



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN



Historic
England

Wellbeing in Volunteers on Heritage At Risk Projects Storyboard of a Report for Historic England

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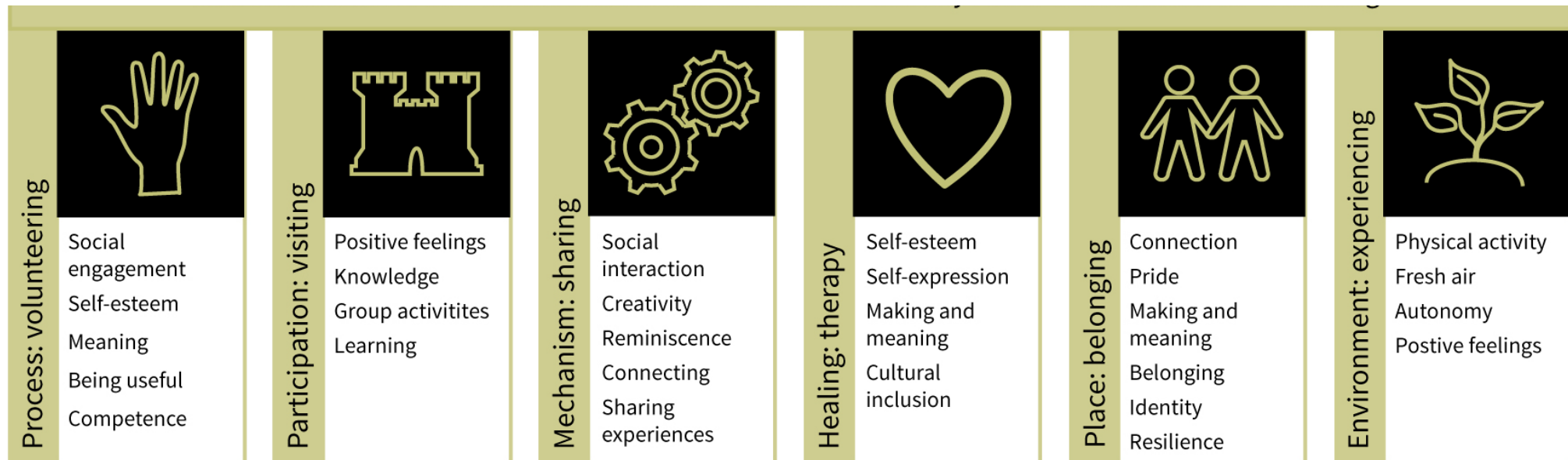


The question

What is the relationship between wellbeing and volunteering on Heritage at Risk projects?

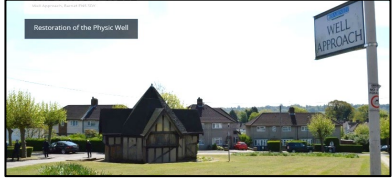
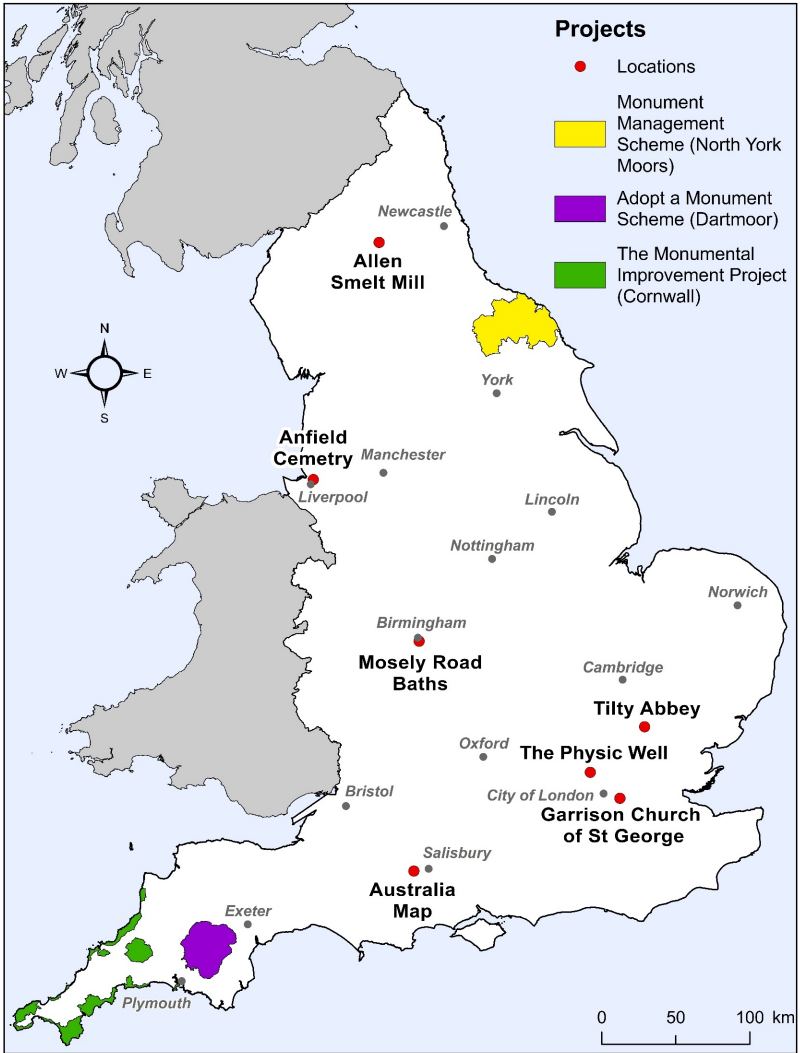
Existing knowledge

- Increasing evidence that heritage can contribute to wellbeing, a sense of ‘feeling good and functioning well’ (Aked et al for NEF 2008)
- Major heritage organisations now build wellbeing into strategic planning
- Social prescribing to enhance wellbeing is of increasing interest to heritage organisations
- Six routes to wellbeing from heritage (Historic England 2018)



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The ten case study sites

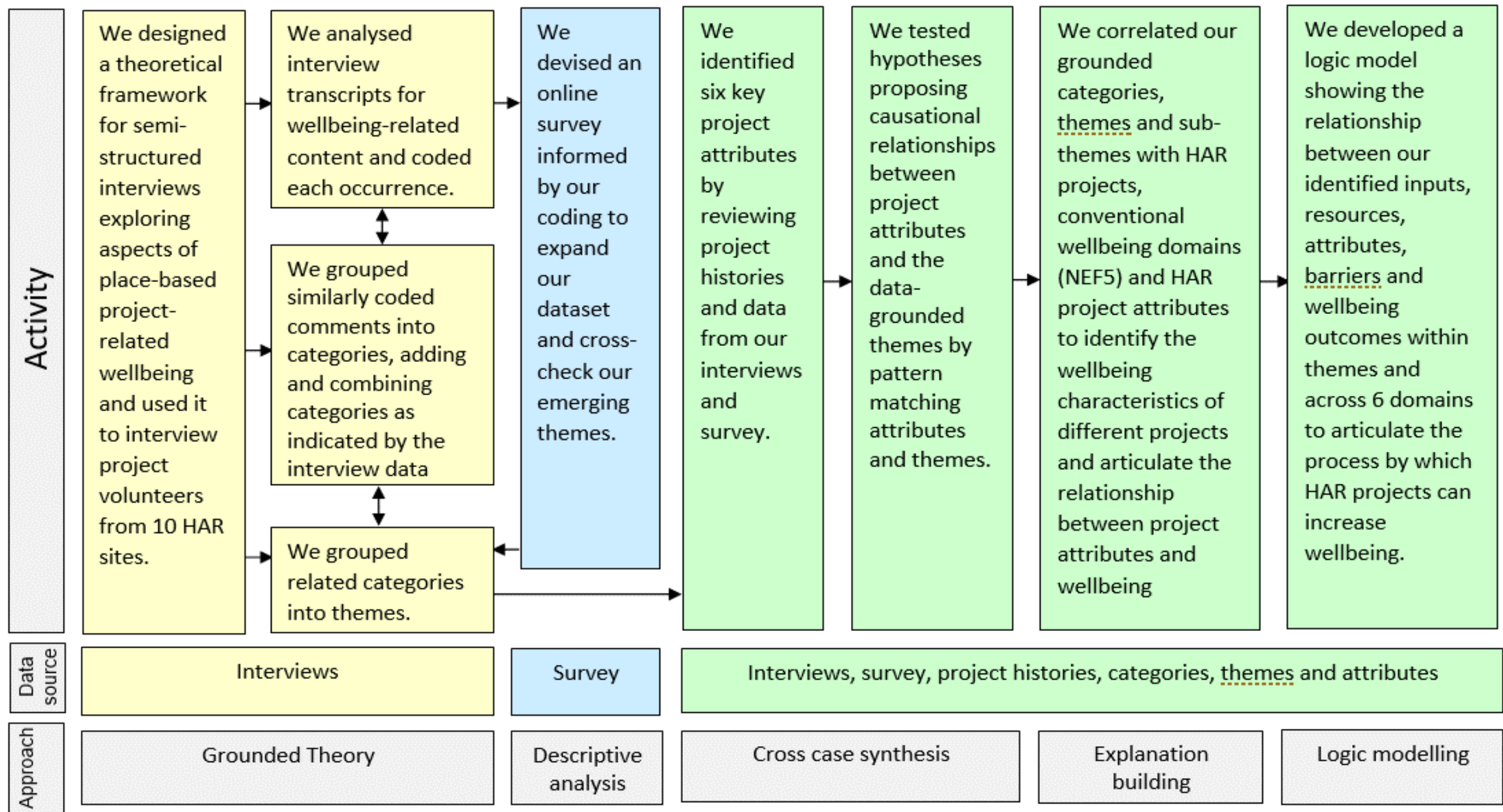


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The
methodology

A research design derived from
grounded theory
to generate new evidence and
insights:

sequential exploratory mixed-
methods approach



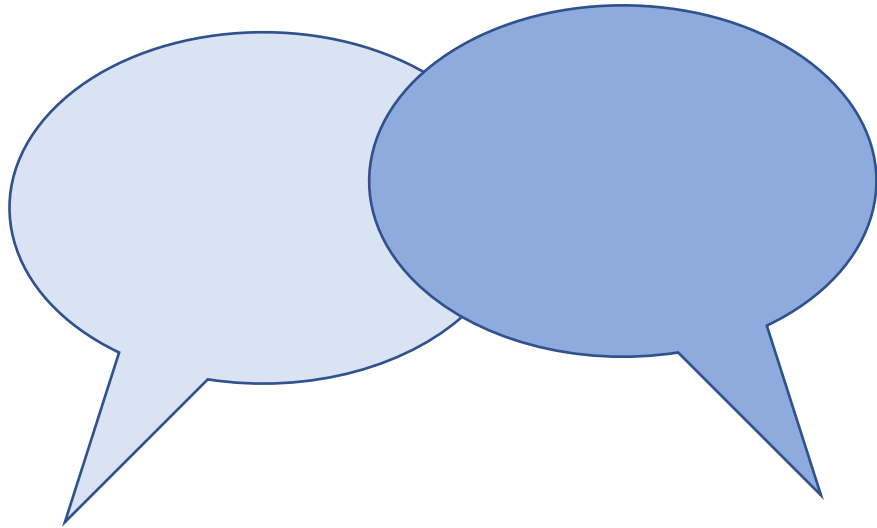
1. Interviews: semi-structured around three areas



[Workshop: 'Heritage and Wellbeing' | Staff and Student News \(kent.ac.uk\)](#)

- **Area 1:** Belonging and identity - In what ways do people feel connected to the place in which they live and its heritage?
- **Area 2:** The impact of volunteering on/contributing to an HAR project on individuals or communities - with an emphasis on psychological effects/wellbeing but not excluding transferable skills, social capital
- **Area 3:** The impact of a completed restored heritage asset on individuals or communities - after the project

Interviews: some features of interviewee cohort



- 35 interviews conducted online, transcribed (nearly 185 000 words)
- Open-ended questions: feelings about the place in which they lived and its heritage; impact of volunteering on a HAR project on individuals/communities; impact of a completed restored HAR asset on individuals/ communities
- Some informant characteristics:
 - 18 identified as male and 17 female
 - majority identified as white British (24/35)
 - majority married (24/35)
 - ages ranged from 20 to 80
 - 16 in full-time employment, 16 retired, two students
 - length of involvement in the project ranged from two months to 13 years

2. Online survey: to expand dataset and cross-check emerging themes

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore the connections between volunteering on a Heritage at Risk (HAR) project and individual and community wellbeing. HAR projects are funded by Historic England with the primary intention of protecting heritage such as historic buildings and ancient monuments. This research could have important implications for promoting wellbeing through heritage volunteering.

Why have I been invited?

You are being invited to take part because you have volunteered on a HAR project. We are inviting many other HAR volunteers to take part.

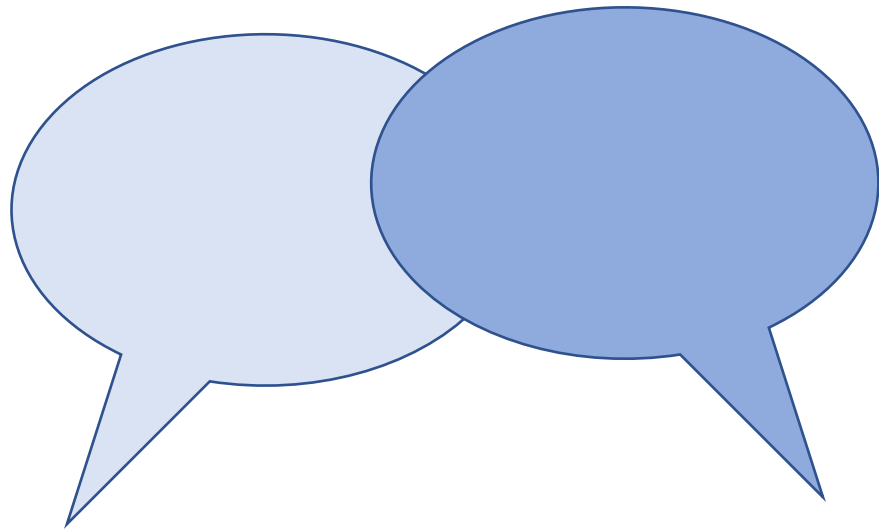
Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign an online consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason, before submitting your completed questionnaire. This will not affect your statutory rights.

After submission, all data will be immediately anonymised, so it will no longer be possible to withdraw, as we will be unable to identify your responses.

- To explore themes arising from interviews further
- New questionnaire that included some validated measures
- Piloted August 2020
- Launched September 2020 for three months
- Link sent to contact person at each case study site

Online survey: some features of respondent cohort



- 52 usable responses
- 75% from rural projects/archaeological sites
 - accounts for the high numbers strongly liking their local place for its natural surroundings (86.6%) and walking (74.5%)
- 31 respondents were male and 21 female
- 88.4% aged over 50
- Nearly 60% of respondents were retired
- Over 96% identified as British and 65.3% as white
- 67% had a university degree

3. Cross case synthesis: matching site characteristics and wellbeing

- Seven key attributes of sites identified from interview data
- Positive and negative wellbeing associations matched to these attributes
- Relationship to wellbeing cross-matched to NEF wellbeing domains
- Attributes
 - Rural/urban
 - Intact/ruin
 - Indoor/outdoor
 - Improving condition
 - Physically demanding
 - Autonomous volunteering
 - Publicly engaged
- NEF Domains
 - connect with others
 - become physically active
 - learn new things
 - give back
 - focus on the moment; be mindful

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Conclusions



[Heritage at Risk: Latest Findings | Historic England](#)

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Six themes emerged associating volunteering & wellbeing

Purpose

1. Volunteers can indulge their personal interests in history, archaeology, heritage and/ or place.
2. Volunteers can feel altruistic and satisfy their need to do so.
3. Volunteers have something to dedicate themselves to / be a focus for their attention.

Being

4. Volunteers can be the person they feel they are, and express and show that identity.
5. Volunteers strengthen can their sense of belonging by working in groups with others.
6. Volunteers can make a meaningful contribution that they can feel good about.

Capacity

7. Volunteers gain personal satisfaction and bolster employability by learning new skills.
8. Volunteers increase their interest in / connection with the world around them by increasing their knowledge.
9. New perspectives / opportunities gained from new or diversified experience.

Sharing

10. Volunteers connect their interests with others.
11. Volunteers increase their place attachment by connecting with heritage / place / community.
12. Volunteers gain satisfaction from increasing social cohesion by connecting with a wider and more diverse range of people.

Self-nurture

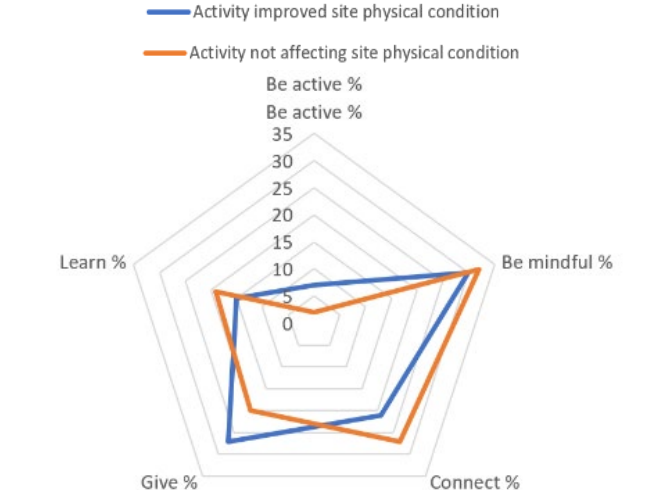
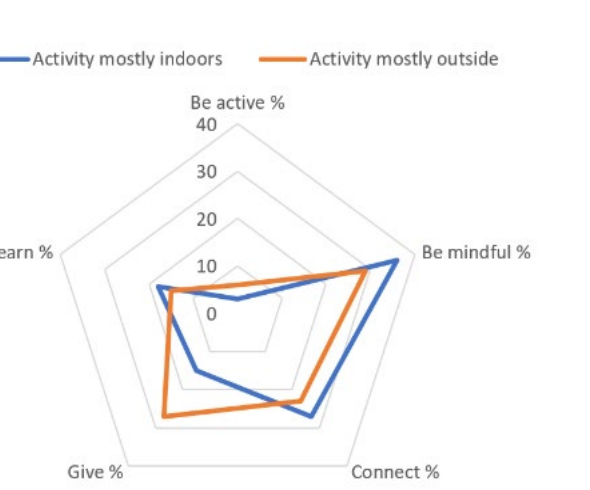
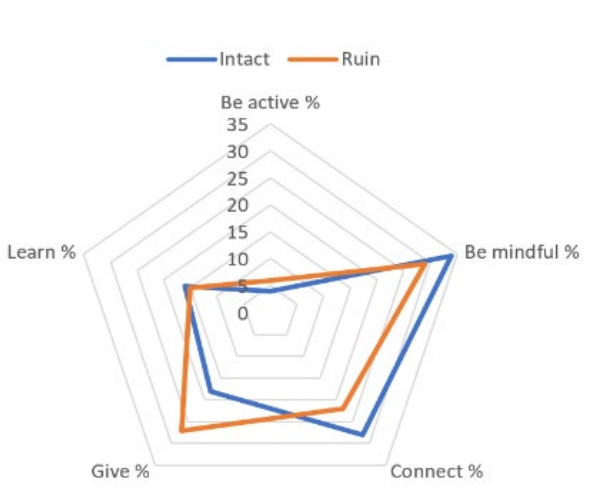
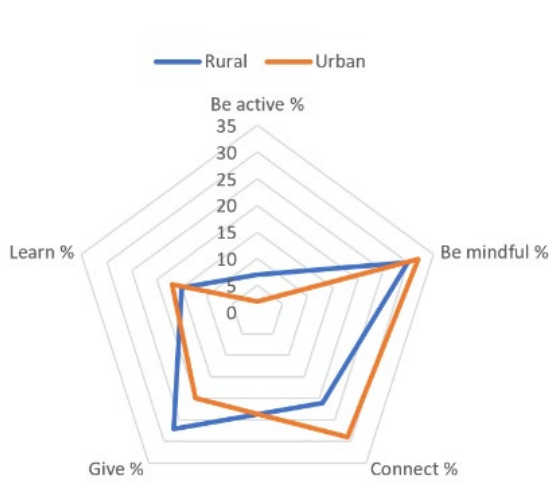
13. Volunteers improve their physical health by being more physically active.
14. Volunteers improve their sense of hedonic wellbeing through experiences they enjoy.
15. Volunteers increase their sense of belonging and connectedness with others by extending networks.

Self-actualisation

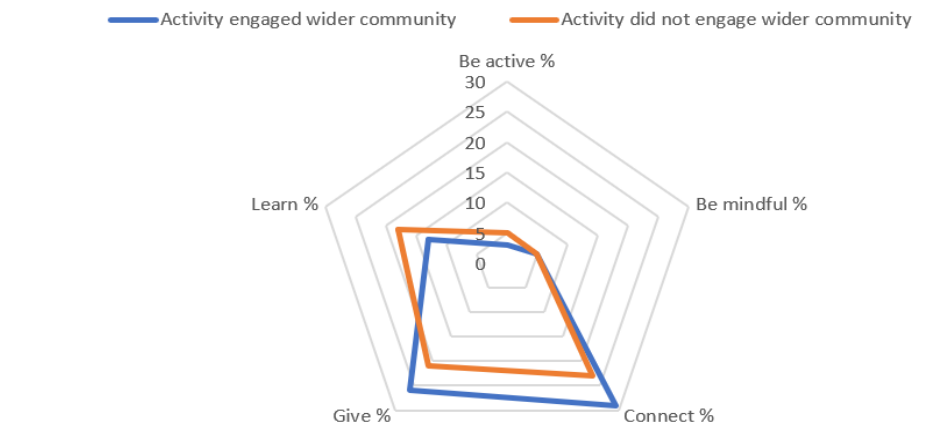
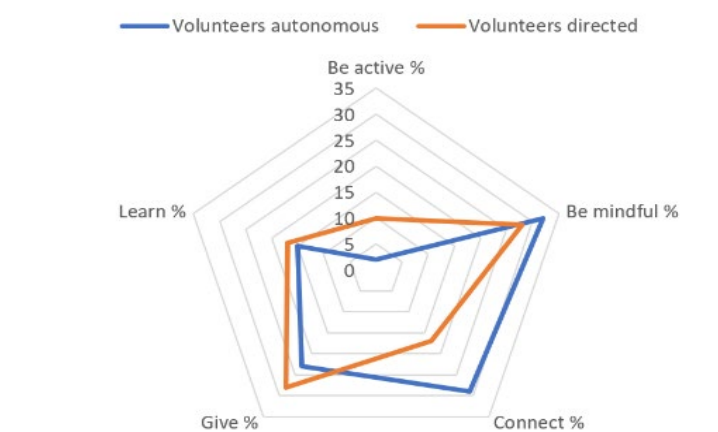
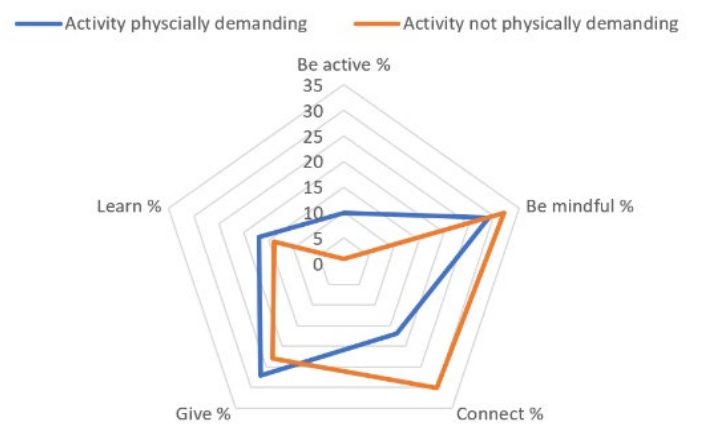
16. Volunteers gain a sense of achievement by changing others' knowledge and attitudes.
17. Volunteers take pride in improving the place/area where they are volunteering.
18. Self-esteem is enhanced by feeling valued.
19. Optimism is increased by exploring future opportunities/ aspirations.

Activity attributes could be matched to wellbeing

- 1. Rural/urban
- 2. intact/ruin
- 3. Indoor/outdoor
- 4. Improving condition



- 5. Physically demanding
- 6. Autonomous volunteering
- 7. Engaging wider community



Conclusions from cross- case synthesis

- Attributes most strongly associated with wellbeing:
 - Sites which were rural and/or ruined
 - Activities which made a difference
 - Activities which were outdoors and/or physically demanding
 - Outcomes which engaged members of the wider public
- Activities most strongly associated with wellbeing:
 - Activities on rural ruin sites where the physical condition of the site was improved
 - Activities which made a difference, especially in connecting with the wider community
- However, **all attributes and activities showed some association with wellbeing**

Eight characteristics of heritage and at-risk volunteering specifically were associated with wellbeing

Heritage volunteering offers:

Temporality – Volunteers enjoy the mindfulness and privileged access of 'niche' opportunities and experiences connecting with the past.

Discovery – the excitement of discovery and the interest in seeing things in new ways contributes to hedonic wellbeing

Authenticity – feeling connected to irreplaceable tangible remains from the past strengthens empathy and attachment.

Continuity – activities linking past and present to future offer reassurance about the passage of time and impact positively on perceptions of self-efficacy, connectedness and fulfilment.

At-risk volunteering offers:

Rescuing – helping preserve irreplaceable heritage enables volunteers offers senses of purpose, feeling needed and valued and success over adversity.

Nostalgia – connecting with a lost past, place or person increases perceptions of connectedness, continuity and belonging, nurtures personal interests and builds empathy.

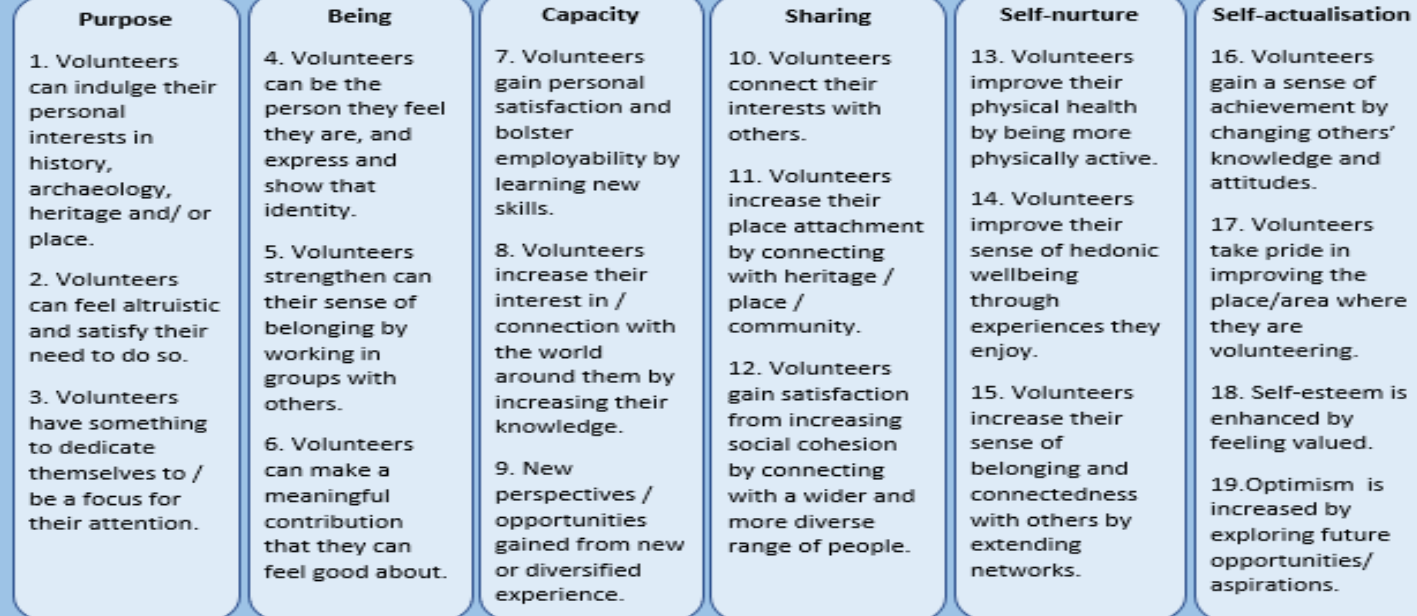
Transformation – wellbeing is associated with reassurance that change over time is possible and satisfaction in helping achieve change.

Legacy – wellbeing related to giving, self-esteem, self-actualisation and feeling valued is associated with creating a meaningful legacy.

Bringing together the new insights

Wellbeing in volunteers

Wellbeing outcomes (6 HARAW themes)



Inputs and opportunities provided by HAR interventions

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A logic model to articulate the relationship
between inputs, activities and wellbeing outcomes
in HAR volunteering

Inputs (what projects need)			Activities (what people do)		Outcomes (what people gain)	
Aims and motivations	Enabling actions	Resources needed	Opportunity	HAR-specific experience	HARAW wellbeing themes	NEF/NHS Wellbeing
From HAR team – all essential	Barriers to be removed	Accessible asset with a heritage ‘story’ – can be any site type or condition (eg rural/urban, building/archaeological site, ruin/intact)	Opportunities to connect with and learn from heritage / history / archaeology / place	Connecting with <u>heritage</u> aspects of project/asset provides the opportunity to experience:	Purpose	Be mindful Give Learn Connect
Identified heritage need					Lack of resources	Opportunities to contribute and have a positive impact on asset / place / people
Assessment of required actions	Lack of Information / awareness of opportunities	Specialist advice and expertise	Opportunities for public / community engagement	Discovery	Capacity	
Project design						Too much responsibility on volunteers
From volunteers	Barriers to be managed	Range of activities to match volunteer interests, aspirations and availability	Opportunities for public / community engagement	Continuity	Sharing	Connect Give
Time/Commitment						
Skills / knowledge Networks	Health constraints	End-of-project support with reporting	Flexible management (activities are regular and/or as-needed,	Rescuing	Self-nurture	Be mindful Connect Be active
Interest in history						
Belief in value of heritage	Site accessibility	Support for scoping future activity (including ongoing	Flexible management (activities are regular and/or as-needed,	Nostalgia	Self-nurture	Be mindful Connect Be active
Desire to help heritage						
Aspiration to occupy time purposefully	Site accessibility	Support for scoping future activity (including ongoing	Flexible management (activities are regular and/or as-needed,	Nostalgia	Self-nurture	Be mindful Connect Be active
Attachment to site /place/community						
Desire to give to community	Site accessibility	Support for scoping future activity (including ongoing	Flexible management (activities are regular and/or as-needed,	Nostalgia	Self-nurture	Be mindful Connect Be active

HARAW Recommendations



[Heritage at Risk | Campaign for National Parks \(cnp.org.uk\)](https://www.cnp.org.uk)

Six objectives to embed wellbeing in HAR interventions

1. Ensure Historic England staff, stakeholders and volunteers are aware of the capacity of HAR interventions to support wellbeing in volunteers and know the benefits of this for people, places and the organisation
2. Assess all proposed HAR interventions for potential to involve volunteers and supporting wellbeing
3. Identify and promote to potential volunteers the likely wellbeing impacts of HAR interventions (alongside the opportunities offered) in order to attract a more diverse range of volunteers
4. Identify HAR volunteers' aims and monitor their experience longitudinally with reference to the wellbeing outcomes of this report
5. Track the development of skills, knowledge and experience for those HAR volunteers who wish to record this
6. Capture feedback from as many HAR volunteers as possible when their volunteering ends

Toolkits have been developed to help realise these objectives

Three recommendations for future research

1. Explore the nature of *causal* links between aspects of HAR volunteering and wellbeing, including the impact of volunteering on wellbeing over time
1. Advance understanding of the *distinctive* wellbeing benefits of volunteering in heritage and/or at-risk contexts
3. Explore the wellbeing impact of volunteering on members of currently *under-represented demographic groups*, including young adults (20-40 years), economically disadvantaged individuals, members of minority ethnic communities and individuals with special needs