putting the viability of school trips at risk, English Heritage believes it is more important than ever for the charity to keep offering educational trips to schools free-of-charge.

However, over the past three years, English Heritage has seen the cost per head to the charity for facilitating free educational visits rise from £2.25 to £3.66. As a result, the charity initiated a [year-long fundraising appeal](#) to ensure the work it does to support schools and educational groups will not only continue but also expand, in particular by encouraging teachers to take advantage of their local heritage sites and creating useful curriculum-based resources for them. As well as [teachers' kits](#)



[and resources](#), English Heritage has developed a wealth of rigorous historical information on its website and social media channels (particularly YouTube) that teachers can use to support their lessons, or visits to historic sites. The charity has also partnered with the [Hyundai's Great British School Trip](#) programme, which provides financial support to schools who do not have the funds to access transport.

National Trust uses 'Isaac Newton's Lockdown Legacy' to Launch Time + Space Award for Young People



Earlier this year, the National Trust launched a Time + Space Award for young people, inspired by Sir Isaac Newton's annus mirabilis or 'year of wonders', which happened when he was just 23.

The new award will support some of today's young people – aged 16 to 25 years-old – to bring their ideas to life at Newton's home, Woolsthorpe Manor, a farmhouse in Lincolnshire. Newton said of his 'year of wonders', "In those days I was in the prime of my age for invention."

Working with a panel of experts and voices from the fields of science, creativity and culture, the new award is based on the extraordinary story of a young man, whose father died before he was born, who was misunderstood by his family and teachers and raised in turbulent times. Forced to return from university during a pandemic in 1665, he used the time and space away from his everyday life to explore things he was relentlessly curious about. As a result, he made world-changing discoveries about calculus, optics, motion and gravity.

The Time + Space Award offers young people living across the UK the chance to be given time, space and resources to explore their own big idea in one of four areas: science, art and culture, society, nature and climate.

The scheme was launched after research revealed that half of today's young people say the Covid-19 lockdowns made them more creative (50 per cent). While many believe lockdown had a range of negative impacts, 44 per cent believe that it had a positive impact on their hobbies and interests. 61 per cent of young people began a new hobby during lockdown, and a majority continue that hobby to this day.

Further research revealed that young people overwhelmingly see themselves as creative (92 per cent) but money, time and confidence are some of the biggest barriers to making their ideas happen. 68 per cent of young people say they need space (physical or psychological) to unlock creativity, 51 per cent need inspiration from places of interest or people who are notable in their fields, while 60 per cent said what they need is time.

Around three million 16- to 25-year-olds had an idea during the pandemic they have yet to make happen, 25 per cent had a science/invention idea, 22 per cent an idea related to writing, 22 per cent an idea related to art and nine percent an idea related to changing society.

The National Trust is working with experts including Dame Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock, David Olusoga, Tayshan Hayden-Smith and Megan McCubbin to help choose winners of the Time + Space Awards. Applications are based on answering a big question on one of the four themes mentioned above. It is hoped the scheme will help unlock the potential of young people from across the country and from a wide range of backgrounds. The National Trust wants to inspire the future as well as explore the past. This award is about opening a space that's fizzing with historic significance and inviting today's young people to use it to understand, explore, and challenge the way we see the world. The deadline for entries for the Time + Space Award was the 30th April 2024.



Place & Engagement

Neighbourhood Plans and Bespoke Planning Policy in York



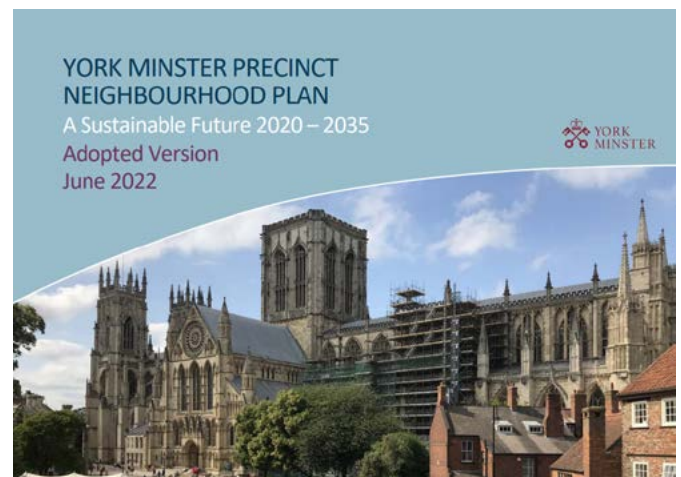
Under English Planning law, Neighbourhood Plans are normally used to allocate land for residential and employment development within a Parish area.

This is the first time a Neighbourhood Plan has been used to create bespoke planning policies to drive significant change in a cathedral's heritage environment. Brought about through the 2011 Localism Act, the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations are intended to give power back to local communities to manage change in the area. York Minster (the Chapter of York) used these regulations to establish the York Minster Neighbourhood Forum to write their own planning policies for York Minster against which they could deliver the biggest changes in the Precinct since 1855 as well as begin the journey towards Net Zero by 2030.

The organisation created their own bespoke planning policy to drive significant change in a complex heritage estate, sensitively and quickly. Through the creation of York Minster's Centre of Excellence for Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management, the pioneer project of the Plan, they want to share the Neighbourhood Plan as an example of best practice in managing complex heritage estates.

York Minster's vision is bold: a new public square named in honour of the late Queen anchored by a statue, created by one of their own stonemasons

utilising ancient craft and cutting edge technology, unveiled by the King in November 2022; a new museum; a new ticket office; three new public parks with an emphasis on wellbeing; increased biodiversity; a new refectory powered by solar slates; 199 solar panels on the roof of York Minster; a new Heritage Quad and Technology Hub providing state of the art facilities for their Centre of Excellence for Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management. This Centre encourages global learning and knowledge sharing and supports young people in the early stages of their careers as well as many commercial and retrofit opportunities in the Precinct.



The Plan was adopted by the City of York Council in June 2022 and now forms part of the Development Plan for the City of York. To date, nine major planning consents have been approved against

the policies of the Plan and over £15 million of investment in the Precinct delivered since 2023. For further information, visit [York Minster Neighbourhood Plan | York Minster](#).

Seeds Collected from Felled Sycamore Gap Tree 'Springing into Life' at Conservation Centre



Seeds and material collected from the Sycamore Gap tree after it was felled last September are beginning to 'spring into life'. Recent pictures show a collection of small seedlings and buds growing at the National Trust's Plant Conservation Centre, where staff have been carefully looking after the delicate material for several months.

The iconic sycamore tree had stood in a dip in Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland National Park for around 200 years before it was felled in an act of vandalism last autumn, sparking an unprecedented public response.

In December, the National Trust revealed that the material was showing 'signs of life' but that the timing of the event – when the tree was still in the growth stage of its annual cycle – was less than ideal for propagating.

Since the felling, experts have used a range of techniques to cultivate the material. These include 'budding', where a single bud from the original tree is attached to a rootstock of the same species, and

two forms of grafting - 'whip and tongue' and 'apical wedge' grafting - where a scion (a cutting from the tree) and a rootstock are joined together by corresponding cuts in the material. These processes are designed to create genetically identical replicas of the original Sycamore Gap tree.

The seeds, meanwhile, have been grown on in a special peat-free compost mix, having first been washed and checked for any disease, with several dozen now sprouting.

As well as being a fundamental part of our ecosystems, trees are an intrinsic part of our cultural heritage – a form of living history. The Trust's Plant Conservation Centre cares for some of the rarest, and most historically and culturally significant trees, from descendants of the apple tree that inspired Isaac Newton's theories, to cuttings from the Ankerwycke Yew, which has stood at Runnymede for centuries and will even have witnessed the sealing of Magna Carta there in 1215.

The National Trust, working together with Northumberland National Park, Historic England and the Hadrian's Wall Partnership, said its plans for the plants were still developing, and that saplings would not be ready for planting for at least 12 months.

Meanwhile, the organisations are planning a range of responses to the tree's felling later this year, which will include work with local schools, tree planting initiatives in Northumberland, and artistic interpretations. Details about these will be shared in the coming months, with inspiration from 2,000 ideas and tributes received from the public.

Thornborough Henges Reunited



Thornborough Henges comprise three identical, aligned, circular earthworks, each more than 200m in diameter. Dating from 3000 to 2500 BC, people gathered at this site for rituals and ceremonies for at least 2,000 years, making this the most important ancient site between Stonehenge and Orkney.



At the start of 2023, the central and southern henges plus their surrounding lands were gifted to Historic England and English Heritage by the construction companies Tarmac and Lightwater Holdings. The northern henge (the best preserved of the three and one of the best-preserved henges in the country) was subsequently put onto the open market by its private owner and in early 2024, English Heritage – with the generous support of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, Jamie Ritblat and family, and the SCS Trust – acquired it on behalf of the nation.

The northern henge now joins the central and southern henges within the National Heritage Collection and under the care of English Heritage. The acquisition not only guarantees public access in perpetuity to the entirety of this remarkable Neolithic monument but will allow English Heritage to share with visitors the full story of Thornborough Henges so that they can better understand the henges' significance and scale as well as how each individual henge relates to the others.

Like most of the historic sites in English Heritage's care, entry to Thornborough Henges is free.

St Peter's Sudbury and a Partnership Approach to Regeneration



St Peter's Sudbury is an incredible Medieval Grade I listed church, recently reopened as the Sudbury Arts Centre, a central space deeply rooted in the heart of the community. The dream to transform this building started in 1973 by one man who did not want to see the church replaced by a carpark. Since vesting with the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) the building's been cared for by a group of local volunteers (the Friends of St Peter). But a new strategy needed to be developed and implemented which would finance the growing repair need and ambition of the CCT and local stakeholders to get the building into more regular use.

Managed by the [CCT's Regeneration Team](#), the project collaborated with over 32 stakeholders (including organisations and businesses) and consulted with more than 500 local people to find a potential new use for the space. A £2.7million 16-month project started on site in 2021, reopening the doors on October 23rd 2023 as a 21st century fit-for-purpose cultural hub, complete with – for the first time – toilets, a kitchen and bar area, heating, a new mezzanine floor, accessible external space, and beautiful community co-created interpretation.

Originally planned as an in-house run enterprise, the operating model represents a new partnership for the CCT. During the development phase, conversations with The Bridge Project, a local charity, grew from interest in café management to a more substantial role as site operator, with the Bridge ultimately taking on operational management under the terms of a lease. The [Bridge Project's](#) values align with the CCT's strategy to put both buildings and people at the heart of our activity, and the partnership was formalised in 2023. With agreement from our main project funder, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the CCT remain grant recipient with responsibility for the delivery of approved project outputs and outcomes delegated to the Bridge.

Since re-opening the Sudbury Arts Centre has welcomed over 30,000 visitors, and in just two months recruited 24 new volunteers. The café is making a profit, events are fully booked, and the original staff team have trebled in size. The Bridge has developed skills in historic building management and the CCT are accruing new skills in community engagement, learning and evaluation. The Trust is proud to be on this new journey with the Bridge Project and looks forward to further partnership work and opportunities for future shared learning.

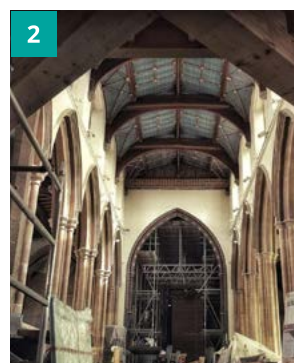


Image 1: External shot of St Peter's on Market Hill taken by drone showing scaffolding at East end for roof works.

©Ben Kempsey. Image 2: Internal shot of the Nave prior to works commencing. ©Chad Brown

Image 3: Community support on launch day October 2023 (in 4 hours over 2500 individuals attended). ©Amanda Gerry



Engaging the Local Community in the Transformation of Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens



In summer 2023, English Heritage announced the completion of a major two-year conservation project to transform Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens and Northumberland.

Belsay Hall's original roof – which had caused damp issues – was replaced, saving one of England's earliest Greek Revival houses for future generations, while the site's Grade 1 listed gardens were restored, and repairs made to the stonework of the medieval castle that stands on this unique historical site. Family-friendly features, including a new family trail and play area, and fresh interpretation were also introduced as part of the 'Belsay Awakes' project, to bring the site's stories to life for visitors.

Community was at the heart of the project and will continue to be integral to English Heritage's work at Belsay. Supported by a team of local volunteers, the charity invited members of the community and visitors to see conservation in action at Belsay – including giving them unprecedented behind-the-scenes access to learn about the significant work to replace the roof at Belsay Hall. Over 100 volunteers collectively contributed over 3,000 days' worth of time to support the project, including those providing guided tours for visitors, those supporting

important conservation work and volunteer gardeners who helped to restore Belsay's distinctive landscape back to its best.

During the 2023 peak season, English Heritage again jointly funded a free weekend bus service from Newcastle City Centre to Belsay to help more people get to this remarkable historic place in the North East. The service is due to run again during the 2024 peak season.

English Heritage were delighted to welcome Heritage Minister Lord Parkinson to Belsay in September 2023 and to invite him to plant a tree within Belsay's grounds to mark the official re-opening of the newly transformed site.

The project was made possible with help from a £3.4 million grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and other generous supporters, including the Garfield Weston Foundation, the Foyle Foundation, Historic Houses Foundation, and the Catherine Cookson Charitable Trust.

And Who is My Neighbour? – Addressing Dark Heritage through Community



In 1865, a memorial to Edward Colston was installed as part of the major restoration of St Mary Redcliffe Church.

The window, which depicted the parable of the Good Samaritan and contained the words Go and Do Thou Likewise – a phrase that the Colston family had adopted as its motto – was installed on Whitsunday 1870.

Colston is estimated to have been involved in the transportation of over 84,000 slaves from West Africa to the Caribbean and Americas, and although detailed analysis of Colston's role as a slave trader had been carried out as early as 1920, this evidence had largely been ignored.

Following the removal of the Colston statue in Bristol in 2020, the Church took the decision to remove the four panels that contained the dedication to Colston because they travestied the Good Samaritan message and were inconsistent with church's values and mission. In a spirit of openness, the Church ran a competition to find four new designs that would be consistent with the church's modern values of compassion, inclusivity and justice.

Dozens of people from a variety of backgrounds entered the competition and five shortlisted designs were displayed during an exhibition that took place at St Mary Redcliffe during the summer of 2022. Members of the public were invited to provide feedback on the five designs and their comments were included in the decision-making process. Local artist and Doctor, Ealish Swift, won the competition with a series of designs that referred to Bristol's rich multicultural past and present.



Throughout the project, collaboration and feedback was sought with representatives from Church Buildings Council and its Contested Heritage Committee, Historic England, Bristol Diocesan Advisory Committee, Art & Christianity, Bristol University, Victorian Society, and Bristol's Black Community.

The new stained glass was installed during an event to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Bristol Bus Boycott in October 2023. The four panels each depict a crucial aspect of our shared Bristolian history as neighbours and reference a relevant aspect of the character of Christ. The design is studded with blue hydrangea flowers, a symbol of unity and togetherness.

The Divine Beauty Project – Conservation of Birmingham Cathedral’s Burne-Jones Windows



Birmingham Cathedral’s four Burne-Jones windows were fully conserved in 2023, taking over 500 working days across an 8-month period, by expert conservators from Holy Well Glass.

Twenty-one panels were removed and repaired in their workshop in Wells, while the rest of the windows were cleaned and restored in situ. In some cases, this work involved cleaning individual fragments of glass, replacing leads and making more substantial repairs to the stonework of the building. New protective grilles were also installed, significantly improving the windows’ visibility from the outside. Key parts of the conservation process were shared via live streams on the Cathedral’s YouTube and Facebook pages, attracting over 3,000 views.

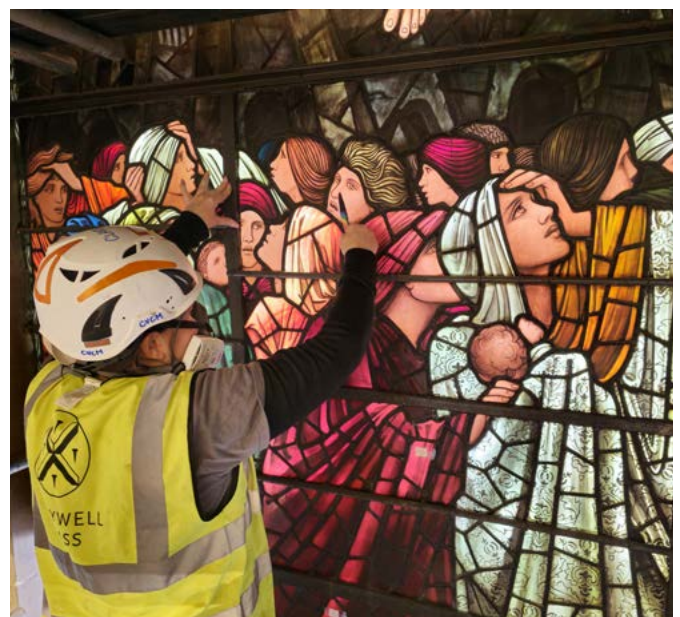
In January 2023, the project launched with Divine Beauty at Night by Luxmuralis – an immersive light and sound experience inspired by the imagery in the windows. Over 2,400 people, many of whom had not been into the Cathedral before, participated.

Scaffolding was in place between April and December 2023, providing a backdrop for a range of engagement activities. Over 3,400 people attended scaffolding tours between May and October, with more than 35 per cent being first-time visitors to the Cathedral and 60 expressing interest in volunteering at the Cathedral after their experience. This was only possible because of the ongoing support from their dedicated volunteers, who continue to be an invaluable part of the Cathedral team.

Over 500 people engaged with monthly ‘stained-glass live’ drop-in sessions with the conservation team, where the public could learn about

conservation techniques and see panels of the windows in their dismantled state up close. The Divine Beauty Project team also visited Holy Well’s workshop in Wells to see detailed conservation first-hand.

The hoarding around the work site was decorated with spray-painted street art inspired by the images of their windows, alongside information about their creators, Edward Burne-Jones and William Morris. The project attracted significant local and national media coverage, including specialist articles, cultural insight pieces written by local cultural reporters, radio interviews, television coverage, and podcasts. The team are immensely grateful for the support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, contractors, and other supporters in delivering the project.



New Research Shows the Ghost of 'Lost' Blossom Enduring Through Street and Place Names



Accompanying the National Trust's recent Blossom Week (20th to 28th April), new research published by the charity has revealed the significance of historic blossom in all its different guises in influencing the street and place names that still exist today.

By analysing modern and historic maps, and matching these results to research undertaken by the Trust using artificial intelligence in 2022, recent work has been able to paint a picture of blossom over time, across more than 90 per cent of England and 30 per cent of Wales.

A detailed analysis found that the number of place names associated with blossom has doubled from three per cent (23,000 of the 700,000 place names examined) in 1900, to six per cent (51,000 of the 912,000 place names examined) in 2023 – despite the loss of blossom from our landscapes.

One of the strongest correlations observed was the link between declining areas of traditional orchards and increases in place names associated with blossom. Across all counties surveyed, over 70 per cent evidenced an increase in blossom-related place names alongside a decline in the presence of traditional orchards; and for cities the figure was even higher, with over 80 per cent following this pattern. Despite the declines in the presence of blossom in our landscapes, the use of words linked to blossom in our place names has increased.

Also, with regional and country variations of place names in 1900 compared to today, there appears to be a dilution in the more individual characteristics of certain types of blossom across the regions. It is possible that the proliferation of more generic orchard-related terms in current place names

reflects a combination of the perceived importance of historic blossom sites, and simultaneously a loss of local history and character.

As part of this year's Blossom Week celebrations – supported by players of the People's Postcode Lottery – the National Trust encourages more people to notice and consider places' names that surround them and how these names could be rooted to the cultural history of the area. The aim is to bring blossom back to as many cities as possible through various projects, including the blossom gardens in London, Plymouth, Newcastle and Nottingham.



Acorn Bank Watermill



The Grade II* listed mill building at Acorn Bank has been in the care of the National Trust since 1950. It was substantially rebuilt and restored in the late 1980s along with the mill machinery.

The present mill originated in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century and milled grain, most likely oats, until the mid-1930s. It is also unusual in that there were at least two waterwheels operating on the site at any one time, and possibly three, for much of this time. As well as milling grain, the second and third waterwheels were used for other purposes including sawing timber and providing power to the gypsum mine on the estate.

The mill is maintained and brought to life for visitors by the Acorn Bank Watermill Trust. This Trust was formed to the immediate aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic with the aim of ensuring that the mill remained open for visitors and received the regular maintenance the mill machinery required. The Trust will also consider taking forward new projects to further enhance the visitor experience.

The Acorn Bank Watermill Trust are currently undertaking their greatest challenge yet in assembling the former second waterwheel. The hub of this waterwheel is still in place, while many of the cast iron shrouds which form the outer edge and hold the wooden 'buckets' in place have also survived. Several replacement shrouds have been cast to replace those which have been broken. A new wooden launder has already been constructed to supply the new waterwheel. Work is also underway to fit a new pit-wheel which will connect onto the original hub and drive the machinery.

New interpretation is being installed to explain these works. Members of Acorn Bank Watermill Trust are on site every Tuesday progressing the works. Visitors to Acorn Bank can see this exciting conservation project in action and have the opportunity to ask questions about the restoration.



Stories of Discovery & Sustainable Conservation

Taking the Plunge: 18th Century Cold Bath Uncovered in Bath



Archaeological excavations in the basement below the 18th century Bath Assembly Rooms have revealed the remains of what was once a popular form of ‘taking the waters’ for health purposes – a cold bath.

Archaeological excavations in the basement below the 18th century Bath Assembly Rooms have revealed the remains of what was once a popular form of ‘taking the waters’ for health purposes – a cold bath.

Specialists believe that this could be the only Cold Bath of its kind located in a historic assembly room, which in the 18th and 19th centuries was a popular place for entertainment, conversation, dancing and gambling across the country.

Bath and many other spa towns were known for their hot mineral water and became popular spots for bathing and ‘taking the waters’, but in the 18th century, medical practitioners also recommended cold bathing for men and women as beneficial for various physical and mental ailments, including gout. They advised regular, if not daily, bathing by plunging into cold water for a short period of time and then warming up quickly afterwards.

There was a surge in plunge pools and cold baths in private houses and estates along with public facilities in Bath and other towns, however the location of the one at the Assembly Rooms suggests it would have been more exclusive, for those wanting a more private cold bath experience.



The Bath Assembly Rooms, now cared for by the National Trust, were built between 1769 to 1771 by John Wood, the Younger, who would have been heavily influenced by medical theories of the time. The Cold Bath was one of many rooms in the building. The New Bath Guide of 1778 noted ‘...a commodious cold-bath, with convenient dressing-rooms’; and there were rooms for billiards, coffee and gambling along with spaces for balls and concerts, making it a ‘one-stop-shop’ for all leisure, health and entertainment needs.

During the Second World War, the Assembly Rooms were bombed, and the Cold Bath damaged. In the years after the war, the Bath was filled in with rubble and a floor laid over the top, although research suggests a floor may have been laid over as early as the beginning of the 20th century, with the space used for storage.

The excavation of the Bath Assembly Rooms Cold Bath was overseen by Wessex Archaeology and is part of a major project by the National Trust to create an experience that will transport visitors back to the social scene of Bath in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, whilst remaining open as much as possible during this transition.

Rare Roman Head of Mercury Discovered During Dig in Kent Shipyard



The excavation of a medieval site once used for shipbuilding delighted archaeologists when they also came across earlier evidence of a Roman settlement. As part of the discovery, finds from a Roman settlement in use between the first to third centuries included the head of a figurine of the god Mercury, made from pipeclay, which is believed to be 'incredibly rare'.

Smallhythe Place in Kent, cared for by the National Trust, has been researched for several years by archaeologists, focusing on the shipyard by the River Rother, one of the most significant Royal shipbuilding centres of medieval England.

Excavations over the last three years have found evidence of medieval shipbuilding and breaking from the 13th to 15th centuries. Over time, the site gradually silted up and the industry declined.

However, the discovery of a previously unrecorded Roman settlement has excited experts.

Religion was a central part of daily life in most Roman provinces, and statues as well as portable figurines of gods like the one discovered at Smallhythe were worshipped by both the Roman elite and ordinary citizens in their homes.

Pipeclay figurines were made of clays local to central Gaul (modern-day France) and the Rhine-Moselle region and then imported. However most pipeclay figurines found in Britain are of female deities, the majority being of Venus. Mercury was the god of all the fine arts as well as commerce and financial success, but while he is the most common god for metal figurines, pipeclay examples are extremely rare, with less than ten so far found from Roman Britain.

The excavations at Smallhythe revealed previously undiscovered Roman activity, dating from the first to third centuries AD. Discoveries included tiles stamped with the mark of the Roman fleet (the *Classis Britannica*), ceramics such as an intact pot, and evidence for buildings, boundary features and pits – which provide tantalising clues to the nature of this riverside community. But to come across a head of a figurine of Mercury, in pipeclay, is incredibly rare. Just five centimetres tall, the head is clearly visible as Mercury, with his winged headdress.

Funding for the excavations at Smallhythe Place was generously provided by the National Trust's Roman Research Fund, the Robert Kiln Fund, the Society of Antiquaries, the Royal Archaeological Institute,

and the William and Edith Oldham Charitable Trust. The Mercury head along with other finds from the excavation have been on show since February at Smallhythe Place.

600-year-old Token Discovered at Oxburgh Estate



A medieval Christmas token has been found by National Trust archaeologists near Oxburgh Hall in Norfolk.

Most likely from Bury St Edmunds Abbey nearly 30 miles away in Suffolk, the token could be spent in the church or locally and its discovery may indicate the distance people travelled for these festive celebrations. Dating between circa 1470 to 1560, the token was found during an archaeological survey in West Park at the Oxburgh Estate, cared for by the National Trust.

In the medieval and early Tudor eras, on the Feast Day of St Nicholas (6th December), a choirboy in cathedrals and churches across the country was chosen to act as 'Boy Bishop', a parody of the Bishop over the Christmas period. It was a tradition that was also practiced in other countries including Germany, Spain and France. They would lead certain religious services, as well as processions, and would collect money for the church and their local parish. Boy Bishops, mostly in Suffolk, also doled out tokens to the poor typically during a procession through the town, which could be spent at the Abbey in Bury St Edmunds or in the locality on food during the period of the 6th December (St Nicholas Day) to the 28th December (Holy Innocents Day).

Whilst not a thing of beauty it does have an interesting story. It was found a volunteer metal detectorist who had been surveying the West Park field at Oxburgh as part of the parkland restoration initiative. Before the tree planting began, the Trust undertook metal detecting, field walking and

geophysics to find out more about the history of the field. The results have revealed not only part of a medieval village including horseshoes, hand-made nails and tools but also part of a Roman village.

The token found at Oxburgh has a well-preserved side depicting a long cross, just like contemporary coins, while the reverse side is very corroded but would probably have shown the head of a bishop representing St Nicholas. The tokens came in equivalent sizes to a penny, half penny and groat. Made of lead there was no real monetary value to them, they were parodies of real coinage, but they could be exchanged for food during the festive period. The one found at Oxburgh is the size of a groat which equalled four pennies, although it is not known how many goods could be exchanged for the tokens.



Suffolk's Unforgettable Garden Story



Suffolk's [Unforgettable Garden Story](#) is a Gardens Trust and Suffolk Gardens Trust project which recruited volunteers and trained them to research and record historic landscapes.

Funded by Historic England, it told the stories of more than 20 Suffolk parks and gardens through detailed research reports compiled by volunteers, including some who had never previously undertaken historic research.

Over 18 months, Gardens Trust worked closely with [Suffolk Gardens Trust](#) to recruit, train and support more than 20 volunteers to research and record local historic landscapes. Gardens Trust wanted to draw on local knowledge and expertise to help ensure that these landscapes at risk are better understood and protected.

The project brought attention to the value of the county's historic designed landscapes and so far has resulted in the registration of seven new sites to the National Heritage List for England, including: Abbot's Hall in Stowmarket, the pleasure grounds of an early 18th century house; Thorpeness Meare, the vibrant and adventurous landscape of Britain's first

purpose-built holiday village; Crow's Hall, an early country house landscape with stunning views; Staverton Park, once owned by royalty; and the Walled Garden at the Royal Hospital School in Holbrook, featuring a distinctive 'crinkle-crankle' wall.

Volunteers in Suffolk are keen to continue recording sites and will continue their campaign to add more historic designed landscapes to the National Heritage List for England. In addition to conducting ongoing research, the group will be continuing to meet in person and visit landscapes in Suffolk as often as possible, keeping the research group active for the long term. For more information, [email here](#).

The project is also being replicated across more counties in England, most recently in Nottinghamshire. If interested in running an Unforgettable Garden Story research and recording project in your area, email this [contact](#).

Image 1: The volunteer team, with Project Officer Karina Flynn, recently attended a project celebration event at the Food Museum in Stowmarket. ©The Gardens Trust. Image 2: The early country house landscape at Crow's Hall in Stowmarket is now Grade II registered thanks to the volunteers' research. ©Historic England.

A Garden for the Future at Sheffield Park & Garden



For the first time since the National Trust took ownership in 1954, plans are afoot for the creation of a new area in the Grade I listed garden at Sheffield Park & Garden in East Sussex.

Members of The Royal Oak Foundation, the National Trust's partner in the United States, have generously donated funds to support the project. The project has also been made possible in part by a generous gift left in a Will for the benefit of the garden at Sheffield Park.

The project presents an opportunity for the conservation charity to enhance this unique property with a design of our time that is sympathetic to the existing landscape, while also addressing the current challenges of climate adaptation and the positive effect of nature on mental health and wellbeing.

From 'Capability' Brown to Arthur Soames, Sheffield Park has a long history of innovation and high horticultural design well ahead of its time. As 'curator of colour' at Sheffield Park, Soames in particular pushed boundaries at the beginning of the 20th century with experimental planting, creations of hybrids and exotic species from around the world.

In keeping with this pioneering spirit and with the help of two-time RHS Chelsea award-winning garden designer, Joe Perkins, the National Trust is making its own contribution to this legacy with a sensitive and inclusive design with climate resilience at its core. The new garden will transform a corner once used for experimental beds within the 120-acre garden into a remarkable new visitor experience. The development provides a unique opportunity to adapt and innovate as it addresses face-on some of the practical challenges in caring for the historic landscape.

Joe Perkins is an experienced landscape designer with 12 years of involvement in planning and delivering gardens at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show. The Sheffield Park & Garden team are delighted to be working with a local designer of such calibre, and with shared concern for sustainable and responsible planting, to identify a narrative for the space that resonates now and forever.

Since January 2024, National Trust members, supporters and visitors to Sheffield Park & Garden have been able to engage with the new space in person and online as it progresses. The public will be invited to share in the hope and vision of the project by suggesting the name for this 'garden for the future' ready for the official opening in spring 2025.



Sustainable Conservation at Lincoln Medieval Bishops' Palace



In June 2023, Lincoln Medieval Bishops' Palace reopened to visitors after a two-year £2.5 million conservation project.

Since becoming a charity in 2015, English Heritage has continued to invest in heritage conservation, but the project at Lincoln provided them with the first opportunity to test a new Sustainable Conservation approach adopted in caring for the National Heritage Collection.

The Palace buildings, mostly ruined in the 17th century, represent the remains of the principal residence of the bishops of Lincoln, who first moved to the site in the 12th century. They illustrate the development of high-status domestic architecture around 1200, a formative period in architectural history. It was largely for this illustrative value that the Palace was acquired by the Ministry of Works in 1954.

The conservation strategy to halt the decline of the building's historic stonework and to stabilise it for the future was informed by an appraisal of the historic significance and vulnerability of different parts of the site, supported by 3D laser scanning of the whole palace.

This preliminary appraisal, documented in a Conservation Framework report to guide the work, revealed opportunities to both conserve historically significant fabric at the site and to preserve the Palace's architectural form. While the remains of the Palace's West Hall consist of low walls, they have very high evidential value because enough original fabric survives to show the forms of medieval windows and window-seats. The combination of fragile stone, invasive valerian roots and water penetration had endangered this important fabric over time, so the project adopted varied conservation techniques in different wall-heads, including capping with turf, lead or stone slabs, to help conserve these features. Stone-replacement was limited to places where no alternative was viable, and the project involved the delicate conservation of moulded stones in-situ. It is hoped that the conserved fabric will be easy and affordable to maintain, and that the project will secure the Palace for decades to come.

Details of the Sustainable Conservation Principles launched by English Heritage in 2023 can be found [online](#).

BBC's New Series of Digging for Britain



The following four National Trust places have appeared in the latest six-part series of *Digging for Britain* presented by Professor Alice Roberts, which aired in January on BBC2.

First, Ankerwycke on the rediscovery of the medieval nunnery of St Mary's at Ankerwycke, Surrey, as part of a wider National Lottery Heritage funded project to understand this internationally significant landscape. The programme joins the regional archaeologist and team during one of their community excavations, which revealed the medieval cloistral layout of the site preserved beneath Tudor landscaping gravel. This helped understand more about the site and life of nuns living in the nunnery beyond the male-biased historical accounts.

Second, Fan Bay on the White Cliffs of Dover, an artillery installation built at the behest of Sir Winston Churchill immediately after the fall of France, was featured for the excavation of one of the six-inch gun replacements alongside the Project Manager and team. As part of a National Lottery Heritage funded project, the excavation cleared the 1960s overburden to reveal the gun's emplacement in and entrance to the subterranean magazine structure both in excellent condition. Cable shafts, ducts and even some surviving magclip cable were discovered during the dig, giving the team greater understanding about how the artillery was hardwired in such a groundbreaking way during the Second World War.

The third programme featured regional archaeologist and team for excavations at Smallhythe Place, Kent, revisiting a site once investigated by Time Team. Now lying over ten miles inland, the tiny village of Smallhythe was once a port lying alongside the Rother.

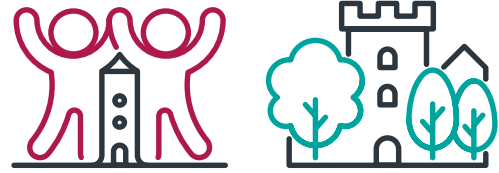
The excavations revealed that Smallhythe was location for royal shipbuilding, with Henry V's ships being built here, during medieval times. The excavation gives the team more information on where the dock was located and how the site would have functioned.

The last feature was Chedworth Roman Villa in Gloucestershire – one of the largest and finest examples of a Roman villa in Britain. The programme joined the regional archaeologist, investigating important mosaics. Radiocarbon dating and optically stimulated luminescence (OLS) samples indicated that a wealthy family continued to live at the villa, in some style, well into the 5th century – the first demonstration of this for any villa in Britain.

All episodes of 'Digging for Britain' can be seen on BBC iPlayer.



National Trust Heritage & Archaeology Ranger Team Network



The National Trust looks after some of the most iconic archaeological monuments in the country, including the Stonehenge landscape in Wiltshire, parts of Hadrian's Wall in Northumberland, Fountains Abbey & Studley Royal in Yorkshire, and the Sutton Hoo burial ground in Suffolk.

What is less well known, is the fact that it looks after tens of thousands of sites of archaeological interest across its land. These sites have the potential to reveal fascinating stories about our past, but they require careful management to ensure that they are preserved, and that future generations can share and benefit from the values they retain.

To help ensure that sites of archaeological interest are kept in good condition the National Trust has created a network of Heritage & Archaeology Ranger Teams (HART), who undertake regular visits to record and report back on any issues they identify. HART volunteers can also support property teams by participating in any management works that may be required. This invaluable work allows the Trust to understand the threats that might result in damage to sites of archaeological interest, and enables it to plan appropriate responses.



The number of HART groups across National Trust properties is growing, to help facilitate this important work. Anyone interested in joining a HART group can look on the National Trust volunteering [web page](#), or contact their local property. If a HART group does not exist, there is an option to complete and submit an 'expression of interest' form.



An Update on Heritage Crime

Extent of Heritage and Cultural Property Crime in England Revealed



Historic England, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), and members of the Alliance to Reduce Crime Against Heritage (ARCH) have released findings on the scale and extent of heritage and cultural property crime in England.

The Heritage and Cultural Property Crime research was funded by Historic England and carried out by crime analysts at Opal - the National Crime Intelligence Unit for Serious Organised Acquisitive Crime - between February 2020 and February 2023. The work identified a diverse range of active and emerging threats to the historic environment, including the theft of historic lead and stone, high value burglaries targeting cultural objects, unlawful metal detecting (also known as nighthawking) and the removal of artefacts from the nation's protected wreck sites. The research also highlights the problem of antisocial behaviour - particularly arson, vandalism and graffiti - and provides recommendations for more effective prevention and active enforcement of heritage crime.



Heritage and Cultural Property Crime Findings

Theft of historic stone, including York stone, from some of England's most cherished historic sites is on the rise, particularly walls and paving slabs in Yorkshire and Cheshire, as well as granite cattle troughs and fountains from Kent and London. It continues to be at risk from those intent on stealing and trading for financial gain.

Metal theft from historic Places of Worship increased during the Covid-19 lockdown, but effective preventative and enforcement action has since resulted in a steady decrease.

A reduction in unlawful metal detecting has been achieved with the support of landowners and the metal-detecting community, with offenders being identified and brought to justice.

Offences relating to the theft of cultural objects from art galleries, museums and stately homes are on the rise, with artwork and antiques being the most frequently stolen items. It is estimated that over £3.2 million worth of cultural property was stolen in the 2021 to 2022 period.

The ARCH partnership is calling for enhanced crime recording standards and the development of a heritage crime 'marker' on police call handling and crime management systems. Currently, no standardised methodology exists across police forces, and heritage crime is not considered a priority. This limits our understanding of the true scale and extent of heritage crime in the historic environment and how to deal with it. If introduced, appropriate changes to police systems would lead to consistent records and a more accurate understanding of the scale and extent of crime and anti-social behaviour in the historic environment, leading to more effective crime prevention and enforcement activity.

Other threats identified in the report include:

- The theft of valuable heritage materials and cultural objects by opportunist offenders and organised crime groups as likely to increase with rising inflation continuing to impact the price of commodities.
- Arson, vandalism and graffiti continuing to pose a significant threat to the owners and managers of England's nationally important historic buildings and archaeological sites. Initiatives such as the Heritage Watch programme and the work of the National Fire Chiefs' Council and the National Rural Crime Network, however, are having a positive impact.

Cyber-enabled crime

The use of the internet has grown, and it is likely that stolen items will continue to be sold online where offenders can (often anonymously) make a profit. It is also likely that a higher number of fakes will enter the market as online scams and fraudulent activity rise.



Protected wreck sites

Last autumn, Historic England – working with MSDS Marine and the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) and partners – announced an innovative forensic marking system to protect some of England's 57 most historic and archaeologically important wreck sites. These include the Dutch warship Klein Hollandia. This new technology should act as a deterrent to those seeking to steal historic artefacts such as cannon from the seabed.

Historic stone theft – York stone

York stone is a popular material for construction, building and landscaping. The variety of colours and its durability make it desirable. According to Ecclesiastical Insurance, York stone slabs taken from the grounds of historic properties such as churches can cost up to £400 per square metre to replace. The latest research reveals that theft of historic stone from some of our most cherished historic sites rose 9 per cent in 2022. Offenders have been known to be highly organised, disguising themselves by wearing high-vis jackets to appear as workers. York stone slabs from the grounds of historic properties and church paths are targeted, with gangs often removing them using stolen vehicles and tools. The assessment is that the demand for valuable York stone will continue, and therefore offending will continue while a profit can be gained. The ARCH partnership is calling for enhanced intelligence-gathering and scrutiny of the trade relating to 'architectural salvage', which includes York stone.

Unlawful metal detecting

A 9.3 per cent reduction in unlawful metal-detecting has been highlighted in the research. This has been made possible with the support of vigilant landowners and the legitimate metal-detecting community working in partnership with the police. Historic England has also been working with members of the metal-detecting community to train detectorists as part of the Heritage Watch scheme. It is likely that further work to raise awareness of laws surrounding metal-detecting will encourage responsible detection and reporting of finds. The small minority of metal-detectorists who break the law are being identified and brought to justice.

Metal theft from places of worship

Theft of metal roofing, notably lead, from historic churches increased by 41 per cent during Covid-19 lockdowns. These offences are likely to have been committed by both opportunistic offenders and organised crime groups. Between January and November 2023, the theft of lead from church roofs decreased by 26.2 per cent compared with the same period in 2022. Improved security measures may have helped this, as well as introducing Heritage Watch schemes and prosecuting two organised crime groups responsible for stealing high volumes of roofing lead from historic church buildings from Dorset to Yorkshire. Latest figures show that lead prices increased by 8 per cent between January and November 2023 (on average, £1,309 per tonne) compared with the same period in 2022. To try to reduce the threat of theft, some listed historic churches are replacing stolen lead with stainless steel after consulting Historic England's guidance on metal theft from places of worship. Many offences, including removing small parts of lead flashing at a time, may have gone unnoticed during the summer of 2022. The high price of lead may have also encouraged opportunists.

In 2023, 943 Places of Worship are on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. There are 53 Places of Worship on the Register that have listed threats linked to heritage crime.

High value burglaries

The research highlights offences relating to the theft of objects from art galleries, museums and stately homes, with artwork and antiques being the most stolen items. Organised crime groups are believed to be responsible for several sophisticated burglaries resulting in significant financial and cultural loss, estimated to be more than £3.2 million of cultural property stolen across the 2021 to 2022 period.





Events & Awards

Heritage Day 2024: Bringing the Sector Together Towards Collaboration



Nearly 300 Heritage leaders, professionals and volunteers gathered online and in-person at the historic venue, St. John's Church Waterloo, for the Heritage Alliance's [Heritage Day 2024](#). Panels, workshops, case studies, keynote speeches and an awards ceremony all focused on 'The Power of Collaboration'.

The Heritage Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay delivered a keynote speech to the sector. A dynamic 'Heritage Hustings' saw representatives from across the political spectrum look ahead to the general election and discuss the place of heritage in their party's vision. 'Finding Common Ground' welcomed representatives from the creative industries, construction, and environmental sectors to discuss how heritage can add value to growth industries and support public policy priorities. Delegates had the opportunity to choose from an array of workshops, tours and networking sessions; afternoon discussions included a session focused on 'Future-Ready Heritage', which explored themes of innovation and inclusivity, amongst other panel discussions.

The day culminated with the presentation of the annual Ecclesiastical Heritage Heroes Awards, now in its 14th year, celebrating the significant contribution of heritage volunteers.

The winner for the [2023 Ecclesiastical Heritage Award](#) is Tyne Theatre & Opera House Performance Research Volunteers. This award recognises the volunteers who gathered and reviewed over 23,000

images of newspaper adverts, programmes, and day-bills to create a performance database covering 52 years of the Tyne Theatre & Opera House's history. The database is a valuable resource for theatre history scholars and is also informing Tyne Theatre & Opera House's planned theatre development.

The Ecclesiastical Heritage Collaboration 2023 Award went to Clifton Suspension Bridge Volunteer Hard Hat Tour Guides. This award recognises the volunteers who lead hard hat tours into the Leigh Woods Abutments – a series of twelve vaulted chambers supporting the structure of Brunel's Victorian suspension bridge. Volunteers have researched and created props to bring the story to life and their enthusiasm and dedication led to visitor numbers doubling.

Heritage Day 2024 was open to all those with an interest in heritage through the generous support of [Ecclesiastical Insurance](#) (Heritage Alliance's Corporate Partner), [Farcroft Restorations Group](#) and Programme Sponsors ([Minerva, UK Heritage Pulse, The Architectural Heritage Fund,](#) and [Direct Access](#)).

Celebrating Digital Skills for Heritage



On 18 October 2023 the [Reflect, Share, Inspire](#) event brought together over 570 heritage professionals and volunteers at The British Museum to celebrate the wealth of resources created by The National Lottery Heritage Fund's [Digital Skills for Heritage](#) initiative (2020-2024).

Speakers from projects funded by the initiative shared the learning of their inspirational digital journeys and reflected on their digital successes.

The Heritage Alliance was a key contributor to the "Digital skills for Heritage Conference" in October 2023, coordinating four sessions. As part of the keynote panel, the Heritage Alliance CEO shared the

journey the sector took in embedding digital skills since 2020, as well as reflecting on some inspiring examples of great practice from across the sector. Later, the Heritage Alliance's Head of Development chaired a panel offering practical and empowering advice for heritage organisations to engage with digital, no matter the size of their organisation or their budget.

Historic Houses Awards



Historic Houses' 2023 Awards were presented at the organisation's national AGM in November. The winners were:

[Restoration Award](#)

Brockfield Hall

[Sustainability Award](#)

Leighton Hall

[Frances Garnham Award for Innovation in Education](#)

Wentworth Woodhouse

[Garden of the Year Public Vote](#)

Glenarm Castle

[Garden of the Year Judges' Choice](#)

The Manor House, Bledlow

[Collections Award](#)

Ushaw

More details about these worthy winners can be found [online](#).



Heritage Open Days 2023



[Heritage Open Days](#) is England's largest community heritage festival. Grassroots-led, it is coordinated and promoted nationally by the National Trust with support from players of People's Postcode Lottery.

Between the 8-17 September 2023, 5,282 events were organised by the largest community of local organisers in the programme's history, including 2,254 organisers and 44,200 volunteers from civic societies, preservation trusts, museums, businesses, councils and community champions.

"The strength of Heritage Open Days is the combination of national and local input working together."

Local Organiser 2023

A range of resources and activities were offered to inspire, support and connect organisers including four webinars open to all as well as the New Wave training programme. This year 14 organisations were supported through this programme to co-create audience-led events with young adults.

923,000 visitors enjoyed events that included an open day at the BFI National Archive, a Proggy Pride workshop at Sunderland Museum & Winter Garden, and a carnival finale exploring the musical heritage of Kirklees. Over 1,200 events were inspired by the festival theme of 'Creativity Unwrapped', with opportunities ranging from bell-ringing and

backstage tours to talks on fashion and video shorts on the art of the inland waterways.

The [Festival Review](#) highlights that 34 per cent of visitors were from C2DE backgrounds and nearly two-thirds of visitors who had previously attended Heritage Open Day events agreed it led them to visit heritage sites more often. As the cost-of-living crisis continues, the principal of free entry for all events continued to be an important factor for visitors. 45 per cent said they would not have visited had there been a charge for the event, although approximately two-thirds of visitors gave a donation where the opportunity was offered. An overall £8.9 million was contributed to local economies through secondary spend.

"Fantastic tour, I can now understand why the cost of the visit is expensive and the care that goes into making it happen."

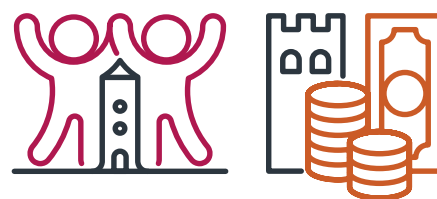
Visitor 2023

"These are how memories are made and it's all thanks to HERITAGE OPEN DAYS!!"

Visitor 2023

Image 1: Different musical styles were explored at Wightwick Manor's Heritage Open Day. ©Heritage Open Days/Paul Harris. Image 2: Sunderland Culture co-created a Proggy Pride workshop for Heritage Open Days as part of the New Wave training programme to work with young adults. ©Heritage Open Days/Jack Herron. Image 3: A volunteer team welcomed queues of visitors to BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Manchester for the first time over Heritage Open Days. ©Heritage Open Days/Paul Harris

The CBA Festival of Archaeology



The [2023 Festival of Archaeology](#) was held from the 15th to 30th July. The theme was “Archaeology and Creativity” and over the course of the Festival there were over 457 events and opportunities to engage in archaeology across the UK.

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CBA-led events included in-person events, their launch and skills day at Wales’ Powis Castle and youth weekend at Stourhead, both delivered in collaboration with the National Trust. To close the Festival they collaborated with the Royal Parks to deliver a family fun day at Greenwich Park. Online, the CBA once again delivered the annual #AskAnArchaeologist and ‘A Day In Archaeology’ events along with a Youth Day, online lectures and a theme day.

Alongside CBA activity, an incredible range of events were delivered by a wide range of groups and organisations across the sector. Events included family fun days, re-enactments, hands-on crafts, and skills training including opportunities to participate in archaeological fieldwork, guided walks, lectures and workshops.

Updated materials provided support and guidance to event organisers including a new guide from the AMPHORA team on wellbeing at events and additional support and information on safeguarding.

Online Festival resources continued to grow, enabling organisers to share material that could be accessed by the public at any time. Resources include lectures, craft activities and self-guided walks. The development of this area of the website has enabled the CBA to share over 200 resources on demand throughout the year.

During the two-week Festival period, the #FestivalofArchaeology hashtag reached over 61 million users with the Festival’s digital reach estimated at over 90 million.

The Festival was once again well-supported by a wide range of organisations across the sector including principal partners: Historic England; Cadw; the National Trust; Royal Parks; Forestry England; Prospect; Antiquity Trust; ClfA; and the Royal Archaeological Institute.





The National Trust was very pleased to take part in the CBA's Festival of Archaeology across many of its places, including hosting the opening weekend at Powis Castle & Gardens and the Youth Weekend at Stourhead. Another 50 National Trust property events took place across the fortnight, ranging from Anglo-Saxon costume demonstrations at Sutton Hoo, children's archaeology activities at Plas Newydd, talks at Smallhythe, Geophysical surveying at Divis & the Black Mountains, and artefact handling and conservation-in-action at Chedworth Roman Villa. This was enhanced by a digital offer through the National Trust website, social media, and additional content for members.

National Trust archaeologists also took part in #AskAnArchaeologist day on Twitter/X and ran another 'Evening with National Trust Archaeologists' event, featuring three presentations followed by a live question and answer session. Plans are well underway for the Festival of Archaeology 2024, which will feature events at even more National Trust properties, including at Hardwick Hall, who will be hosting the Festival finale together with the CBA on the 28th of July.

Archaeological Achievement Awards



The Archaeological Achievement Awards are coordinated by the CBA with a judging panel of representatives from across the archaeology and heritage sector.

The Archaeological Achievement Awards are coordinated by the CBA with a judging panel of representatives from across the archaeology and heritage sector. The awards celebrate the very best of archaeology across the UK and Ireland and provide an opportunity to recognise the achievements of our sector over the last year, from contributions to knowledge development and research, work with local communities, to the achievements of those at the start of their careers, the dissemination of archaeological knowledge and exciting innovations.

2023 saw the introduction of a new award, Archaeology & Sustainability, which includes approaches to making archaeological projects sustainable or the contribution archaeology can make to the wider debate on creating a more sustainable future.

There are five award categories:

- Archaeological and Sustainability;
- Engagement and Participation;
- Early Career Archaeologist;
- Public Dissemination or Presentation;
- Learning, Training and Skills.

There is also an overall Outstanding Achievement Award which in 2023 was won by Worcestershire's County Council's Archive and Archaeology Service's Roots In Time, an archaeology and art project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England, based around a new public green space and woodland at New Farm Nature Reserve just north of Evesham.



Supported by Historic England, the event was held at the De Grey Rooms in York and attendees at the event were welcomed by Rachael Maskell, MP.

The awards were supported by several sponsors including AOC Archaeology Group, the Royal Archaeological Institute, the Institute for Archaeologist of Ireland, University Archaeology UK, Archaeological Management Solutions, and National Highways, Prospect and ClfA.

Information about all the 2023 shortlisted nominees and winners is available via the [CBA website](#).

The 2024 awards will be launched at the Festival of Archaeology opening event on Saturday 13th July at the Scottish Crannog Centre, and the awards ceremony will be held in November in Cardiff, Wales.

Partnership Project to Restore Rivers Wins 2024 UK River Prize



The Ullswater Catchment Management partnership has won the prestigious 2024 UK River Prize's Catchment Award.

Spearheaded by the National Trust and Ullswater Catchment Management Community Interest Company (UCMCIC), it works to restore and improve rivers in the Ullswater catchment in the Lake District.

The partnership, shortlisted against three other finalists for the prize, has delivered over 280 restoration initiatives across the catchment since its inception in 2015, including the successful 're-wiggling' of Goldrill Beck.

In total, it has restored 843 hectares of key habitats, the equivalent of roughly 1,180 football pitches. This includes over 13km of river restoration, 46 hectares of pond creation, 16km of hedgerow creation, as well as significant restorations of wood pasture, peat, and wetlands. In addition to the practical restoration work, the partnership has also hosted a range of engagement opportunities designed to connect people with nature and their rivers, training and educational initiatives including community events, volunteer days, and workshops and demonstration events for the local community and farmers.

Partnership work in Cumbria is due to continue over the coming years, with further work planned to restore natural habitats. 6,000 opportunities to restore water-dependent habitats such as rivers, wetlands, and peat bogs have been identified on National Trust land through a recent survey. This will ensure a more climate resilient and sustainable landscape, achieving improvements for the environment,



biodiversity, and local residents.

The project is supported by the Cumbria River Restoration Strategy, which is led by the Environment Agency and Natural England.

Other finalists for this year's UK River Prize were 'Rewilding the Rom' in Greater London, the Upper Witham Restoration in Lincolnshire, and The Riverlands Porlock Vale Streams Project in Somerset.

Both the Ullswater and Porlock Vale projects are part of the National Trust Riverlands Programme, a multi-million pound programme of work to restore the nation's rivers in partnership with the Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales.

The National Trust would like to thank all partners, funders, stakeholders, local communities, farmers and landowners involved in making these projects happen.

Marsh Community Archaeology Awards



The annual Marsh Community Archaeology Awards are delivered in partnership by the CBA and the Marsh Charitable Trust.

The awards showcase excellence in archaeology, celebrating the passion and dedication of individuals and the outstanding contribution of archaeology projects which create social, cultural, and environmental benefits.

The 2023 award winners were announced online during the CBA's Festival of Archaeology and the winners are:

Community Archaeologist of the Year

Arran Johnson, a community engagement officer with York Archaeology. He has been instrumental in the development and delivery of their Archaeology on Prescription programme and Arran has made it his personal goal to ensure that anyone who wishes to take part is able to, regardless of their accessibility needs.



Community Arwy Project of the Year

Small Pits, Big Ideas encouraged local residents across six sites in Worcestershire to open up their gardens and participate in unearthing the past. Supported by experienced archaeologists, mentors, students and local archaeology groups, over 400 people took part in digging test pits and processing the finds.

Young Archaeologist of the Year

Rosie O'Toole is a Young Leader at two Young Archaeologists' Club branches and is a passionate and active community archaeologist with nine years of fieldwork experience, despite being 17. She is always happy to talk about her experiences and encourages other young people to get involved in archaeology.

Youth Engagement Project of the Year

The Kelsae Archaeology Project was co-created and delivered by young people from Kelso High which saw them record and research historic buildings in Kelso town centre using clay to create a blueprint of the town with the local buildings they had investigated. The project allowed young people to build links with their community, engage with a range of community groups, showcase what they had achieved, and celebrate their success.

Further details on the Marsh Community Archaeology Awards including all the 2023 winners are available [online](#).

The Gardens Trust Volunteer Award



The Gardens Trust's Annual Volunteer Award celebrates volunteers and recognises the value of volunteering; showcases volunteers and the contribution they make; and encourages volunteering through a variety of roles.

The winner of the Gardens Trust Volunteer Award 2023 is Roger Last, a volunteer with Norfolk Gardens Trust. Roger was nominated for his work to produce Norfolk Gardens Trust's book *Enticing Paths*. Not only did he work 'incredibly hard to produce this well-received 480-page hardback book containing over 500 colour images, but he did it during the most challenging of times, during Covid lockdown when archives were closed and travelling to take photos of people's maps, pictures or documents was very difficult.

The Gardens Trust would also like to say a huge thank you and congratulations to all the Volunteer Award 2023 nominees who have all made immense contributions to the historic designed landscapes sector. Their work ranged from organising online events, to governance, to boosting their organisations' social media efforts.

The award was presented at their Volunteering Celebration Day in September, and Roger was presented with a glass token and framed certificate. Roger was delighted with the award and said: 'It's an honour and a privilege to have won in such a strong field.'

The Volunteer Award is an annual event, with details found [here](#).



Thank you

The Historic Environment Forum would like to thank all contributing organisations for inputting into this edition of the Historic Environment Overview

Architectural Heritage Fund
Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK Research and Innovation
Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers
Birmingham Cathedral
British Museum
Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
Church of England
Churches Conservation Trust
Council for British Archaeology
Department for Culture, Media and Sport
English Heritage
The Gardens Trust
The Heritage Alliance
Heritage Open Days

Heritage Trust Network
Historic England
Historic Houses
Historic Royal Palaces
ICON - Institute of Conservation
Institute of Historic Building Conservation
The Landmark Trust
Manchester Cathedral
The National Lottery Heritage Fund
National Trust
Natural England
St Mary Redcliffe
UNESCO UK
World Heritage UK
World Monuments Fund Britain
York Minster