



World Heritage in the UK 2023 – 24

New for this review, are some of the key nation-wide developments that have influenced and shaped the UK's World Heritage sector during 01 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

Periodic Reporting

DCMS and Historic England oversaw the Third Cycle of Periodic Reporting concerning the UK's implementation of the World Heritage Convention. This exercise ran from September 2022 through to July 2023 and involved the completion of comprehensive questionnaires at both the national level and at individual site level. All questionnaires were completed and submitted to the World Heritage Centre in advance of the deadline and received positive feedback for the UK's approach.

Copies of the questionnaires and for the World Heritage Centre's high-level findings from the reports submitted across the Europe and North America region are available from DCMS and/or Historic England.

Tentative List

Following a robust and thorough selection process, the UK's latest Tentative List of prospective World Heritage Sites was updated and published in April 2023. The List comprises:

- The Flow Country
- Gracehill Moravian Church Settlements
- City of York: historic urban core
- Birkenhead Park, the pioneering People's Park
- East Atlantic Flyway: England East Coast Wetlands
- Little Cayman Marine Parks and Protected Areas
- Mousa, Old Scatness and Jarlshof: the Zenith of Iron Age Shetland



Alongside the updated list, DCMS published some background to the process and guidance for sites on the Tentative List and those interested in applying in the future, which can also be viewed [here](#). DCMS continues to engage closely with Tentative List sites as they work through the nomination process towards inscription as World Heritage Sites, notably focussing on the processes in place for Technical Evaluation (reviewing Tentative List sites' nominations in draft form) and the introduction of the new Preliminary Assessment stage where UNESCO review and provide feedback on nominations at an early stage.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill received Royal Assent in October 2023, becoming an Act of Parliament. One of the measures in the Act to strengthen heritage protection in England includes a new duty on decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing a World Heritage Site, thus putting the protection of World Heritage Sites on the same footing with other heritage assets/designations for the first time in legislation in England. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) will update the National Planning Policy Framework in 2024 in order for the new measures introduced in the Act to be implemented, with DCMS and Historic England feeding into this work.

The following projects are examples of the work undertaken across the UK's UNESCO World Heritage Sites, during the same year.

Cornish Mining WHS

Mineworkers' smallholdings within the Tamara Landscape partnership area

Whilst metalliferous mine sites with their Cornish-type engine houses and other features are readily recognisable, mineworkers' smallholdings are often mistaken for small fields associated with commercial farming. Historically these smallholdings comprised small subsistence farms whereby mineworkers would manage a small landholding of perhaps 3-5 acres to grow fruit, veg and perhaps raise chickens or a pig. Whilst surviving in a number of locations across the World Heritage Site, the

Tamar Valley was understood to have experienced little smallholding creation. Working with the Tamara Landscape Partnership, which is a 5-year programme of activities across the Tamar Valley, research was commissioned to assess mineworkers' smallholdings in the Tamara scheme area. The resulting study revealed a wealth of information about specific mineworkers in the Tamar Valley in the mid-nineteenth century and will help inform a range of uses including responses to planning applications, input to local Neighbourhood Development plans and other landscape strategies.



The report can be found here:

www.cornishmining.org.uk/about/education/research-mineworkers-smallholdings-within-the-tamara-landscape-area

Heritage Expo

In September 2023 Cornish Mining worked with a multitude of their heritage sector partners to provide a student expo, hosted at the National Trust's Godolphin property. The event showcased the wide-ranging work carried out by organisations, businesses, community groups and individuals who support and deliver Cornwall's historic environment strategy. As well as being open to the public, emphasis was put on the variety of careers and opportunities for engaging with heritage, with nearly 200 schoolchildren from 7 schools and colleges visiting the and talking to exhibitors about the diversity of career choices within the heritage sector.



Derwent Valley Mills WHS

Derwent Valley Mills 'World Heritage Wall' unveiled

There's a new look to the entrance area for Belper's Ada Belfield Care Centre and new town library, with the unveiling of a 'World Heritage Wall'. The mural, measuring 4.4 metres by 2.4 metres, welcomes people to Belper, which lies at the centre of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, and tells them a little of its history, with a map showing a trail of 13 wayfinding boards and 18 heritage markers around the town centre for people wanting to discover more about its heritage.

The care centre and library were developed by Derbyshire County Council using parts of a former textile factory and music hall, reflecting an on-going commitment to conservation in the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.

The mural was the final piece of work in a series of projects delivered through the Great Place Scheme, funded by Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund and delivered by the World Heritage Coordination Team. This completes the wayfinding schemes that have been installed at Belper, Milford and Darley Abbey which comprise interpretation boards, some of which have bespoke blacksmith created waterwheel stands, and a series of 'waterwheel plaques' with QR codes that provide a wealth of information about different elements of the world heritage site including workers housing, railway, mill buildings, waterways and incorporate research about links to the enslaved workers providing the cotton to the mills. You can find out more about the wayfinding project on this You Tube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5ssGhTQ1so>



L-R: WHS Wall official opening: Cutting the ribbon at the Belper mural is Professor Ian Whitehead from the University of Derby, who chaired the scheme board, joined by the Chair of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Partnership and County Council Leader Barry Lewis; Exploring the wayfinding scheme around Darley Abbey Mills; Representatives from the Legacy Makers and Local history groups who helped research information linking the Darley Abbey Mills to the cotton plantations using enslaved workers



L-R: A waterwheel plaque and QR code to find additional information about locations around the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site; Bespoke waterwheel blacksmith created information board stands

Forth Bridge WHS

Forth Bridges Trail

The [Forth Bridges Trail](#) is a circular walk that takes in the iconic Forth Bridges and the historic bridge-head communities of North and South Queensferry. Supported by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Forth Bridges Tourism Group, [further interpretation signage stops](#) were added to the Forth Bridges Trail in March 2024, including two stops dedicated to the Forth Bridge World Heritage Site status.

Writer-in-Residence

The Forth Bridge World Heritage Management Group was delighted to appoint a Writer-in-Residence for 2023. During this time Barbara Henderson published two books. Firstly "Rivet Boy" is based on real events, telling the story of one 12-year old's role in the building of the Forth Bridge. Barbara arranged many engagement events in schools and toured book festivals with Rivet Boy. And secondly, in "Made From Girders", Barbara partnered with photographer Alan McCredie to tell the stories of modern communities at the Forth Bridge.

Charity Events

Network Rail has established two significant and very popular charity events at the Forth Bridge. In September 2023, Barnardo's raised over £50K during the Your View event where participants ascend to the top of the north tower to enjoy spectacular views. This was followed in October, with the return of the Forth Bridge Abseil, which raised over £300K for Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland and other charity partners after 600 adventure-seekers took part. The Flying Scotsman also paid a visit that day during her 100th anniversary tour.



And last but not least, **Dr Miles Oglethorpe** retired from Historic Environment Scotland in March 2024. During his career Miles championed Industrial Heritage, co-writing the nomination for the Forth Bridge's Nomination for Inclusion in the World Heritage List. Since the Forth Bridge's inscription in 2015, Miles has chaired the Forth Bridge World Heritage Management Group and is pictured receiving retirement gifts from this cross-agency and community group.



The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales WHS

A Northwest Wales World Heritage Coordinator has been appointed. This was a 2022-23 management and governance priority. The coordinator is helping facilitate activity in the two Northwest Wales World Heritage Sites (The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales and The Castles and Walled Towns of Edward I in Gwynedd). The post is funded by Cyngor Gwynedd and Welsh Government (Cadw).

Chwarel Dinorwig – example of the WHS’ protection scheduling programme

HBO (Home Box Office, Warner Brothers) helped fund protective measures at Chwarel Dinorwig whilst conducting filming there. In advance of filming, trial excavations revealed well preserved archaeological deposits in areas of the quarry thought to be archaeologically sterile. Information gleaned therein will feed back into the designation process.

But the filming work also led to some comprehensive repair and conservation work. The site’s C4 incline western parapet wall, which had collapsed, needed to be repaired before an actor could be filmed descending the incline.

The incline is pictured below (the pillars, realistic though they look, are in fact fibreglass - parts of the temporary set design).



Levelling Up Funding

The Slate Landscape WHS were successful recipients of Levelling Up funding. Only one in four Levelling Up applications submitted by UK Local Authorities were successful. A strength of the Llewyrch o'r Lechi application was the way in which it built upon priorities detailed in the WHS Management Plan and the partnership approach towards regeneration between Cyngor Gwynedd and delivery partners.



Key work that this funding supports includes: **Yr Hen Bost** (above), a prominent building on Bethesda High Street, that will be transformed into a community centre including the creation of a heritage centre, a café, creative space and business units, upgrading Neuadd Ogwen as a cultural venue, and improving access between Bethesda Penrhyn Quarry and Port Penrhyn (see 'before and after' images below).



The redevelopment of the **National Slate Museum** will include significant restoration and conservation work, as well as a revamped interpretation. The museum will also act as the main WHS hub and gateway, signposting to other parts of the WHS; **Parc Padarn Country Park** will also undergo significant improvements including the repurposing of historic buildings, and improved visitor infrastructure and creating better footpath links between Gilfach Ddu and the slate landscape. Work will also take place in **Blaenau Ffestiniog** (see images below) to renovate three historic town centre buildings for community use, along with a new footpath and cycle route linking the town with Lechwedd Quarry. Funding will also be used for town centre improvements including signage, boundary markers, public art and public realm improvements all centred around the local slate heritage.



WHS Interpretation Plan

Interpretation is a key element in terms of understanding, appreciating, enjoying and hopefully respecting the WHS. The WHS Interpretation Plan is being implemented, one aspect of this is the hubs which will encourage visitors to move around the various component parts of the WHS, whilst also serving as focal points for community benefit.

WHS Community and Business Engagement

Events demonstrating how World Heritage status can be of benefit to local businesses are being held, along with WH training for public-facing roles, promotion of the Welsh language, promotion of considerate and safe visitation, and the development of a sustainable visitor economy plan by Cyngor Gwynedd and Eryri National Park Authority. Various community activities have also been held through the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund Development Phase funding.

The English Lake District WHS

A newly adopted Destination Management Plan (DMP) for Cumbria and covering the English Lake District WHS was launched last year. It provides a long-term vision (up to 2040), a collective statement of intent to manage tourism in Cumbria, objectives and a prioritised 6-year action plan within an annual rolling programme of review.

A DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR CUMBRIA: 2024 TO 2030



This is a jointly developed strategy for the whole of Cumbria including The English Lake District WHS and for all organisations and partners - public and private - involved in the management and delivery of services to visitors. There has been comprehensive consultation and input from a huge range of stakeholders. The development of the DMP has been evidence-led, utilising local data/trends and national sentiment surveys, as well as best practice from other destinations. A full draft was consulted on during November 2023 via a specific consultation event and online consultation. The draft DMP was also presented for feedback at events across Cumbria attended by 500+ businesses and representatives from other organisations.

There are environmental pressures in Cumbria created by residents, by farming and other business activity, and by visitors. Environmental challenges created by visitor economy activity tend to be concentrated in certain locations in Cumbria and can affect the environment and the landscape in ways that impact on the enjoyment of our environment for residents and visitors alike. The challenges created include water usage, water pollution, litter/waste, car parking and pressure on the visitor infrastructure (from toilets to footpaths). One of the objectives of the DMP is to support responsible tourism that benefits the environment and supports vibrant communities.

This requires managing visitors as they journey to and within Cumbria to help improve visitor experience, reduce pressure on the environment and bring further benefits to host communities. It requires enabling low carbon experiences in ways which inspire, excite and attract. It is also about supporting responsible relationships between visitors and the landscape, heritage and communities of Cumbria.

The Flow Country Tentative WHS

The Flow Country World Heritage Site Nomination IUCN Evaluation Visit, 28 Aug – 01 Sep

A major milestone in the nomination process for The Flow Country team was hosting an assessment visit from an IUCN delegation. The visit took place in the last week of August and included site visits across the Flow Country as well as meetings with a wide range of stakeholders.



The visit was widely reported on across local and national media and featured on the BBC Scotland lunchtime and evening news as well as on Radio Scotland.



Following the visit, the IUCN assessors requested further clarification on the global significance of the biodiversity found across the region and a few other points which was all duly provided. The team now await with bated breath the IUCN recommendation to UNESCO, and UNESCO decision on inscription at the end of July.

Ministerial Visit by Gillian Martin MSP, Minister for Energy & the Environment

The Flow Country was pleased to host a visit from the Scottish Government Minister for Energy and the Environment on 5 Feb, demonstrating the high-level attention that World Heritage can bring to the region. The main purpose of the visit was to highlight the potential benefits that World Heritage can bring to the region and its communities. This message was well received with the Minister noting that it was clear from her visit that the Flow Country World Heritage project has the potential to help not only Caithness and Sutherland, but Scotland as a whole. Discussions, also involving the leader of the Highland Council, went on to cover funding sources and mechanisms that will ensure World Heritage, as a catalyst for change, can be fully capitalised on.



Members of The Flow Country Steering Group with the (then) Minister for Energy and the Environment, in Feb 2024 atop the viewing tower at Forsinard in the heart of The Flow Country WHS.

The Flow Country Partnership wins Knowledge Exchange award

The Flow Country Partnership and the University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI) won a Knowledge Exchange award at the [Scottish Knowledge Transfer Awards](#) on 14 Mar: “The Flow Country

Partnership, working with UHI Environmental Research Institute, have the collective aims of re-evaluating the blanket bog peatlands of the Flow Country and ensuring, through individual and collective action, that outcomes related to climate change mitigation, natural capital, sustainability and biodiversity conservation are optimised. It also seeks to ensure that the social and economic benefits arising from appropriate and effective management of this globally significant natural are optimised”.

Gwynedd Castles and Town Walls of King Edward WHS

2023 - 24 saw the completion of a long-standing capital investment project: the transformation of the King’s Gate at Caernarfon Castle, Gwynedd.

The King’s Gate project at Caernarfon Castle encountered significant delays caused by wet Welsh weather, but was fully open to the public by the end of March 2023. This work represents one of the most important capital investments that Cadw have undertaken at any of their monuments in recent years. The introduction of new floors and a viewing platform at the top of the King’s Gate has provided access to the impressive defensive features for the first time in hundreds of years. Perhaps more importantly, the addition of a lift provides unique access for all and not just the able-bodied.



The associated archaeological work at Caernarfon Castle has added to Cadw’s knowledge of the construction sequence of the castle that is seen today as well as the structures that pre-dated the castle. The supporting conservation work will protect the medieval gatehouse for many years to come. The investment also featured ground-breaking new interpretation on the theme ‘the hands that built the castle’, comprising a series of sculptures and artworks in a variety of media that celebrated the craftsmanship that went into building Caernarfon Castle.



One of the new sculptures at Caernarfon Castle on the theme 'the hands that built the castle'. The cupped hands of the master builder, James of St George, offer the castle up for approval.

Jodrell Bank Observatory WHS

For the Jodrell Bank Centre for Engagement this has been a year of settling into their new (NLHF funded) First Light Pavilion, after its opening in 2022. Along with seeing the Lovell Telescope itself, their new heritage gallery and the space dome continue to be star attractions of the site, blending the science and heritage into a unique and immersive experience that visitors really enjoy. Visitor numbers seem to be on the up, which is great news in a visitor economy that was hit hard by the pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis.

Jodrell has been developing their events and exhibitions programmes collaborating with creatives and academics from the fields of science, technology, history and beyond. The Winter Solstice event, which ran over 10 evenings in December, offered films, talks, family activities, stargazing and a specially commissioned outdoor projection show, as an alternative to a traditional Christmas lights event. Jodrell's schools programme continues to be popular; last year 20,000 school children came on a school visit. Alongside this they are developing their commercial and venue hire offer to assist with income generation and over the next year they will be developing their volunteering programme, an arts and culture offer, and working on aspects of accessibility.

In January Jodrell was honoured to welcome Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal, to mark the occasion of Jodrell Bank Observatory being awarded UNESCO World Heritage Status in 2019. Her Royal Highness was invited to plant a sapling apple tree, grown from a pip that originated from the 'Flower of Kent'; the apple tree said to have inspired Isaac Newton's theory of gravity. The pip was then taken on board the International Space Station as part of Astronaut Tim Peake's mission in 2016, and one of just eight such 'Space Saplings' to have been grown in the UK.

Jodrell's 2023 bluedot festival, celebrating music, science and culture, was once again a huge success with over 15,000 attendees, 40 speakers, 400 science researchers, with headliners Grace Jones and Roisin Murphy. The weather conditions were extremely wet however, and as a result the festival will take a break for 2024 to allow the ground time to recover.

Live science of course continues at the Observatory, as the Lovell and other telescopes continue to study the depths of the universe.



Photos:

HRH Princess Royal plants a space sapling outside the First Light Pavilion

Moonwalking at Jodrell Bank © Andrew Brooks

Stargazing © Andrew Brooks

Lovell Telescope at Dusk 3 AB © Andrew Brooks



Great Spa Towns of Europe WHS

New Secretary General for the GSTE and retirement of Paul Simons

New Secretary General, Chiara Ronchini, joined the Great Spa Towns of Europe from Historic Environment Scotland in February 2023, as Paul Simons, the Secretary General since 2013 had decided to retire. Chiara's first task was to visit all eleven towns of the GSTE with Paul where they met Mayors and local Site Managers. The visits were particularly important for experiencing each of the component parts of the GSTE and discovering their particular contribution to the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Site. Chiara and Paul finally completed their itinerary and handover in August, with a visit to Bad Kissingen, where Paul had been officially appointed as Secretary General ten years earlier in March 2013. Paul's retirement from the GSTE was marked at the General Assembly in Bath in March 2023, where his outstanding contribution to the GSTE was celebrated with speeches and unique gifts.

Urban Planning Conference in Montecatini Terme

Montecatini Terme, Italy, was the location for the fourth event in the GSTE's Urban Planning Workshop series in May 2023. Site Managers were joined for the first time by planning and conservation colleagues from each of the towns to discuss the theme of "Being World Heritage: Responding to Urban Planning and Heritage Conservation Challenges". In total, 36 participants were brought together over an intense two days of discussion and learning, to build a shared understanding of World Heritage priorities and goals and to champion the Outstanding Universal Value of the Great Spa Towns of Europe. The workshop successfully promoted further collaboration and friendship between the towns, which is quite a challenge when working in five different languages!

45COM Riyadh

GSTE Secretary General, Chiara Ronchini, attended the 45th World Heritage Committee in Riyadh in September, taking the opportunity to meet up with representatives of the GSTE's States Parties, including the former Chair of the GSTE's Intergovernmental Committee, Dita Limová, pictured here with Chiara. Thousands of participants from over 130 countries attended the Committee, whilst the WHSMF (World Heritage Site Managers' Forum) brought together 100 Site Managers from different UNESCO World Heritage sites from every continent. It was also the perfect opportunity to see the Committee in action, especially as the GSTE had a State of Conservation Report which was decided upon during this sitting.

Celebrating World Heritage

The Great Spa Towns of Europe have celebrated their World Heritage and spa culture on several different occasions during the last year – using World Heritage Day, European Heritage Days and the inscription anniversary on 24th July as an opportunity to educate and inform, and quite often to celebrate another one of the eleven towns. Vichy, France, used the July inscription anniversary to invite a delegation from Baden bei Wien in Austria to a town-wide festival inspired by the music, gastronomy and culture of Vienna – including the famous waltz!

Site Managers Group Monitoring Workshop

The GSTE Site Managers met online in November 2023 for a special workshop to work together on the important topic of monitoring the state of conservation of the World Heritage Site.

Indicators, measurement tools, baselines for the state of conservation of each attribute and thresholds for acceptable change are all part of this complex task. Data collected in future has to cover issues to do with all the attributes of the World Heritage Site, such as the mineral springs and key buildings, tourism, environmental issues and climate. An 'early flag' protocol for assessing impacts on the World Heritage Site has also been developed.

Gracehill Moravian Church Settlements Tentative List WHS

It seems a long time ago since hearing about the "Christiansfeld Initiative", an aspiration of the Moravian Settlement of Christiansfeld in Denmark to become a World Heritage Site. They were looking for international partners and while Gracehill was the only complete Moravian Settlement in Ireland and also Northern Ireland's first designated Conservation Area (1975) it seemed impossible that such a tiny village in a relatively rural area could be successful in such a project. However, the community vision led to enhanced local partnerships and boosted international networks. In the intervening twenty years' sustained enthusiasm, effort and energy has culminated in Christiansfeld being inscribed as a World Heritage Site (2015), and building on this, a vibrant international

partnership comprising Herrnhut (Germany), Bethlehem PA (USA) and Gracehill (UK) has come together.



L: Gracehill 1829, R: Gracehill 2023

There had already been many meetings in the preceding years including a previous UK Tentative List application by Gracehill in 2011. However, the international communities united and in parallel developed plans for a transnational bid and distilled the Outstanding Universal Value that made what the chosen representative Settlements exemplified unique and valuable. The bid was supported by the United States Government who submitted the nomination on behalf of all partners and so the last year has been frenetic with international meetings, both in person and online, and many local meetings with partners in local and national government. Restoration work continues to some buildings, consultation meetings have taken place and plans continue to develop particularly in relation to the need to manage visitors in a sustainable manner. And, of course, there has been a visit from ICOMOS. The journey continues and next year looks likely to be even busier with increasing interest and more visitors.

There is an old saying “We do not inherit the land from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.” The real value of heritage is less in thinking about yesterday and more about planning tomorrow. A rich heritage is the foundation of a bright future. Gracehill certainly hopes so as they seek to join with their international partners to share something of their Outstanding Universal Value.

Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal WHS

This year has been another busy year for Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal – they’ve just published their new World Heritage Management Plan and they’re in their final year delivering the Skell Valley Project which aimed to protect the World Heritage Site from the impacts of climate change.

The Skell Valley Project aims to work with farmers and landowners upstream of the World Heritage Site to protect the water gardens and abbey ruins from the impacts of flooding and siltation. Nature based solutions are being used to tackle this issue. Working on 20 sites up the valley, the Skell Valley Project’s staff and volunteers have planted over 10,000 trees, created seven new ponds, installed 20 leaky dams, and restored 2.2 kilometres of hedgerows since the project began. Over 6 kilometres of fencing have been installed to protect riverbanks and ditches from over-grazing and erosion, and nearly 2 kilometres of farm and forestry tracks have been surfaced to reduce the risk of erosion and sedimentation in the river. These Natural Flood Management measures will also protect Ripon which lies just downstream of the World Heritage Site.



Part-funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and European Regional Development Fund, this £2.5m project is being jointly led by the National Trust and Nidderdale National Landscape. As well as tackling the impacts of climate change the project aims to protect heritage, ensure that nature thrives and work alongside local communities to deliver the work.

The Power of Ten youth volunteering project is being led by our partner Harrogate and District Community Action and provides opportunities for young people to volunteer with organisations across Ripon, developing important new skills for the future. Communities are also recording and conserving the ancient trees in the Studley Royal parklands through the 'Hug an Ancient Tree' project. Oral history and archival research are enriching our understanding of the heritage and landscape along the Skell Valley.

At the moment, they're working with local businesses and partners in Ripon and the surrounding area to develop a set of trails and interpretation that connect the World Heritage Site to the wider landscape. A clear waymarked trail between Ripon and Fountains will encourage more people to walk to the World Heritage Site. Developing a legacy for the Skell Valley Project is also a priority.

Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites WHS

This year has seen many highlights in World Heritage protection, conservation and engagement responding to the policies and actions within the [Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site Management Plan](#).

The first [Festival of Neolithic Ideas](#) was held at Stonehenge in partnership between English Heritage and the Department of Archaeology, University of Cambridge comprising a programme of hands-on activities, demonstrations, fully booked talks and tours. Leading researchers from more than a dozen organisations came together for the first time to share ideas with the public and explore current understanding from recent technological advancements (from radiocarbon dating and ancient DNA analysis to astronomy and laser scanning). STEM is helping to illuminate prehistoric daily life and activities included a planetarium, handheld laser scanning of artefacts and a pop-up prehistoric supermarket. The event provided great entertainment as well as an opportunity to explore the

science of archaeology, helping visitors to better understand the World Heritage Site alongside a Stonehenge Kids' Dig held by English Heritage over the school summer holidays.



The influence of the WHS to artists, historians and archaeologists, Attribute 7 of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV), continued to be demonstrated through a number of exhibitions and events including: the National Trust's '300 Years of William Stukeley' exhibition at [Avebury](#) with 'Sketch like Stukeley' events, Wiltshire Museum's 'Wessex Airscapes, Elevating Wiltshire' exhibition and 'The Art of Wessex' exhibition at The Salisbury Museum.

The four-year [Avebury Papers](#) project between the National Trust, English Heritage and the Universities of York and Bournemouth, continues to progress. Over the past year the project team has trained a team of volunteers to support the project and launched an artist brief.

Stonehenge is celebrated for its connection to the sky (Attribute 4 of OUV). English Heritage is working in partnership with academic experts from Bournemouth, Leicester and Oxford Universities to continue research into the 'major lunar standstill', a rare celestial phenomenon taking place throughout 2024 giving opportunity to explore the [connection between Stonehenge and the moon](#). A number of events and publication of a new text have been planned to study and mark this event, as well as schools' engagement and a planetarium and stargazing events returning to Stonehenge in October 2024.

Two new community exhibition spaces opened in and around the WHS hosting exhibitions and talks and visitors are welcomed by local volunteers. The 18th Century Avebury Chapel, leased by Avebury Parish Council from the National Trust, is located within the henge monument and combines partner displays to present the 'Living Landscape' of cultural and natural heritage within the WHS. [Amesbury History Centre](#), located within the setting of the Stonehenge WHS and supported by Amesbury Town Council, gives visitors opportunity to learn the story behind Amesbury's unique heritage and its connections to Stonehenge.

In late Autumn 2023 English Heritage paid homage to the [grand dahlia shows](#) that took place at Stonehenge in the 1840s. By recreating this more recent aspect of Stonehenge's history, the charity promoted community engagement through close partnership working with local communities.

ASAHRG (Avebury and Stonehenge Archaeological and Historical Research Group) celebrated its 30th year in 2023 with activities including the launch of a new logo and supporting the development of the first Stonehenge Dahlia Show.

The WHS continues to build links with other properties internationally, most recently demonstrated by the English Heritage exhibition 'Circles of Stone: Stonehenge and Prehistoric Japan'. Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan were inscribed as a UNESCO WHS in 2021, and the exhibition revealed remarkable parallels between prehistoric cultures 6,000 miles apart. The exhibition was accompanied by an event hosted by English Heritage at the Japanese embassy and conference '[Stone Circles across Eurasia](#)'.

Natural England continues to support both individual landholders and groups across the WHS through funded agri-environment schemes including physical enhancements through chalk grassland restoration, erosion repair, protection from burrowing animals, and scrub control as well as provision of educational access and interpretation. In the Avebury landscape, the farmer-funded and led '[Making Space for Nature](#)' Marlborough Downs Nature Enhancement Partnership has been supporting and training farmers in collaborative landscape-scale conservation. The Defra funded Farming in Protected Landscapes programme (2021-2025) managed by [North Wessex Downs National Landscape](#) has supported capital works to protect and interpret monuments.

Chalk grassland reversion continues to progress in both parts of the WHS through the work of landholders, Natural England and the National Trust. This work protects archaeological remains and monuments, increases landscape-scale conservation and connects habitats, and where appropriate can provide opportunities for improved public access. In the Stonehenge landscape the National Trust will have restored a further c.100 hectares of its land to chalk grassland by 2025. The [Wiltshire Chalk Partnership](#), a group of organisations and landholders, have also come together to help create 2,000 hectares of semi-natural grassland across Wiltshire and to connect and restore important existing habitats. This initiative will further aid connecting the chalk grasslands in and around the WHS to the wider landscape of Wiltshire and beyond.

The Porton to Plain Farmers Group, in partnership with the RSPB and others, is working to maximise benefits to nature by taking a cross farm approach. The group are focusing on a number of priorities ranging from supporting a diversity of chalk grassland and arable wildlife to improving soil health and water management. The group is in its second year funded by Natural England's Countryside Stewardship Facilitation Fund supporting training events and activities.

The [RSPB](#) also continues its long running Wessex stone-curlew monitoring programme working closely with landholders in and around the WHS to conserve this unique and charismatic bird. 2023 was generally a mixed year for stone-curlew breeding success. The cold weather in early spring combined with a wet July contributed to slightly less fledging success than the previous year. However, the co-ordinated roost count by RSPB volunteers around Salisbury Plain has found that the numbers of stone-curlews gathering in the WHS in the autumn fortunately remained stable, contributing to a steady recovery of the population in this landscape.

Blaenavon Industrial Landscape WHS

The work of the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site Partnership has been ongoing throughout the year. The partnership is governed by a Board of the executives of 8 partners, but the work of the site is overseen and managed through the steering group and 3 working groups, which meet regularly though the year.

This year has seen the end of the management plan, and a review on the way forward, consultation on a major potential redevelopment of a wind farm outside of the boundaries but with impact on the site, and a whole host of projects and activities to promote, preserve and enhance OUV and give heritage a function in the community. Some of the key areas of strength and work in BILWHS are:

- Resilience of all partners is sustainable, and new ways of working have been utilised to make best use of resources
- Much of the management plan has been successfully delivered using the work already being undertaken by partners and achieved a great deal, however much of the plan was unable to be delivered due to the pandemic. It was decided to renew the current management plan for a further 5 years, rather than re-write a new one, although some action plans have had to be renewed
- A proposed windfarm has been widely consulted on within the partnership this year, with the partnership expressing concerns on the impact to OUV. Work continues this
- A Levelling Up project was submitted to address the increasing dereliction of the iron masters' house, and although unsuccessful, did provide information about the state of the property which will help management of the site in the future
- The Townscape Heritage Project initiative is coming to an end, but work continues to redevelop two major properties in the centre of town. Community projects have continued to be being delivered this year and have significantly contributed towards the interpretation of the site, and engagement of the community within the site, in particular a new documentary called 'Hidden Histories' has been created
- The World Heritage Youth Ambassadors continues to go from strength to strength, leading the UK in World Heritage youth engagement
- Big Pit and the Ironworks has continued to deliver excellent services and expand their work, engaging significant visitor numbers for the site, and re-initiating key annual events such as steam punk
- Heritage volunteering is a particular strength in the area, with volunteer museums, environment groups, intergenerational groups, and vintage railway engaging with communities in a significant way
- New multi-organisation partnerships to tackle risks to OUV (eg landscape crime) has been created and actions are being undertaken
- The site's landscape visitors are increasing post pandemic, with many sites becoming honey spots for the wider area
- The World Heritage Centre has a new franchise installed with the ending of the previous business in the café, and has continued to be a hive of activity through the library, events and promotion of the WHS

World Heritage Day took a break in 2023 due to a lack of volunteers, but funding and a new volunteer team has been found to re-instate this annual community run event.

Durham Castle & Cathedral WHS

Giving young people a voice

Enthusiastic youth ambassadors aged 12-26 have researched, scripted and recorded a series of audio stories for Durham Castle and Cathedral World Heritage Site. The one minute stories, told in the first person, bring to life both known and imagined characters from the past. The voices are published on Soundcloud https://soundcloud.com/durham_unesco_whs and accessed via a QR code on the red phone box and benches on Palace Green, a publicly accessible green space at the heart of the site.

"The idea came from a visit to Warkworth Castle and colleagues at English Heritage kindly shared their experience with us. We didn't have a budget for a formal audio guide and we couldn't get consent for permanent signage, but we had 25 young people keen to learn and share their insights

into Durham's past and tech-talented colleagues in Durham University's Museum and Galleries team. We invested a lot of staff time, but the production itself cost around £300" explained Anne Allen, Senior Manager for the WHS.



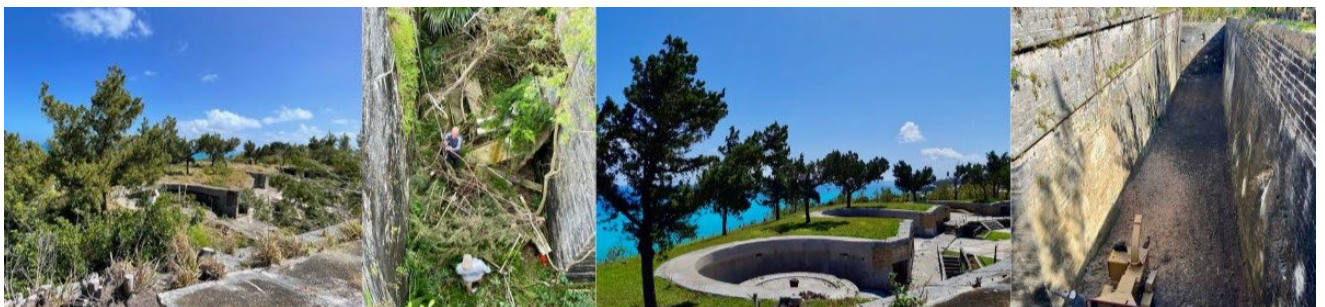
The result is a temporary installation which seeks to capture the imagination of passers-by with snippets of stories about the place and people.

Evaluation by an MA placement student found that the project which brought together young people from County Durham schools with Durham University students fostered mutual understanding and a sense of shared ownership of the site.

Historic Town of St George and Related Fortifications, Bermuda WHS

The [St. George's Foundation](#) mission is to support Bermuda's UNESCO World Heritage Site Town of St. George and its Related Fortifications through collaboration, education and awareness.

In the past 12 months their focus has been on remediating and preserving historic fortifications which have been left derelict for decades. Their core team of enthusiastic volunteers are the backbone of the project, donating the labour critical to revealing the 19th century forts from under forests of overgrowth. Work included repairing cracks in roofs, remediating walls using traditional methods, and removing invasive species from exterior fort walls, roofs and surrounding areas.



L-R Fort Albert in March 2023 and then March 2024

The charity collaborated with community, corporate and school groups who donated their time to maintaining the forts, and were grateful to receive funds from the UNESCO World Heritage Site Fund, overseen by the Corporation of St. George's, plus financial support from local businesses and individuals. Educational tours were given to students and community groups and fundraising tours offered to our members, donors and the public.

An advisory mission from UNESCO visited St. George's in April 2024 at the invitation of the Bermuda Government and stakeholders within the World Heritage Site, including The St. George's Foundation, were invited to meet with the delegates. The UNESCO report is expected in June or July, and will be presented to the Government Cabinet for discussions, and then to Parliament and the public, along with an outline plan for the way forward.

The Frontiers of the Roman Empire WHS: The Antonine Wall

This year has been a busy one for the Antonine Wall and the communities that live in the five local authorities that the Wall passes through. Rediscovering the Antonine Wall was a pan-Antonine Wall project designed to raise awareness, understanding, and engagement with the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site. This £2 million community engagement project was completed in the summer of 2024 and received several awards for its success, including the Scottish Planning Innovation Award (People category) and a Scottish Thistle Award for Thriving Communities.



Photo of Nethercroy Roman Head Sculpture, named Silvanus by the public. Located in North Lanarkshire.
© Historic Environment Scotland

The Antonine Wall also participated in UNESCO UK's Local to Global Project, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The project focused on the future sustainability of UNESCO Designations. The team worked with various consultants on audience development, fundraising, financial sustainability, and digital transformation. A pilot project delivered a series of health walks and created a community map with members of the community aged 60 and over.

A new regional research framework for the Frontiers of the Roman Empire World Heritage Site: The Antonine wall has been developed and is available via the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework. This framework seeks to highlight the Antonine Wall's significance in Scottish Archaeology as well as increase our collective understanding of the Wall.



Community consultation event with Old Kilpatrick Food Parcels © Antonine Wall

Finally, Community Consultation on the future management of the Antonine Wall has just been completed. Several priorities have been identified to inform the development of the next Management Plan: community-led engagement, improving access and interpretation, and health and well-being.

The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh WHS

The Old and New Towns of Edinburgh Partners have been working on the renewal of the World Heritage Site Management Plan, which will be in effect for the next 10-years. Public consultation on the draft plan recently concluded, and the results have been analysed to inform the next steps, including stakeholder workshops to help finalise the document for publication.



Go Auld Reekie/Gu Dùn Èideann - Gaelic handling box launch event © Tom Duffin

A recent highlight was the launch of a Gaelic language version of Historic Environment Scotland's Go Auld Reekie learning resources. To celebrate the launch of Gu Dùn Èideann City of Edinburgh Council, Historic Environment Scotland, and Comunn na Gàidhlig came together to deliver a memorable learning experience for students from Bun-sgoil Taobh na Páirce Gaelic medium primary school. The event was hosted across two venues: Riddle's Court in the Old Town (Scottish Historic Buildings Trust), and The Georgian House (National Trust for Scotland). The children had a memorable day learning about daily life in the medieval Old Town and Georgian New Town, and exploring the juxtaposition that makes Edinburgh unique.

Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS

Work on the next Management Plan for HONO WHS has been ongoing for much of the past year. Meanwhile sites across the Heart of Neolithic Orkney have been a hive of activity thanks to the Historic Environment Scotland World Heritage Ranger Service. Over the past year the Rangers have been visiting local school with replica artefacts, joining in their school projects, and welcoming them on site to foster a sense of pride and ownership over the sites that make the Heart of Neolithic Orkney.



Children excavating at Ness of Brodgar © Historic Environment Scotland

The [Ness of Brodgar](#) archaeological excavation in the buffer zone of the World Heritage Site has transformed our understanding of the contemporary context of the Heart of Neolithic Orkney. The excavation will be entering its final season this summer, and school pupils from across Orkney will have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience during a week of workshops and on-site activities with the Rangers.

New Lanark WHS

New Lanark village was founded in 1785 as a model industrial settlement. By the early 19th century, it had become one of the largest factory sites in the world. Its cotton mills, powered by waterwheels, were operational from 1786 to 1968, providing employment for around 2000 workers at its peak of operations.

Moreover, its planning and architecture were integrated with a humane concern for the well-being of workers. They were provided with good homes, education, free health care and affordable food. New Lanark became internationally recognised as a milestone in social and industrial history. Preserved from its 19th century heyday, the site was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2001.

COVID-19 caused the site to close completely. This had a severe impact on income and the planned maintenance programme, risking deterioration across the estate and in some cases exposing assets to irreversible damage.

A grant of £2,395,140 from the National Heritage Memorial Fund COVID-19 Response Fund is helping tackle the maintenance backlog and unplanned works that have arisen, including urgent roof repairs. This grant was awarded in 2022 and we have recently commenced the maintenance work on site with great enthusiasm. This valued grant will help ensure the site continues to be conserved with integrity, maximising public access so the people who live in, work in and visit New Lanark can continue to enjoy and learn about its unique heritage.

James Pow, Chairman of New Lanark Trust said: *“With this significant grant from the NHMF we can accelerate much needed repairs to ensure the site continues to be preserved with integrity, and to provide a place where people who live, work and visit can enjoy and learn about the unique heritage that New Lanark World Heritage Site has to offer.”*



New Lanark were also pleased to host the Local to Global Scotland workshop delivered by the UK National Commission for UNESCO in June of 2024. This brought together representatives from 5 out of 6 Scottish World Heritage Sites as well as representatives from non-World Heritage UNESCO designated sites in Scotland. This proved to be a hugely valuable day of discussions and networking, exploring the challenges facing Scottish sites in both global and local contexts, as well as sharing potential solutions.