



Historic England

Bounds Wall Ushaw Case Study

Delivering Public Engagement, Skills and Training





Summary

This case study demonstrates how to deliver public engagement, skills and training activities as part of conservation works in progress.

It is intended for those commissioning, planning and delivering conservation projects, such as clients and project teams which may include architects, building surveyors, quantity surveyors and contractors.

Read about which activities were selected and why, the range of options considered and how the activities were planned in to this project. A description of how the activities were delivered and an end of project review with practical lessons learnt, costs and benefits is presented in the case study. It also presents feedback from the project team and those that attended the events.

Since this project was undertaken in 2014, English Heritage has become two separate organisations. The English Heritage Trust, the new charity who care for the historic sites and properties, and Historic England the government's expert advisory service for the historic environment.

This case study has been researched and written by Andie Harris with input from Historic England employees Hilary Roome, David Farrington, Claire Botham, Kate Gunthorpe and Kate Wilson.

Here you can find more case studies and discover a range of activities you could include on your project

[HistoricEngland.org.uk/services-skills/training-skills/heritageskills-cpd/building-skills-and-training-into-conservation-projects/](https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/training-skills/heritageskills-cpd/building-skills-and-training-into-conservation-projects/)

Front cover: Bounds Wall,
Ushaw near Ushaw Moor
© Andie Harris Associates

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Introduction

The Grade II* [Bounds Wall with Ball Courts at St Cuthbert's College](#) in Ushaw is listed for historic and architectural interest and group value with the adjacent listed college buildings. Ushaw College was first developed in 1804-08, founded by refugees from the English Catholic seminary and school at Douai, Northern France. The Bounds Wall was built in 1852 to enclose a playing field and include open and covered courts for some unusual games believed to have their roots in Douai. 130 metres in length, the structure follows an approximate arc of a circle. The complex is a significant and rare survival of a purpose-built sports facility.

Figure 1: The Bounds Wall prior to conservation works
© Trustees of Ushaw

This part of the Catholic seminary was closed in 2011. By the time of this project, the Bounds Wall had fallen into disrepair and was placed on the [Heritage at Risk register](#).



The scope of the conservation works included:

- Stabilising the masonry walls
- Repair and replacement of defective masonry and pointing

The project was on site from June 2013 to February 2014. The value of the project was around £417,000 under a JCT Minor Works Contract. £300,000 was provided as a Historic England Repair Grant for Heritage at Risk, (at that time an English Heritage Historic Buildings, Monuments and Designed Landscapes grant) and the remainder funded by the Trustees of Ushaw College, fundraising and donations. The cost of the skills and training element was £3,315. The professional team, contractors and craftspeople working on the project were:

Role	Organisation or Consultant	Website/email
Lead professional and contract administrators	John Niven, The Old Hall Practice, West Auckland, Co Durham	john@theoldhallpractice.co.uk
Main Contractor	Historic Property Restoration	www.hprltd.co.uk
Structural Engineers	Patrick Parsons	www.patrickparsons.co.uk
Historian and Historic Building consultant	Grace McCombie	
Durham County Council Conservation Officer	Bryan Harris	www.durham.gov.uk/conservation
Historic England	Hilary Roome David Farrington Claire Botham	HistoricEngland.org.uk
Ushaw College	Peter Seed, Estate Manager	http://www.ushaw.org/
Training and Engagement	Andie Harris, Heritage Skills Manager for the North of England Civic Trust (NECT)	www.nect.org.uk

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Planning the activities

Ushaw Bounds Wall was selected as a pilot for incorporating public engagement, skills and training activities into conservation projects for a number of reasons:

- It was an opportunity to engage the public with Ushaw College for the first time since the seminary had been closed in 2011
- It was an opportunity to demonstrate a range of skills and techniques required to repair and maintain a unique historic structure

As training activities were a condition of the Historic England grant, the Heritage Skills Manager was involved in the project from the outset and training was on the agenda at the first site meeting. The training aimed to engage with as wide an audience as possible, including local members of the public, construction professionals, contractors and students.

The Heritage Skills Manager assisted the Old Hall Practice to incorporate training in both the pre-qualifying questionnaire (PQQ) and tendering process for the structural engineers and contractors.

The brief for public engagement, skills and training was to deliver:

- **Public access**
The [Trustees of Urshaw College](#), as the owners of the site, would allow open access to members of the public. This would raise the profile of the Bounds Wall and awareness about its place on the Heritage at Risk register
- **‘Upskilling’ opportunities**
As the contract lasted for a period of over twelve months, it was possible for the contractor to provide ‘upskilling’ opportunities for craftspeople on site. This could lead to a [Heritage Skills NVQ Diploma Level 3](#) for a member of staff or trainee, enabling them to apply for a Heritage Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) card
- **Skills taster days**
The contractor was asked to prepare for and deliver building conservation ‘taster days’. Each taster day would be delivered by at least one experienced and qualified Stonemason. They would provide an introduction to lime pointing delivered through demonstrations, teaching and supervision for groups of up to six people

- **‘Walk and Talk’ tours**

Two-hour tours of the Ushaw College complex including the Bounds Wall were to be delivered, each to a maximum of ten people per group. The tours would be given by the Architect, Structural Engineer and Architectural Historian and would target students and the general public. The experts would describe the significance of the site, the work being carried out and the conservation principles applied during this process.

- **Student visits**

The Architect, Structural Engineer and Architectural Historian would be expected to deliver several student visits, each lasting two hours, under the Heritage in Education Programme.

- **Lectures and talks**

Lectures on the history of Ushaw College, including specific details on the Bounds Wall, were to be given by the Architectural Historian with support from the Ushaw Estate Manager and the Architect. These would be delivered in a lecture theatre in the college.

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Delivering the activities

3.1 'Upskilling' Opportunities

Moz Weston, a craftsman from Historic Property Restoration, was offered 'upskilling' training on the project. This enabled him to work towards and achieve a Heritage Skills Level 3 NVQ Diploma (Fixer Mason) and apply for his Heritage Gold CSCS card. The cost of the qualification was covered by the grant and the CSCS card was paid for by the Contractor. The training and assessment went smoothly. The Heritage Skills Manager had a good working relationship with the Heritage Crafts Alliance who delivered the on site assessment and training (OSAT).

Lessons learnt:

- Learning opportunities do not solely have to be for new recruits. Conservation projects offer opportunities for 'upskilling' a contractors' existing workforce to gain new skills and experience. This on site experience can count towards qualifications such as the Heritage Skills Level 3 NVQ Diploma

3.2 Skills Taster Days

The Heritage Skills Manager and contractor ran two lime taster days which looked at the breathability of traditional buildings, the importance of lime, lime mortar mixes, lime application and uses. Each day involved a practical session with a toolbox safety talk. Participants heard about the lime cycle and the process of lime slaking. They got to practice raking out, deep tamping and applying lime mortars and then discussed the aftercare of the structure. They also got a chance to try their hand at stone replacement and stone dressing.

Lessons learnt:

- Plan ahead for taster days. The contractor is responsible for health and safety on site. By planning this early, it will allow the contractor to prepare and allocate resources, carry out risk assessments, provide evidence of insurance and gain the co-operation of sub-contractors

3.3 'Walk and Talk' Tours

Two 'walk and talk' tours took place attended by the Estate Manager and representatives from the project team. The tours focused on the importance of Ushaw, why the walls are there, the scope of the works, and techniques and materials used to conserve the walls. Particular attention was drawn to the masonry stabilisation techniques, the replacement of masonry and the mortars and their application.

Lessons learnt:

- It was noted in feedback from the tour that not all the representatives attended. The importance of this activity must be stressed as a condition of the grant. This should also be raised at the start of the project, explaining the consequences of non-attendance. In this case it did not have an impact on the content of the tour, as this was agreed in advance and delivered by the rest of the team with confidence.
- Consider having a 'dress rehearsal' involving staff or volunteers as 'guinea pigs' to perfect the content and timings. This will also test the risk assessments so be of benefit to the health and safety on site and ensure everyone is clear on their role and responsibilities.
- Provide the representatives from the project team with information on the history and significance of the site and background on the project to help answer any questions

3.4 Student Visits

The project team led two school visits. There were two additional visits for university students, who had a 'walk and talk' tour of the Ushaw complex and participated in a practical pointing exercise.

3.5 Lectures and Talks

Two lectures by the local Architectural Historian Grace McCombie, with assistance from the Estate Manager Peter Seed, were presented on site in a lecture theatre in Ushaw College. The lectures looked at the history of the seminary and the architectural points of interest of both the college buildings as a whole and individually.

3.6 Bat Survey

A bat survey was conducted to identify any bats in the surrounding area. The wall was cleared prior to the works but there was an opportunity to undertake survey work. The results were included in the programme of activities. 'Seeing and hearing the bats' was noted by one tour attendee as a particularly enjoyable aspect of the visit.

3.7 Use of Contract Clauses

The 'upskilling' training, skills taster days, 'walk and talk' tours and lectures were a condition of the Historic England grant and were all included in the tender and contract documents. This was done by drafting clauses which included an outline description and quantities of the activities to be delivered, health and safety management, risk assessments, evidence of insurance, gaining co-operation of sub-contractors and steps for monitoring progress. The Heritage Skills Manager helped the main contractor with the details of the training activities. The 'model clauses' proved straightforward and practical to apply.

Figure 2: Introduction to lime pointing on a skills taster day © Andie Harris Associates



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Feedback

A detailed evaluation form captured feedback from the event participants, and observations were made throughout the events that were organised by the Heritage Skills Manager.

There was a lot of interest in the project with several attendees travelling a significant distance (over 50 miles) to attend. The feedback was very positive with over 70% of attendees 'very satisfied' with their event. Many visitors particularly appreciated the taster days and advice provided on technical aspects of the work, they commented:

'Brilliant day. Very useful for my job and a cracking set of lads on site. Coordinator was very knowledgable and well organised as well.'

'[I enjoyed] All of it! Especially access to a live site and talking to the workforce'

'Brilliant!'

'Initially concerned that there was insufficient topics for the time made available. However: Just right!'

'Longer lecture please! It was fascinating'

There was also considerable interest in the practical activities and demonstrations. Some examples of what participants enjoyed most about the hands on experience was '1:1 instruction', 'talking to the people who do it every day', '[a] hands on opportunity to chat with tradesman and [a] real project', 'stone carving [and] talking to the guys on site about stone and building conservation' and 'the advice about pointing in general'.

It was important to gather feedback from the contractor and project team to get their perspective as well:

- The Estate Manager at Ushaw commented 'it is great to share knowledge of the site with the general public and to gain an understanding of the work taken to maintain the structure of the Bounds Wall, especially when we are not quite sure how it stands up at all!. He also commented on the support provided by the Heritage Skills Manager, 'as the tours were booked through a coordinator, it was easy for me to deliver the material without worrying about the administrative burden, on top of my day job'

- The contractor also valued the training activities provided, particularly ‘upskilling’ a member of the team to achieve the NVQ3 Heritage Skills and Heritage CSCS Card. The individual’s employer said: ‘the qualification will be invaluable to the future of the person [awarded the opportunity] and their future in the sector’

Lessons learnt:

- It is essential to gather feedback from those attending events to measure quality, inform future events and to demonstrate demand. This project showed feedback should be gathered on the day, as it is much harder to gather after the event
- Photo release permission should be included on the feedback form to allow images from the event to be used in future marketing, social media and reports for funders
- Many projects use contract clauses outlining the public engagement, skills and training activities in the tender and contract documents for the main contractor to deliver (see Delivering the Activities)
- There will also be tasks to coordinate around the main activities which in this case were managed by the Heritage Skills Manager. These may include advertising and promoting the events to specific audiences and acting as ‘host’, administering bookings, taking and gathering photographs and feedback and producing follow-up reports. Allocating these tasks will need to be factored in as they could be delegated to staff or volunteers by the client/building owner, or included in the services delivered by the professional team or contractors

Figure 3: Stone dressing demonstration on a skills taster day © Andie Harris Associates



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Costs and benefits

The Bounds Wall project shows that public engagement and training activities can be delivered at low cost. The value of the project was around £417,000 and the skills and training element was just £3315 (approximately 0.8 per cent of the project value). £300,000 of the project was funded by a [Historic England Repair Grant for Heritage at Risk](#) and the remainder by the Trustees of Ushaw College.

All events were free to participants, but there are opportunities for generating an income from these activities. Various case studies show how demand is strong for 'works in progress' tours. For example on the English Heritage project to repair [Harmondsworth Barn](#) the hardhat tours for members were charged at £18 per head.

For this project, open access to the general public was particularly successful and is now an integral part of the college's provision.

The Estate Manager showed a range of visual material of the Bounds Wall before, during and after the repairs to help illustrate technical aspects. He went on to include details about the building works, materials and technology in subsequent tours for the general public.

There were wider benefits including:

- The diversity of audiences reached in a small package of works due to the range of activities on offer. This was helped by setting expectations of the project team from the start.
- The clients were able to look at alternative methods of engaging the general public, not just by opening the site but by involving them in the very repair and restoration of the complex. The owners felt this was a great start to a new future for Ushaw College.
- The seminary had not been open to the general public since its closure in 2011 and the feedback has culminated in the site re-opening to the public

The successful outcome of this project was that the Bounds Wall was removed from the Heritage at Risk register. A key element to the success of the project was the role of the Heritage Skills Manager who ensured everyone was moving in the right direction. They made it easier for the professionals and contractors by specifying the details of training and pulling together the documentation with the contractor. The Heritage Skills Manager managed the administration of the events but also, by taking bookings from members of the public, gathered information on participants' interests to enable the team to deliver more bespoke events. All costs associated with the provision of this support came from funds outside the contract.

Figure 4: 'Walk and talk'
tour at Bounds Wall
© Andie Harris Associates



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Further reading

More case studies and activities you could include on your project:

[HistoricEngland.org.uk/services-skills/training-skills/heritageskills-cpd/building-skills-and-training-into-conservation-projects/](https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/training-skills/heritageskills-cpd/building-skills-and-training-into-conservation-projects/)

Other websites:

Heritage at Risk register

[HistoricEngland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/](https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/)

Historic England Repair Grant for Heritage at Risk

<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/grants/our-grant-schemes/repair-grants/>

North of England Civic Trust

<http://www.nect.org.uk/hsi>

The National Heritage List for England (NHLE)

[HistoricEngland.org.uk/listing/the-list/](https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/)

Information about the Heritage Skills NVQ Diploma Level 3

[HistoricEngland.org.uk/services-skills/training-skills/heritageskills-cpd/traditional-building-skills](https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/training-skills/heritageskills-cpd/traditional-building-skills)

Harmondsworth Barn

[HistoricEngland.org.uk/images-books/publications/delivering-public-engagement-skills-and-training/heag150-harmondsworth-barn-case-study/](https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/delivering-public-engagement-skills-and-training/heag150-harmondsworth-barn-case-study/)

Ushaw

<http://www.ushaw.org/store/index.php?page=sports-at-ushaw>

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