



# Historic Environment Overview 2024-25

A Report By The  
Historic Environment Forum

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# Foreword: The Historic Environment in 2024–25

Reflecting on recent achievements, it's clear that the heritage sector continues to play a vital role in the nation's economy and culture, despite ongoing challenges at all levels.

According to the [latest available statistics](#), England's heritage sector contributed an estimated £44.9 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy in 2022 and supported employment of over 523,000 workers.

In addition to its economic importance, the sector continues to enrich England's public life. The most recent [DCMS Participation Survey](#) (2024) found that 66% of adults visited a heritage site in 2023–24. 51% of respondents experiencing the most deprivation engaged with heritage that year, rising to 76% among the least deprived. The figures indicate continued recovery from the depths of the Covid pandemic, but engagement levels are still below peak numbers in 2019.

In mid-2022 the [Heritage Sector Resilience Plan 2022–2024](#) was published by the Historic Environment Forum (HEF), with support from Historic England. The plan aimed to bolster sector recovery in the wake of the pandemic, to ensure a strong and strategically connected historic environment sector capable of delivering public value through heritage. Three years on from its publication, many of the collaborative actions identified in the plan have been successfully completed.

The plan was structured around five themes, with examples of subsequent impact, as follows:

### Skills

- A new Historic Environment Skills Forum was established, led by Historic England.
- HEF convened a Heritage Skills Demand Topic Group and is implementing an agreed work plan.
- HEF's Green Skills in Heritage Task Group facilitated connection with other sectors (construction, education, energy production, forestry, etc.) to raise awareness of the value of heritage professionalism and published the [Heritage Sector Net Zero Projects Audit](#).

### Strong governance, business models and capacity

- The Heritage Alliance led initial research on how to improve the signposting of business-skills resources for heritage organisations, cumulating in a [short insight report](#).
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund 'Digital Skills for Heritage' campaign concluded with further development of the [Digital Heritage Hub](#), providing a range of training resources around digital skills for small and medium heritage organisations.

### Climate change

- Historic England published the [Adapting Historic Buildings for Energy and Carbon Efficiency Advice Note](#) (2024).
- A new Carbon Literacy Training Course was developed by Historic England and Historic Buildings and Places, with considerable take-up.
- HEF's Sustainability and Climate Change Group and Fit for the Future (supported by the National Trust) facilitated peer-to-peer support plus oversight of challenges faced by heritage organisations.



### Diversity and inclusion

- Historic England launched an online [Inclusive Heritage Advice Hub](#).

### Embedding heritage in wider public policy

- HEF's Historic Environment Protection Reform Group (HEPRG) chaired by Historic England meets regularly to coordinate sector proposals to simplify and speed up the current planning process relating to the historic environment.

A new version of the [Heritage Sector Resilience Plan \(HSRP2\)](#) was published in June 2025. A HEF Task Group was established to guide the drafting of the new plan, with HEF members looking at options to engage the wider historic environment sector in its delivery.

The new plan includes high-level strategic actions, to be delivered collaboratively in the coming years, linked with four 'cornerstones' of resilience: financial, physical, workforce/institutional, and relevance.

This edition of the Historic Environment Overview celebrates the impact of such strategic collaboration on preserving our heritage and recognising its value across all walks of life. We hope you find it an informative, encouraging and helpful resource.

# How this report is structured

In this edition of the Historic Environment Overview, examples of heritage sector impact from the financial year 2024–25 are shared under the following headings, reflecting four of the five themes set out in the Heritage Sector Resilience Plan 2022–24:



**Skills**



**Climate Change**



**Diversity and Inclusion**



**Embedding Heritage in Wider Policy**

The fifth theme of strengthened governance, adaptable business models and increased capacity underpins many of the examples shared throughout this report. Similarly, many of the highlights cut across one or more resilience themes.

To highlight positive outcomes achieved this year, symbols representing the three themes of Historic England’s Heritage Counts series have also been used throughout:



## Heritage and Society

Exploring how historic places convey a sense of uniqueness, improve personal wellbeing, and are strong emotional pillars connecting communities across England.



## Heritage and the Economy

Exploring how many of our jobs and enterprises are dependent on, attracted to or based in historic buildings and spaces.



## Heritage and the Environment

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

This report was compiled in early 2025. Due to space limitations, it represents just a few of the wide-ranging activities and impact achieved in the previous financial year. It covers the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

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



# 1. Skills

**The heritage sector is built on the strength of its people. Skilled experts, and demand for their expertise, ensures a resilient heritage ecosystem. Initiatives are needed to address issues such as access to training, understanding the need for skilled expertise, funding for schemes requiring such skills, analysing sector recruitment, and recognising achievements with awards programmes.**



## The Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England

The [Historic Environment Skills Forum](#) continued its work through 2024, and engaged over 150 member organisations in the collaborative development of the [Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England \(HESCAPE\)](#).

The plan was launched mid-2024. It outlines a range of activities to be undertaken, to deliver against priority actions to help meet longer term strategic objectives in support of the Heritage Sector Resilience Plan.

### The HESCAPE strategic objectives are to:

- develop and enable a broader range of pathways into historic environment roles
- reduce barriers to cohesive career progression that currently exist for historic environment roles
- improve the perception of, and recognition of, historic environment roles. This includes addressing issues such as limited levels of qualification and accreditation, and perceptions of elitism
- invest in building the capacity and capability of sector employer organisations to deliver work-based training
- support the development of capacity and capability building initiatives for formal training providers, to enable them to better deliver the knowledge and skills needed by employers from their current and future workforces.

The Skills Forum is now establishing several working groups to coordinate sector activity to deliver the actions under each objective.

### The initial five priority actions are to:

- develop the evidence base (focusing on regional skills needs)
- upskill the UK retrofit workforce to work appropriately with historic buildings
- identify and obtain resources to provide opportunities for career-entry training roles (including career changers)
- develop shared apprenticeship programmes specifically tailored for historic environment occupations
- embed the historic environment into mainstream education and training courses.

The Skills Forum meets on a regular basis to oversee the delivery of HESCAPE.





## Historic England and Heritage Alliance: Recruitment Trends

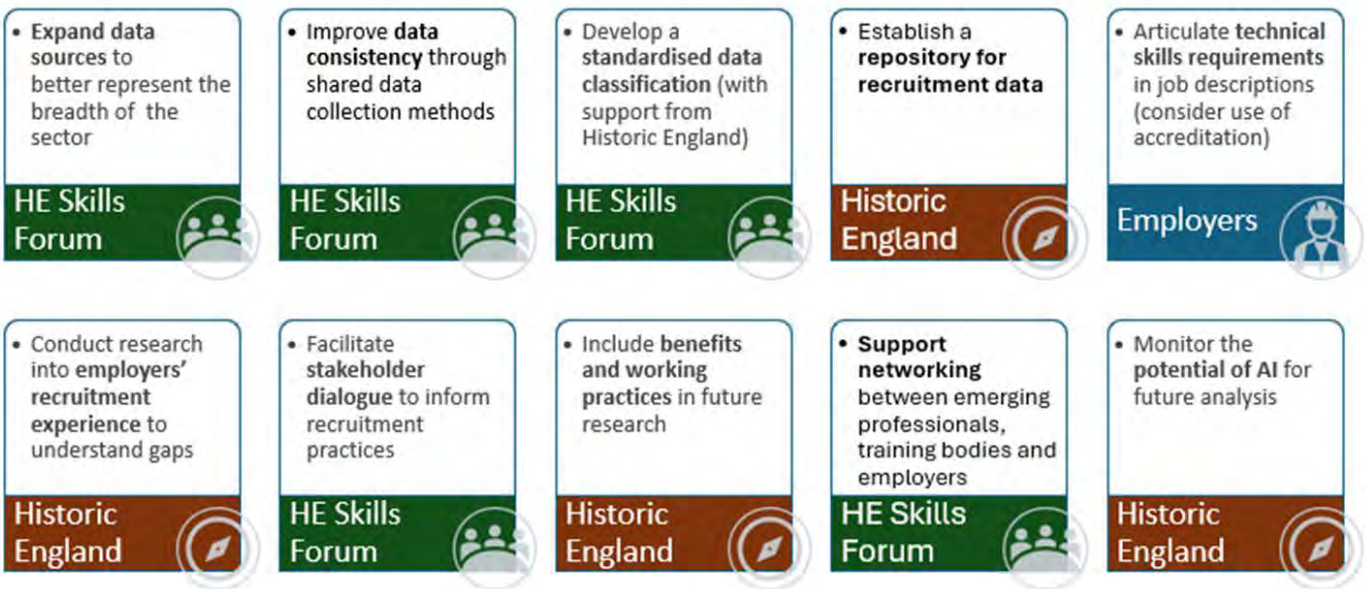
The Heritage Alliance (THA) partnered with Preservation Matters in 2024-25 to conduct an analysis of sector recruitment in 2023. This research was commissioned by Historic England (HE) on behalf of the Historic Environment Skills Forum.

The aim was to provide a more comprehensive picture of the job market and the demand for particular skills across key areas of the historic environment sector.

THA hosted two roundtables with HE, other professional bodies, sector employers, early career professionals and training providers. These sessions served a dual purpose – to test the research methodology, and to facilitate new dialogues around recruitment, current barriers and solutions to make the sector more accessible and heritage careers more sustainable.

Analysis of these roundtables identified key trends and produced a set of recommendations for HE, their skills forum and sector employers. Key recommendations included establishing consistency in recruitment data, better articulation of technical skill requirements, supporting networking opportunities, and monitoring the impact of AI. These recommendations will support better efficiency across the sector by standardising terminology and data collection methods, and improving recruitment marketing practices.

## Recommendations







## Historic England's Building Skills Programme

The Heritage Building Skills Programme (2021–26) is a major in-work training and apprenticeship pilot programme delivered by Historic England (HE) in the North of England. Bringing public, private and philanthropic sectors together, it provides training for craftspeople to learn heritage trades at critical entry points, acquiring valuable skills and knowledge to help address skills shortages.

Over the past year trainees have had the opportunity to gain practical experience, qualifications and expert tutoring to work towards long-term employment, while helping to rescue some of the country's most valued historic buildings and places. This is done through their day-to-day work in heritage specialist construction firms and also at the programme's summer schools.

### The programme comprises:

- 11 'preparing for work' placements (running for 9 weeks)
- 19 'entering the workforce' apprenticeships in heritage construction firms



- 14 'sustaining the sector' placements for individuals with previous construction skills to upskill (running for 6–12-months).

The impact can already be felt. Across 12 trade specialisms, 44 trainees have taken part and 85 per cent of graduates are now employed in a heritage construction role, with many working towards higher level qualifications within industry. This has been achieved in tandem with rescuing heritage sites at risk through grants, and three summer schools providing intensive training – at Wentworth Woodhouse (South Yorkshire), Hopwood Hall (Greater Manchester), and St John the Evangelist church (Lancaster).

Since the beginning of the programme, trainees and apprentices have collectively improved the condition of 278 buildings across England – 238 are on the National Heritage List England and 55 were on the Heritage at Risk Register.



To achieve those outcomes, HE has partnered with 32 heritage building conservation organisations and 19 training providers. To date the trainees have achieved 75 qualifications. New entrants, mid-career and master craftspeople have been connected, creating peer and mentor relationships lasting beyond the confines of the programme.

A full impact evaluation report is due in June 2026, when the current trainees will have completed their time on the programme. Feedback already attests that the opportunity has positively impacted the workforce by embedding enthusiastic learners, while also raising general awareness of heritage building skills. HE is sharing lessons learnt with the Historic Environment Skills Forum and wider sector stakeholders, so that future skills interventions and programmes can benefit from the delivery team's experience.



## Heritage Building Skills Trainees At Haigh Hall, Wigan

In 2024 two trainees and one apprentice on the Heritage Building Skills programme, who had met at the summer school in Lancaster, worked at Grade II\* Haigh Hall, Greater Manchester. The building was on the Heritage at Risk Register and required essential repair works, commissioned by the council with a view to bringing it back into use. Ellen Hunt (stained-glass trainee), William Wilkes (trainee joiner), and Gareth Kirton (plastering apprentice) all contributed to the repairs.

Ellen worked with Recclesia, a historic building conservation firm appointed to undertake repair and maintenance work to two glass domes at the Hall. She assisted in cleaning the outside of the Penthouse glass dome to remove years of deposit, and later helped with the installation of the newly painted replacement glass. This enabled her to see a whole project through: 'It was a great learning experience for me as it was my first time being on site and working with stained glass in-situ.' Ellen came into stained glass conservation after a master's in chemistry. At Recclesia she has been able to apply her former chemistry training to her current craft, undertaking scientific testing to inform conservation methods.

Will worked with Robinsons Preservation at Haigh Hall for three months. He carried out repairs to the dome ceiling, which had suffered from water ingress and dry rot. He previously worked with a joinery firm in Edinburgh, doing mostly attic conversions and modern extensions. Gareth worked on some of the same ceilings as Will, working on the 'wading' that connects the plaster to the supporting ceiling structure. Before becoming a trainee in 2023, he had been a labourer with 20 years of construction-site experience.

Ellen and Will graduated from the programme into permanent roles with their host firms, and Gareth is due to complete his apprenticeship in 2026.

There is further information about the [Heritage Building Skills programme](#) on Historic England's website.



Image 1: Will surveying the timber roof at Haigh Hall. © Robinsons Preservation

Image 2: Ellen cutting away putty from the stained glass frame. © Recclesia

Image 3: Gareth working at Haigh Hall. © Excel Bespoke Plaster



## Green Skills in Heritage

Over the past year the Historic Environment Forum (HEF)'s Green Skills in Heritage Task Group has worked to bridge the gap between traditional heritage practices and the emerging green economy, recognising the sector's potential to be part of the solution to climate change.

The initiative began by addressing the lack of a clear definition of 'green skills' within the heritage context. Through a mapping exercise and collaborative efforts, the group agreed that green skills encompass a wide range of competencies, including construction techniques, procurement practices, sustainability planning, and innovative approaches to conservation that align with net zero objectives.

The group partnered with the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) to attract new talents by contributing to their Careers Hub, showcasing that the heritage sector is part of the green economy.

At a pilot workshop in Castle Acre, Norfolk, participants identified the need for more integrated training approaches – such as utilising large restoration projects as learning opportunities, and developing skills bootcamps to bridge existing gaps in professional development. A roundtable with trade bodies further highlighted the challenges. Many external sectors struggle to see the financial potential in heritage work; the task group began to break down these barriers.

In December 2024 the group's [Heritage Sector Net Zero Projects Audit](#) unveiled significant challenges facing the sector – including inconsistent terminology, complex funding landscapes, and limited understanding of skills pipelines.

However, the research also highlighted a huge potential demand for green skills and sustainable practices within heritage organisations.

The group's recommendations provide a strategic roadmap for future action. This includes mapping environmental funding streams, investing in youth training, promoting consistency in terminology and carbon calculation, supporting cross-sector networks, and advocating for policies that support skills development.

More than just skills analysis, the work of the Green Skills in Heritage Task Group is a vision of how heritage skills can meet contemporary environmental challenges. The group has laid the groundwork for a more integrated approach to heritage management, which is dovetailing in the work of a new working group linked to the Historic Environment Skills Forum. This work shows that the heritage sector is a crucial player in building a sustainable future.



## Sustaining Horticulture Skills for Heritage

In September 2024 English Heritage (EH) announced that one of England's most experienced and respected gardeners,

Alan Titchmarsh, had become an ambassador for the charity's Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme.

The programme provides paid traineeships for aspiring horticulturalists, who work alongside professional garden teams at some of the country's most important historic and botanic gardens (both those managed by EH and those cared for by other heritage organisations).

Gaining a first paid gardening role is a challenge for aspiring gardeners, as most paid positions in the sector require previous experience. Gardeners from low-income backgrounds are particularly disadvantaged, as they may not have the opportunities to take unpaid volunteer roles to build experience. Many colleges are also no longer able to offer an industry placement to give their horticulture students practical experience of working in a garden.



Supported by the National Garden Scheme – and others including the Royal Horticultural Society, The Stanley Smith (UK) Horticultural Trust and The Barbara Whatmore Charitable Trust – the EH programme gives trainees the chance to gain practical experience and skills to help start their horticultural careers.

The programme has already supported over 300 trainees, who consistently report that they were able to secure work within the horticulture sector following the completion of their training. EH looks forward to continuing to work with Alan Titchmarsh and partners to build on the success of the programme, supporting skills training for future generations of gardeners.



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## Case Study



### Degree Apprenticeships for Archaeological Specialists

The qualifications arm of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) will soon assess the sector's first cohort of master's degree apprentices. The level 7 Archaeological Specialist Apprenticeship develops practical skills, knowledge and 'real world' experience.

It is widely recognised that there is a shortage of specialists; many, for instance, are approaching retirement age. As many are also self-employed, structures to train the next generation are



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not in place. This is where the level 7 apprenticeship comes in. It is offered by two universities: University of Wales Trinity St David (part-time, distance learning) and Bishops Grosseteste University in Lincoln (part-time, blended).

Dr Emily Johnson, Senior Zooarchaeologist at Archaeology South-East (University College London), CIfA member and Chair of the CIfA Finds Special Interest

Group, says: 'Developing this apprenticeship was a colossal step forward in meeting a training need ... practical skills can't all be taught from books alone, and even where artefact specialism courses exist (e.g. as part of university degrees), they may not prepare you well for a job in commercial archaeology doing that specialism.'



## Strengthening Conservation Skills

The Institute of Conservation (Icon) is the professional body for the UK's conservation-restoration professionals. Its vision is to protect, preserve and promote our shared cultural heritage by cultivating skilled conservation professionals, fostering collaboration across the sector, and delivering public benefit through engagement and advocacy.

Over the past 12 months, Icon has been implementing actions outlined in their 2023 Conservation Skills Strategy. One key challenge was the low uptake and limited training opportunities for several heritage apprenticeship standards. Recognising this, Icon merged the

Cultural Heritage Conservation Technician apprenticeship and the Museums and Galleries Technician apprenticeship to create a new standard: Collections Technician (Level 3). This will provide a stronger training pathway for apprentices, and a more sustainable framework for employers supporting them.

Icon's membership represents more than 150 specialist areas of practice, yet many of these disciplines are sustained by only a handful of practitioners. This places collections at significant risk. To address this, Icon has started conversations with key partners – including Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland, Community NI, ClfA and the Construction Industry Training Board – to develop a strategy for safeguarding skills. Mapping the most vulnerable areas of conservation practice, Icon aims to bring together stakeholders and implement targeted strategies to protect the future of our heritage.

Alongside these efforts, Icon has also been collaborating with six dedicated funders to create internship opportunities which target skills at risk. The first two internships (focusing on musical instrument conservation and manuscripts conservation) are already underway. Additional opportunities will soon launch in horological conservation and industrial heritage collections conservation. Recognising the particular challenges within industrial heritage, Icon has also been supporting the existing workforce. With funding from Heritage Compass, Icon is helping practitioners develop their knowledge of conservation theory and practice, and to work towards Icon Accreditation.

Through these initiatives, Icon is committed to strengthening the future of conservation by ensuring that skills are nurtured, knowledge is preserved, and the sector thrives for generations to come.



## Supporting Affiliate Membership to the Institute of Historic Building Conservation

A series of measures has been launched by the Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) to streamline the pathway to Affiliate membership and beyond.

Affiliate membership is an assessed membership category, providing formal recognition of the member's awareness of built and historic environment conservation practice. It is well suited to recent graduates, early career practitioners, and those with up to five years of relevant professional experience. It also provides a firm grounding in IHBC competences for those who wish to continue to formal accreditation in the form of Associate or Full membership.

The new initiatives evolved as a response to concerns that those

registered as Supporters were experiencing various barriers to advancing to Affiliate membership – including lack of clarity around the application process, lack of confidence in their ability to meet the requirements, and time constraints.

Support measures include the launch of a revised application form to streamline the application process. A suite of accompanying guidance documents and resources aims to demystify the process, including sample statements and a guidance video for greater accessibility.

These resources can all be accessed on the dedicated [Affiliate webpage](#).

In addition, there are also regular online 'Supporter to Affiliate Surgeries', where applicants can drop in and find out more about the application process in an informal and supportive setting, with time for individual questions.

Dates for upcoming surgeries are on the website.

The IHBC has also launched an Affiliate fast-track scheme, which was first trialled in 2023. This offers more targeted support. While the format for the scheme is still in development, previous pilots have focused on supporting existing long-standing members,

as well as specific groups such as Local Authority Staff, to advance to Affiliate membership through a more simplified application process. This approach has yielded a significant number of applications and resulted in new Affiliate members.



## Small Projects Grant Scheme

This year Historic Houses (HH) launched its Small Projects Grant Scheme, directly funding projects at member places for the first time. The aim is to catalyse work that might not happen without their help, enabling the use of specialist skills and unlocking the possibility of further, future projects.

HH invited applications for non-capital works: research, collections and archive management, and educational programmes. They sought out projects that would last no more than twelve months, with a clear public benefit and a legacy to leave beyond their completion. HH were able to make awards of up to £5,000, matching up to 50 per cent of an applicant's total costs.



Prioritising public benefit, value for money and knowledge sharing, the independent grant assessors (Alice Purkiss of Oxford University and Dr Oliver Cox of the V&A) chose four inaugural recipients of the 2024/5 awards:

- Camden Place, Kent – for a digitisation project of a collection of artefacts relating to France's Second Empire and Napoleon III, who lived his later life in exile here
- Harvington Hall, Worcestershire – for an archive conservation project to make the collection available to the public, benefitting its own interpretation and aiding historical research



- Penpont, Brecon Beacons – for the establishment of a 'Land Library', inspired by Colorado's Rocky Mountain Land Library, to connect people to nature through books, and vice versa
- Chawton House, Hampshire – for a project that seeks to ready the collection for display in time for Jane Austen's 250th birthday.







## Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings: Two Projects

Nurturing building craft skills is vitally important, but they cannot flourish without tools or premises. In the 1930s, when old buildings were unprotected and often torn down, the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) was given a traditional blacksmith's forge. Dating from the 17th century, the structure stands on the green of the Surrey village of Chiddingfold. It has two hearths, a shoeing-shop for horses and a pit for wheelmaking.

The forge has been let to several working blacksmiths during SPAB's ownership. On the approaching retirement of the most recent tenant, it proved difficult to find a successor. SPAB agreed to accept a surrender of the lease to help find a new blacksmith.



Using SPAB's network of William Morris Craft Fellows, and with advice from the National Heritage Ironwork Group, a blacksmith was found and will soon moving in. He is at an early point in his career, but is already a specialist in architectural metalwork and conservation. Some limited work was necessary to the floors and interior of the forge to meet his needs – SPAB's application to make these changes was backed by community groups and supported by the council after pre-application discussion. Soon Chiddingfold will ring again with the sound of hammers on metal.

In 2018, in the Kent village of Boxley, the former medieval chapel of St Andrews was a Grade II\* listed building on the national register of threatened historic buildings. With support from HE, SPAB negotiated purchase and took on the challenge. Disused for 50 years, it had lost its right to be a dwelling and was falling into severe dereliction. SPAB analysed the building, obtained consents and carried out repairs. Some beautiful work was undertaken by contractors Owlsworth plus a range of specialist craftspeople.



At the outset of this project, SPAB invited in the community. This paid dividends in engagement and help with protection, and through the stories that emerged. In the 20th century the building was the community post office, and is fondly remembered as such. The pandemic threatened to interrupt this community engagement, but SPAB was able to bring a digital dimension to it – and was delighted to win a national Museums and Heritage Award in 2021.

Following repair of the building's structure and roof, the focus moved to sustainability measures. Despite the presence of a major gas pipeline running across the site, SPAB sought to avoid fossil fuels. The building's new heating system is air sourced, made possible by the installation of breathable wood-fibre internal insulation. A relatively plain interior made this acceptable. The insulation, and a secondary glazing system supplied by Storm Windows, make a sustainable, energy-efficient and characterful new home. SPAB is grateful to supporters including the Pilgrim Trust, Kent Archaeological Society, individual donors, and Historic England.



## The Gardens Trust: Strength Through Volunteers

The Gardens Trust is a national charity focused on historic designed landscapes. It relies on volunteers to deliver its work, which includes commenting on planning applications as a statutory consultee, supporting research and recording, and raising awareness. Many of the volunteers are from the 36 County Gardens Trusts (CGTs) across England.

Since it was created in 2015 the Trust has invested heavily in training and supporting CGT volunteers, who are central to its work. Expert local volunteers generously donate huge amounts of time and energy to ensure that historic designed landscapes are understood, enjoyed and protected.

Recent years have been tough. While many CGTs are thriving, many others are struggling with issues of capacity, succession and strategic planning. The Gardens Trust meanwhile has its own challenges, largely around financial strain as well as defining and resourcing its relationship with the CGTs.



In their 10th anniversary year, the Gardens Trust and the CGTs are carrying out a review of their relationship to see how it can be strengthened and made more sustainable for the next 10 years. The scoping stage has been made possible thanks to Historic England funding. Over spring 2025 a survey and series of nine regional meetings enabled staff and trustees to meet with all 36 CGTs. This produced a huge amount of mutual learning, and

fostered essential relationships and team morale. Throughout the rest of 2025 a way forward will be plotted together, and an application made to The National Lottery Heritage Fund for a grant to support testing and delivery.

It remains to be seen what the future holds for the Gardens Trust and the CGTs, but it is clear that communication is key in order to achieve shared goals.





## Marsh Community Archaeology Awards 2024

The Marsh Community Archaeology Awards were once again delivered by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) in 2024 in collaboration with the Marsh Charitable Trust. Celebrating the passion and dedication of individuals, and the outstanding contribution of projects that create social, cultural and environmental benefit, there were two categories: Community Archaeologist of the Year, and Community Archaeology Project of the Year.

Placing a strong emphasis on skills development, the winners of the 2024 awards were Dr Catherine Parker Heath (Community Archaeologist of the Year) and Dig the Castle, Torrington, Devon (Community Archaeology Project of the Year).

Catherine Parker Heath is a Community and Conservation Archaeologist at the Peak District National Park. Her dedication to community engagement and volunteer involvement has made a significant impact on how archaeology is experienced and appreciated by people of all ages and backgrounds. Participants are taught valuable techniques



such as surveying, photography, drawing, and digital mapping with ArcGIS. Her projects not only educate but also empower volunteers, creating a lasting appreciation for archaeology and conservation.

The Dig the Castle project, conducted in September and October 2023, aimed to explore Torrington's little-understood motte and bailey castle through a range of archaeological skills. Over 100 adults participated in the excavation, and an open day attracted over 200 visitors. Additionally, more than 150 children engaged through school visits and activities. The project gave volunteers the opportunity to develop skills such as excavation and finds processing. It also fostered a strong sense of community, allowing participants to form new friendships, improve their wellbeing, and develop a greater sense of purpose. The success of the Dig the Castle project highlights the importance

of community archaeology in bringing people together and connecting them with their heritage. The project not only advanced understanding of Torrington's historical site but also enriched the lives of those involved.

More details of the 2024 winners are available on the [CBA website](#). By celebrating these outstanding contributions, it is hoped that more individuals and communities are inspired to get involved in archaeology and discover the rich tapestry of our shared history.







## New Church of England Roles: Church Buildings Support Officers

As one strand of the Church of England's Buildings for Mission project, 35 new roles within dioceses and national organisations have been created as Church Buildings Support Officers (CBSOs). The roles are funded until 2026 and cover a wide range of skills – including community engagement, fundraising and grants support, and church building maintenance, repairs and improvements. Many of the roles are involved in distributing the project's Minor Repairs and Improvements grants.



All the CBSO roles are fully supported via a National Liaison and Training post. This provides them with regular training and support – especially important for the new and apprentice posts – in order to improve their skills and knowledge within the sector. Training subjects include working alongside bats, working with architects, parish fundraising, disability and access, faculty and planning, interpretation, church maintenance and insurance.

Around a third of these posts are young, early career individuals who are new to working with the church or with historic buildings. Another third changed career from working in other sectors, some bringing useful transferable skills with them. The posts also include 5 apprentices, studying

the Level 4 Historic Environment Advice Assistant (HEAA) course through Strode College in Somerset. They receive on-the-job training through their dioceses, plus a full programme of site visits and online training through the Church of England centrally. These training sessions have also been available to HEAA apprentices who are employed by Historic England, enabling them to increase their knowledge of working with churches.

The CBSOs have also been engaging directly with the Parochial Church Councils (PCCs), through site visits, advice, guidance and regular training workshops, thereby increasing the skills and knowledge of the many volunteers who look after and maintain our historic churches.



## 2. Climate Change

**Our heritage is directly threatened by the changing climate. It is also affected by responses to climate change concerns, where steps intended to reduce carbon emissions or improve the resilience of our built heritage can have unintended negative consequences. Recent work to address such issues includes establishing net zero standards, cross-sector initiatives and guidelines, partnership programmes (such as between heritage institutions, environmental organisations, landowners, farmers and local communities), awards and training.**



### The Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard

The Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard (NZCBS) is the UK's first cross-industry standard that brings together net-zero carbon requirements for all major building types. It has been developed by a consortium of leading built environment organisations: the Better Buildings Partnership, the Building Research Establishment, the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers, the Carbon Trust, the Institution of Structural Engineers, the Low Energy Transformation Initiative, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the UK Green Building Council.

Whilst significant progress has been made in defining what net zero means for buildings in the UK, a process of market analysis showed a clear demand for a single, agreed methodology. The NZCBS enables industry to robustly prove that their built assets are net zero carbon and in line with our nation's climate targets.



The NZCBS sets limits for embodied carbon and for operational energy across thirteen different building typologies. While the standard covers retrofit of existing buildings, it has not yet been developed for application to heritage assets.

The RIBA is currently designing the renovation of its own Grade II\* listed headquarters building at 66 Portland Place, London, and this project is being used as part of the pilot testing programme for the NZCBS. With its heritage constraints, it provides a useful case study to test the applicability and potential to apply the standard to retrofit a mixed-use heritage building, containing offices, café, bookshop, function spaces, galleries, lecture theatre and library. It will provide valuable insight into how the NZCBS can be applied to heritage buildings.





## Climate Change: UNESCO Heritage Pilot Project

In July 2024 the UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) and DCMS launched the £1.8m Climate Change and UNESCO Heritage (CCUH) project under HM Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund. Over a period of 12 months, across three UNESCO sites, the project is creating the tools and conditions to enable communities in the UK and beyond to address sustainability challenges. Underpinning the pilot is the understanding that participatory approaches, founded on the principles of sustainable development, are needed to bring people, communities and organisations together to address such issues.

With cultural and natural heritage being foundational to localising global challenges, CCUH has explored ways to capitalise on the huge potential offered by UNESCO-designated sites as testing grounds for developing new ways of working, and positioning heritage as a vector for understanding local climate-change impacts. Working with teams at North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, Fforest Fawr UNESCO Global Geopark and Hadrian's Wall UNESCO World Heritage Site, the project



has undertaken a range of collaborative activities across 2024/25 – with the aim of developing creative approaches to stakeholder engagement, open-source data cataloguing and tools, and models for joint working and adaptation pathway planning. Additionally, a steering group of representatives across government and public agencies is in place to ensure better understanding of opportunities for improved inter-departmental partnership working, data sharing, and cross-cutting policy work around heritage and climate change.

The results of the pilot will include accessible, adaptable and reusable templates and tools, based on approaches developed at each site. These materials are expected to be launched on a dedicated platform later in 2025; the aim is to enable testing and adoption by natural and cultural heritage sites across the UK and in international settings.

As a component part of the CCUH project, a Research & Innovation Group has been established. This comprises leading academics and

practitioners from eight UK universities and UNESCO Chairs, practitioners from English Heritage, Historic England, the National Trust and the private sector, and specialists from UNESCO Sites and UNESCO itself. The group will deliver actionable outputs to enhance the role of UNESCO sites in fostering collaborative, place-based solutions to global challenges, including:

- a comprehensive study contextualising learning from the CCUH project and wider place-based approaches in UNESCO sites and beyond
- a strategic research framework for the next five to ten years, supporting collaboration and driving research and investment across the global UNESCO network
- evidence-based solutions to address interconnected challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss.

More information can be found on the [UK National Commission for UNESCO's website](#).





## World Heritage, The Skell Valley and The Power Of 10

The North Yorkshire UNESCO World Heritage Site (WHS) of Studley Royal Park, including the ruins of Fountains Abbey, is feeling the effects of climate change. At the heart of the National Trust-owned site is the River Skell, whose course was altered by monks in the 12th century to build their abbey, and in the 18th century to create the Studley Royal water garden. Flooding damages the abbey ruins, while soil carried by the river is deposited in ornamental water features, harming the beauty and ecology of the garden.

The 2015 WHS Management Plan initiated the Skell Valley Project, involving Historic England, the Environment Agency, Nidderdale National Landscape and others in developing management solutions. Wider discussion



broadened the scheme to address climate change challenges, decline in nature, neglected heritage, and unequal access to the outdoors. The resulting £2.5m Skell Valley Project is funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the Wolfson Foundation, the Royal Oak Foundation and others. Together with farmers and landowners on 20 sites upstream of the WHS, natural flood management measures – including woody debris dams, tree planting and wetland creation – have slowed water flow and reduced soil-wash into the river. Volunteers have restored wildflower-rich grasslands, controlled invasive

species, and managed new wetland habitats.

With Harrogate and District Community Action, the project increased volunteering with local organisations. Attracting young people is a shared ambition – the Power of 10 scheme inspires them to explore new opportunities by completing 10, 20, 50 and 100 hours of volunteering in their community, with recognition at each milestone. The project has also funded Ripon Business Improvement District and Visit Ripon to support local tourism businesses. Online resources, developed through workshops, enable the promotion of the landscape in attracting visitors.



With bus company Transdev and North Yorkshire Council, a walking trail hub was created at Ripon Bus Station that encourages onward travel via the new (wheelchair and pushchair friendly) Fountains Way. Two further walking trails interpret heritage along the valley, encouraging people to access the outdoors and enjoy health and wellbeing benefits.

Image 1: Pond dipping in the River Skell. © National Trust Images/Anthony Chappel-Ross.

Image 2: Building leaky dams upstream of the World Heritage Site. © National Trust/Jenni Shepherd



## The National Trust's 10-Year Strategy

Founded in the late 19th century to preserve the environment from the ravages of industrialisation, then adapting to save scores of country houses from dereliction, the National Trust (NT) is now ramping up its efforts to address the climate and nature crises. The NT marked its 130th birthday by launching a hugely ambitious ten-year strategy. This followed the largest public consultation ever carried out by the NT, with more than 70,000 people – including members, volunteers and industry partners – to provide the building blocks for the new strategy.

Over the next ten years the NT will work in partnership with environmental organisations, farmers, landowners and local communities to create 250,000 hectares of nature-rich landscapes (an area one-and-a-half times the size of Greater London), both on and off NT land. This is the biggest contribution to addressing the catastrophic decline in nature the NT has made in its history. The groundwork was laid over the past ten years, during which time 25,000 hectares of priority habitat landscapes were restored. The NT now pledges to restore ten times that amount of land to a level that is rich in nature.



Supporting efforts to tackle climate change include restoring vital peatland (which stores more carbon than the forests of Britain, France and Germany combined), reducing flood risk to many thousands of homes and businesses, and improving soil health to provide a habitat for one billion earthworms. To restore peatland, improve the quality of the water in rivers and reconnect landscapes, the NT will make strategic land acquisitions while also supporting other landowners.

Alongside these efforts to tackle the nature and climate crises, the NT will significantly improve people's access to nature, beauty and history. Multiple studies demonstrate the wellbeing benefits of time spent in nature, but access remains very unequal while the impact of the UK's mental health crisis is far-reaching – 17 million working days a year are lost to mental health related issues.

With founding partners Natural England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund, NT is inviting towns and cities across the UK to be part of a new programme: Nature Towns and Cities. This will support 100 towns and cities to transform and grow their networks of green spaces, enabling everyone to enjoy time spent outdoors in nature close to home. Partnership will be vital to achieving this goal, and the NT is bringing together a strong coalition of like-minded organisations and funders from across UK society.

To achieve these ambitious goals the NT aims to inspire five million more people to care and advocate for nature and heritage in the next decade, by giving their time, voice or money. Fundraising is critical to achieving these goals; the NT aims to fundraise more in the next decade than it has in the previous century. For more details, read the National Trust's [2025–2035 strategy](#).





## Heritage on the Edge

At the end of 2024, heritage organisations and the National Trust (NT) gathered at Dinas Dinlle (a hillfort in North West Wales that has been slowly slipping into the sea) to initiate a programme of long-term planning around heritage assets and historic landscapes at our coast.

The NT owns 860 miles of coastline around England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its analysis shows that, by 2060, 192 designated heritage sites and

monuments will be at medium to high risk from climate-exacerbated coastal processes (flooding and erosion).

Working to generate better understanding of how to plan strategically for this impending but long-term change, the NT invited the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland), Cadw, Historic Environment Scotland, Historic England, universities, Natural Resources Wales, Natural England, the Environment Agency, English Heritage Trust and the World Monuments Fund to convene and collaborate to help it shape its response.

The outcome of the discussions was to shift to a landscape and heritage cluster model to deal with

the situation, as the NT develops its approach to managing change and loss. By working with the landscape and its people and use, the public benefit and services at play alongside the heritage significance will be better understood.

The programme was presented at the launch of the Coast-R Network, funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). This highlighted further partnership opportunities with the Crown Estate and Network Rail. The Trust is aiming to develop the programme alongside the launch of its 2025–2035 strategy.





## Joint Statement Between Natural England, Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund

In 2024 the [Joint Statement between Natural England, Historic England and The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#) was published, recognising the crucial role that

heritage management practices play in nature recovery, and that connecting people to their past can help them shape a sustainable future.

The broad definition of nature, and the benefits of integrated delivery, is not always understood. As articulated in the 2006 [NERC Act](#), the role of Natural England (NE) includes the protection and enhancement of landscapes, geodiversity, seascapes and the historic environment.

Advocacy and action are being achieved through collaborative working and projects. Examples

include the [Northern Nature, Culture and Place Forum](#), highlighting opportunities to enhance natural, historic and cultural capital for the benefit of people, and King's School Ely, undertaking pioneering research and management of the Ely Plane Tree, for its heritage and nature value, funded by the first [heritage grant issued for a project on a single tree](#).

The Joint Statement is a real step forward in recognising how we can work together for biodiversity, people, places, heritage and the economy.



## Delivering Carbon Literacy Training to Heritage Organisations

Since January 2024, Historic England (HE) has delivered carbon literacy training to over 450 heritage organisations. The roll-out of this training is part of a broader programme of HE support (the Sector to Net Zero project) for heritage organisations, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to calculate their carbon footprint and establish carbon reduction plans.

The target audience of the training is micro, small and medium sized heritage organisations, from industrial heritage sites and historic houses to archaeological companies and conservators. HE delivered this training programme in partnership with seven sector support organisations: Historic Houses, Heritage Network, Historic Buildings & Places, the Nautical Archaeology Society, the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists, The Heritage Alliance and Icon. This partnership model of training roll-out has maximised the reach of support and raised awareness across the partner organisations' members and the sector.

HE set up a trainers' framework to deliver the heritage carbon literacy course, creating the additional benefit of building the capacity and capability of heritage climate action trainers in the sector. The course is now available for organisations to train their staff, trustees and volunteers, expanding knowledge and understanding beyond the one or two learners trained by the initial roll-out.

According to pledges submitted as part of the certification process, trained organisations have so far potentially saved approximately 193 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-e. Building on this success, HE is now developing the next phase of a suite of carbon reduction training.



## Climate Action Programmes at Historic England

2025 will mark the end of the second phase of the climate change and net zero programmes from Historic England (HE), plus their review for the coming years. HE continues to focus on sector-wide initiatives aimed at reducing carbon emissions and enhancing sustainability.

For the development and delivery of their heritage carbon literacy course, HE has been awarded Silver Carbon Literacy Accreditation. Efforts to improve carbon tracking and measurement continue with the development of a suite of carbon accounting and reduction training. These tools help organisations quantify and reduce their emissions, enabling more data-driven decision-making in sustainability efforts.

Together with Arts Council England, HE is co-signatory of the Climate Action Statement of Purpose, reinforcing a joint commitment to addressing climate change in the heritage and cultural sectors. A pilot project has been launched this year supporting decarbonisation projects in cultural and heritage organisations to explore practical implementation of decarbonising work.

In partnership with Cadw and Historic Environment Scotland, HE developed a handbook for delivering the Level 3 Energy Efficiency in Older and Traditional Buildings qualification. This initiative aims to improve expertise in retrofitting historic buildings, ensuring they become more energy efficient while preserving their unique heritage value. This initiative is a crucial step in aligning heritage conservation with environmental goals.

Other publications include guidance on climate resilience, promoted across the sector. More than 180 local authority partners in HE's online community have

received training and support, helping them integrate climate adaptation strategies into their planning and conservation efforts. To further enhance energy efficiency, a utilities monitoring platform is being developed to track energy consumption and emissions in real time. This will support better decision-making regarding energy use and conservation.

Within their own operations HE is taking multiple steps toward net zero emissions: communication campaigns have been launched to encourage sustainable commuting, and waste management programmes are in place across all offices. Surveys are underway to identify additional areas for improvement. New energy-efficient laptops have been distributed to 70 staff members, supporting lower energy consumption in daily operations. To further minimise waste, HE is developing charity partnerships to facilitate the re-use and recycling of older equipment, ensuring that outdated technology is repurposed.



### Harnessing New Technology to Tackle Climate Change

In summer 2024, English Heritage (EH) completed a project to install solar panels on the visitor centre at Whitby Abbey – a former Grade I listed 17th-century mansion. This was the first time the charity had installed solar panels at a historic site in their care, and it demonstrated how the sensitive adaptation of historic buildings and use of new technology can

help tackle climate change and contribute to a sustainable future for our environment.

The charity took the opportunity to reduce the site's environmental impact when replacing the flat roof of the visitor centre following storm damage. The solar panels are largely invisible on the roof, and the roof itself is now formed of a more sustainable Terne-coated steel. This durable alternative to lead is created from 100 per cent recycled materials, and will cope better with the coastal environment at the site. In a hundred years' time, when the roof is at the end of its life, the steel will be 100 per cent recyclable again.

The 28 solar panels on the roof are contributing to 50 per cent of the building's annual net power requirements, and should pay for themselves within five years. They are expected to generate an estimated 18000kWh of electricity annually – enough to run around ten homes in the UK each year. On a typical spring and summer day, the visitor centre won't need any additional electricity from the National Grid.

Larger downpipes have also been fitted at the visitor centre to help cope with increased rainfall, and lightning protection has been installed to help protect the historic building from the changing climate.





## Archaeology and Solar Farm Development

To deliver on its growth and clean energy missions, the government is looking closely at how planning systems can sometimes create friction and slow down delivery. While managing impact on heritage assets is vital to ensure sustainable development, and while growth should not come 'at any cost', as a sector we must do what we can to enable development that the country needs.

Since November 2024, the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) has been leading a cross-sector group seeking to develop a set of common principles for

archaeology on solar farms, drawing on the expertise of the following organisations: Solar Energy UK, Historic England, Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers (ALGAO), Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers (FAME), the Local Government Association, Cadw and the Historic Environment Division Northern Ireland. All partners have engaged enthusiastically with the project. The group is looking for areas where any mutual lack of understanding can be ameliorated, and seeking to set expectations for solar developers to ensure that archaeological processes can be employed efficiently and effectively.

As archaeological remains and geological conditions differ from site to site, there can be no one-size-fits-all solution, but it is hoped that agreement on optimum approaches can be achieved. For example, discussions have sought to agree

what information can helpfully be provided up-front in applications to inform decision-making. Promoting recognition of the design flexibility inherent in this type of development, and options to reduce below-ground impacts, have also been discussed. With this information, approaches to pre-determination evaluation – which use a range of non-intrusive techniques, supplemented by targeted trial-trenching where necessary – can be encouraged.

Common principles emphasising the positive outcomes for archaeology as a result of solar development promise better protection of sites, and wider dissemination of information about archaeological heritage for local communities. A high-level roundtable was held in March 2025, and work to agree and publish common principles guidance is set to conclude later in the year.



## Sustainability and Climate Change: Haddon Hall

In November 2024 Haddon Hall in Derbyshire received the annual Historic Houses Sustainability Award. Sponsored by Savills, the award recognises and celebrates work done by privately and independently owned historic houses in the field of sustainability. The award is a benchmark for excellence and recognition of environmental best practice within the heritage sector. Judges take several factors into account, including reducing carbon footprints, eco-tourism and sustainable development, biodiversity and habitat management.

Haddon Hall is a Grade I listed medieval house, home to Lord and Lady Manners. Open seven days a week to the public, from April to October, Haddon welcomes over 80,000 visitors annually. Sustainability and environmental best practice are at the heart of everything the team do – not only to tread lightly on such an ancient building and estate, but also in order to protect the landscape, enhance its biodiversity and include the local community.



1

Using wood from the estate, log fires are used for heating, a woodchip boiler is used for water, and shutters conserve the heat. Water is sourced from their springs, and two ram pumps are being restored to sustainably pump water around the supply pipes. For maintenance and restoration local craftspeople are employed, working in traditional materials obtained from the estate. This includes using silt from rivers to make lime plaster in the kiln, and using a fallen oak from

the park to make desks and other furniture.

All the gardens, parkland, rivers and land on the estate are treated with the same gentle touch that is employed within the Hall. The team have followed organic practices since 2009, and are pursuing a policy of food self-sufficiency, with a biodynamic household vegetable garden and the supply of parkland venison and beef to the estate-owned hotel.



2



## Church of England's Net Zero Programme

As part of demonstrating environmental leadership, the Church of England has set the ambitious aim of becoming net zero by 2030. To spearhead carbon emissions reductions, the Church established the Net Zero Programme. Work commenced at the beginning of 2023 with the mission of deploying £190m in Triennium funding, allocated by the Church Commissioners, to facilitate the Church's transition to a low-carbon future.

A [Routemap to Net Zero](#) was adopted by General Synod in July 2022. It seeks to achieve significant reductions in the Church's scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions across its built estate (some 410,000–415,000 T CO<sub>2</sub>e per year from over 32,000 buildings in total, including churches, church halls, cathedrals, schools, clergy housing and theological education institutions). Targeted work on reducing scope 3 emissions (waste, water, procurement streams, IT etc.) will form future work after 2030.

The programme is overseen by a Net Zero Carbon Programme board drawn from across the National Church Institutions, supported by a team based within the Cathedrals and Church Buildings Department of the Church Commissioners but working in partnership across the church and with dioceses. The period 2023–25 comprises the programme's development phase, during which the focus is on building capacity at all levels of the Church to deliver the 2030 ambition. An initial suite of projects and workstreams has been rolled out. As the programme develops, it will look to scale up those workstreams and projects making the greatest impact.

### Work in progress includes:

- a Cathedrals decarbonisation workstream to support decarbonisation activity across some of the nation's most valued and iconic heritage buildings
- a Demonstrator Churches workstream, supported by additional funding from the Benefact Trust, to establish a network of exemplar net zero churches around the country so that there is a 'parish near you' which other churches can learn from
- a project to support the highest emitting churches through the commissioning of fully funded energy audits to help churches develop net zero carbon actions plans
- a regional fundraising campaign, currently being piloted across 8 dioceses, which seeks to match fund fundraising at the local level for net zero projects
- a Churches Quick Wins Fund, devolved to dioceses to facilitate the delivery of net zero projects which are reasonably well advanced in terms of planning and fundraising to help get them over the line
- a Pilot and Evaluation Fund to trial new renewables/net zero technologies and approaches
- additional workstreams to tackle clergy housing, schools portfolios, offices etc.
- encouraging churches to register with and pursue awards under the A Rocha Eco Church initiative, with parallel awards also available for dioceses and cathedrals.

Information about achievements to date can be found in the [first Annual Impact Report](#).





## A Cathedral and a Demonstrator Church in the Church of England Net Zero Programme

The historic 800-year-old Salisbury Cathedral significantly reduced its energy use after installing LED lighting as part of its commitment to reach net zero carbon. The new system reduced the electrical demand for internal lighting by over 80 per cent. Kenneth Padley, Canon Treasurer at the Cathedral, said: 'It balances illumination with atmosphere for liturgy, and there are parts of the building that our guides can show off as never before – medieval paint under the triforium arches and the blocked doorway to the former glazing workshop above the Trinity chapel, to name but two.'

A significant benefit of the relighting is its contribution to lowering the Cathedral's carbon footprint. Combined with the effect of external LED re-lamping in 2024, a combined saving of approximately 30 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year has been achieved. Addressing climate change remains a key strategic priority for the Cathedral and aligns with the Church of England's ambitious net zero carbon target. The Cathedral worked closely with Spectrum Electrical Group and ERCO to



install the new lighting, which was funded in part by a grant from the Friends of Salisbury Cathedral.

One of the first churches to take part in the Demonstrator Churches project is St Peter Mancroft Church, in Norwich city centre. It received a Church of England Demonstrator Churches grant of £50,000, with co-funding from the scheme's partners, Benefact Trust, of £36,000 – to transform its carbon footprint and energy use by replacing its interior lighting system and installing heat pumps, batteries and 48 solar panels. Through this work, the church expects to see an 84 per cent reduction in emissions by saving 52.26 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> each year.

The roots of this project began in 2017, when it became apparent that the lighting in the Grade I listed church needed a complete overhaul. The subsequent failure of one of the main gas boilers sped-up environmental planning.

Work began on installing solar panels on the southern roof in March 2024, with the installation of the new LED lighting system, heat pumps and batteries to follow. Rev'd Canon Edward Carter, Vicar of St Peter Mancroft, said: 'It is a comprehensive project to a Grade I listed church at a time when the net zero agenda is one of the Church of England's top priorities. We are delighted to have been identified by the Diocese of Norwich as a demonstrator church project.'





## Heritage at the Heart of Agri-Environment Schemes

For over 20 years, Agri-Environment Schemes (AES) have encouraged landowners to protect and enhance the environment on their land by paying them for the provision of environmental services, including the protection of historic features and landscape character. The pressures on our land are many, exacerbated by a rapidly changing climate. With this in mind, Environmental Land Management schemes (ELMs) have been developed as a key delivery mechanism. This has been a collaborative effort, with co-design between DEFRA, land managers, Natural England, the

Forestry Commission, Historic England and the Environment Agency.

For the Countryside Stewardship Higher Tier strand of ELMs, this collaboration has resulted in the development of new actions (formerly options) for adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change, with integration of the needs of other environmental assets at its heart.

New actions have been targeted at both coastal and riverine environments. The restoration of maritime cliffs seeks to protect the coast from erosion and sea-level rise. It is underpinned by a land survey that identifies all the environmental assets (including heritage assets) that may be affected by the restoration. Within the riverine management space, an action has been developed to connect rivers with floodplain habitats. It looks to manage

historic assets within the river, such as weirs, as well as assets on the surrounding fields that may be affected by hydrological change. Identifying the location of previous palaeo-channels can also help target interventions that improve landscape character.

A series of capital works is available to deliver protection, management and restoration of heritage features. Integrated management is at the fore of delivering resilience in these dynamic and rapidly evolving habitats.

Adapting to climate change, reducing flood events further downstream, and using heritage to inform change are all measures that create resilient environments. Such work will continue to ensure heritage is protected, understood, valued and enhanced in the face of a rapidly changing climate.



## Landmark Goes Renewable

The Landmark Trust is a charity with an estate of over 200 historic buildings across the UK and in Italy, all available for residential stays. The cost of keeping these places comfortable for guests is considerable, in both financial and environmental terms.

Following the creation of the organisation's wide-ranging Environmental Sustainability strategy in 2022, the Trust has been installing renewable energy infrastructure on sites across their estate. Having established which buildings had the largest adverse environmental impact in terms of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions, they began with ten of these buildings, carrying out detailed heat-loss analysis and starting the process of transferring them to low-carbon systems. At the same time, all new Landmarks now have low carbon heating systems from the outset.

At Wortham Manor, a 16th-century house in Cornwall, the Trust installed a ground source heat pump, and underfloor heating and radiators throughout the building. Bore holes were sunk in the field next-door, while a stone outbuilding houses the pump. At Tixall Gatehouse in Staffordshire – a magnificent Elizabethan gatehouse – bore holes have been dug for ground source heat to serve the building, and an unused top floor is being brought into occupation as a new open-plan kitchen/sitting room.



The Station Agent's House, a new Landmark in central Manchester which opened in 2024, lacked the space for ground source infrastructure so here air source heat pumps were installed, located in an adjacent railway arch. These provide hot water and central heating. Lime plaster mixed with cork, and double-glazed sash windows, have all improved thermal performance. Renewable energy, through ground source heat, was also

installed in a major project to rescue Grade I listed Calverley Old Hall, near Leeds, from dereliction. To maintain the necessary conditions for Elizabethan wall-paintings that were discovered during the project, a building management system was also installed. The completion of the project, opened by the RT Hon Rachel Reeves MP, saw the building removed from the Heritage at Risk Register.

These major infrastructure works have been accompanied by careful thermal assessments, the installation of greater insulation, the use of Chimney Sheep draught excluders (made from Herdwick wool) to close flues, and the hanging of thick, thermally lined curtains. Careful monitoring of the performance of these systems will be undertaken over the coming months to help guide future work.

## Case Study



### Kent Wildlife

In November 2024 English Heritage (EH) joined Kent Wildlife Trust, the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership and the Western Heights Preservation Society in announcing a new project to restore 80 hectares of precious chalk grassland habitat and defensive earthworks across Dover Castle and the Western Heights in Dover.

Supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, and running until December 2026, the project will create vital habitat for key species, including the chough – a rare member of the crow family, native to Kent and a common sight at the time Dover Castle's defences were first built in the 12th century, but which was lost for more than

200 years. The new project builds on work EH has already delivered, in partnership with Kent Wildlife Trust, to support the reintroduction of the chough to the local area. During summer 2023 EH opened a temporary aviary at Dover Castle to house four young red-billed choughs, allowing the public to learn more about the chough's historic links to the area and its ecological significance.

By restoring local chalk grassland, the project will help connect Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and make the important chalk downland landscape more resilient to the effects of climate change. Work includes clearing overgrown scrub to reveal defensive earthworks going back 2,000 years, helping Dover's rich heritage to be enjoyed and understood. A mixed breed livestock herd will be introduced to support the long-term management of the landscape through conservation grazing.

The project to restore Dover's special landscape will provide opportunities for local people to experience the wellbeing benefits of connecting with the natural and historic environment. New volunteering opportunities will be created – including that of EH's first nature volunteers. The project will also part fund an apprentice countryside ranger role.





## 3. Diversity and Inclusion

**For the heritage sector to retain its relevance, and therefore ensure its resilience, it is crucial that it reflects an increasingly diverse society and is accessible to all.**

**Issues that are currently being addressed include ways to increase diversity among both visitors and heritage sector staff, improving inclusivity within heritage sector decision-making, and removing economic barriers to those wishing to partake in visitor-orientated initiatives and those wishing to establish careers in the sector.**



### Department for Culture, Media and Sport: Policy Round-Up

In February 2025, Secretary of State Lisa Nandy announced an over £270 million [Arts Everywhere Fund](#) for arts venues, museums, libraries and the heritage sector in a nation-wide boost for the cultural sector. For heritage this included:

- £15 million for Heritage at Risk to provide grants for repairs and conservation, focusing on sites with most need (restoring local heritage, such as shops, pubs, parks and town halls)
- £4.85 million Heritage Revival Fund to enable community organisations to own neglected heritage buildings and bring them back into use.

- £3.2 million for four cultural education programmes to preserve increased access to arts for children and young people, including through the Heritage Schools Programme, the Museums and Schools Programme, the Art & Design National Saturday Club and the BFI Film Academy.

In addition, regional growth and regeneration got a boost as ten major projects across the UK will receive more than £67 million in funding to support cultural programmes, such as £15 million to the National Railway Museum towards its capital redevelopment in York.

The [Listed Places of Worship Grant](#) scheme provides grants towards VAT paid on repairs and renovations to the UK's listed sites of worship. Since 2010, nearly £350 million has been awarded, supporting listed churches, synagogues, mosques and temples across the UK. In January 2025 DCMS confirmed that the scheme will be extended until 31 March 2026, with a budget of £23 million. Against a tough

financial background, and bearing in mind a wide range of competing priorities within the Department, the difficult decision was made to implement an annual limit of £25,000 on the amount individual places of worship can claim in the coming year. It is believed that this will continue the widest distribution of the scheme's benefits within the available means. Based on previous data, it is expected that 94 per cent of claims will be unaffected by this change.

The [National Blue Plaque Scheme](#), led by Historic England, celebrates the lives of notable historic figures and the buildings in which they lived and worked, demonstrating that the people who make up our nation's story come from all walks of life and all across the country. Four plaques have been unveiled since the launch of the scheme, including Daphne Steele, the first black matron in the NHS (Ilkley), potter Clarice Cliff (Stoke-on-Trent), songwriter and humanitarian George Harrison (Liverpool) and actor Cary Grant (Bristol).





## Ending Unequal Access at the National Trust

The National Trust (NT) welcomes millions of visitors every year to the historic buildings, gardens and landscapes under its care. Enabling a more enjoyable visitor experience for disabled people has always been part of the NT's 'for everyone, for ever' mission, and is now at the forefront of the new strategy (launched in January).

The ambition to end unequal access is the culmination of a 3-year commitment of designated central funding for NT sites to focus on improving accessibility. The NT has a decentralised business model, where places generate their own funds, but the central funding for this initiative enables faster delivery and greater visitor experience consistency across all sites.

To support this consistency, a set of access standards was produced – each with three levels to enable incremental development, particularly where significant structural change might be needed (such as new paths and adapted building entrances). The expectation from the 3-year



funding was that every site would achieve at least the initial level in that timeframe.

The standards were wide ranging, covering, for example, physical content, sensory experiences, audio-described tours, accessible cutlery and alternative formats for materials. Quarterly internal surveys track progress and support NT sites to keep on track. While the standards were developed centrally, it was a shared ambition nationally that enabled implementation to be successful. Visitor feedback also guided development of the standards. Surveys and direct comments shaped understanding of how changes affect visitors. Once all the standards are met, the NT's commitment to raise levels of accessibility remains ongoing.

A significant partnership with AccessAble (a leading UK provider of access information for disabled

people) enabled the NT to improve its pre-visit information guides. Surveys to inform the guides were undertaken by disabled people, and the NT and AccessAble continue to collaborate to keep the content current. All 594 visited sites now feature comprehensive pre-visit information AccessAble guides.

As accessibility has moved to being one of the three central pillars of the new long-term strategy, a profound cultural shift is happening within the NT. There is an increased confidence of what is possible and how to put it in place, and accessibility is in mind from concept stage to design and delivery for any project. The voices of disabled people are central. Improvements to pre-visit information, more accessible facilities, and more informed staff are all cornerstones of this ongoing cultural shift, as the NT moves to really end unequal access to its places.



## Supporting Diverse Audiences to Connect With Our Heritage

English Heritage (EH) is working to broaden audiences and make everyone feel welcome at heritage sites in their care. Collaborating with communities who are currently under-represented among their visitors, the charity is looking at ways for people to experience meaningful connections with historic places.

In September 2024, EH worked alongside the Southampton Chinese Association to host a Chinese Moon Festival at Stonehenge – welcoming around 100 members of the local Chinese community to mark this ancient and cherished festival in Chinese culture. In December, EH welcomed visitors from local mosques to Stonehenge for an unforgettable opportunity to observe a major lunar standstill (a rare astronomical event that may have influenced the monument's



design), and to share a crescent moon sighting event to mark the start of the Islamic month. Inspired by the way different cultures and communities have traditionally celebrated a connection with the moon, the event noted the similarities in alignment between Stonehenge and the Kaabah (the square stone structure at the heart of Islam's most sacred mosque, the Masjid al-Haram, in Mecca). Many of those attending said they would like to come to similar events in the future, describing it as an emotional opportunity to conduct sunset prayers at the site and to witness the crescent moon rising above the stones –

85 per cent were visiting Stonehenge for the first time.

The events to engage new and under-represented audiences at Stonehenge were part of a wider initiative in partnership with academics from the universities of Bournemouth, Leicester and Oxford, who have been investigating whether the major lunar standstill influenced the design of Stonehenge. This work, which allowed academics to share their research with a wider audience, was shortlisted for the Partnership of the Year award in the Museum and Heritage Awards 2025.





## Thirty Years of Heritage Open Days

[Heritage Open Days](#) is England's largest heritage festival, powered by a community network including business owners, museum staff, council officers and members of local interest groups. Grassroots-led, it is presented nationally by the National Trust and supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery.

In 2024 the festival celebrated its 30th anniversary with the theme Routes–Networks–Connections. Its largest ever community saw 2,354 local organisers and 115 coordinators working with 41,700 volunteers and 7,800 paid staff, to put on 5,427 free events across 6–15 September. Connections at national level were prompted by the theme, with networks cross-promoting each other's work and leading to new events such as sea shanties at Heritage Harbours and walks with the British Pilgrimage Trust.



Over one million visitors enjoyed the festival programme in 2024, with 82 per cent saying it made them feel more proud of their local area. The [Festival Review](#) shows that it continues to provide a gateway into the sector, with 35 per cent of audiences from a C2DE background and 22 per cent of visitors not having visited a heritage site in the last 12 months. For those who had been to Heritage Open Days in the past, 58 per cent reported that they went on to visit heritage sites more often. Although founded on the principle of free access, the detailed annual evaluation data set also shows how the festival generates income: 67 per cent of visitors made donations where they saw the opportunity, while sites benefited from an estimated £3.7million of additional spend and local area economies from a further £7.8million.

To mark the anniversary a special [online gallery](#) was created,

showcasing its impact across three decades. Organisers nominated their stories, which were shortlisted for a public ballot attracting over 3,000 individual votes and local media attention. The final stories have a permanent place on the national website, and the active organisers also benefited from a micro-grant to spend on further promotion or materials for their festival events.

The anniversary year also saw the launch of a new database to support future growth, and the development of a ten-year strategy to grow the festival to be more sustainable, diverse and inclusive. In preparation for the 2025 cycle, new partnerships were established with Kids in Museums and VocalEyes to boost support for the community, alongside a new micro-grants programme to encourage more stories from under-represented histories and to support organisers from under-represented backgrounds.



## Representing Young People in the Heritage Sector

New Wave is an annual youth engagement project delivered as part of [Heritage Open Days](#), designed to address the under-representation of young people as visitors and volunteers/staff within the heritage sector. A small cohort of festival organisers is taken through a structured training programme, focusing on collaborating with young adults aged 18–25 to develop new, innovative festival events. Young adults are encouraged to be active decision-makers through co-creation, while heritage organisations are given training and support to embed youth voice in their organisation.

In 2024, a supportive network was created for 18 organisations from across England. Across the programme, sites worked with 97 young people to deliver events, with 100 per cent of them feeling that their contribution made a real difference. Equally, 100 per cent of organisations involved enjoyed working with young adults to programme events.

Partnership working was a key theme of the project. For example, Crewe Lyceum worked with a small group of volunteers



and partnered with YMCA Crewe. Previously the theatre's engagement work had focused on young people aged 5–18, instead of under-served 18–25s. Many of the people they worked with had never visited a theatre before. Young volunteers led the decision-making process, and collectively explored the history of the theatre for inspiration. They chose to focus on ghost stories from the theatre's past and created an escape room-style experience throughout the building. It opened the theatre up to new ideas for hosting events outside the typical programme, and helped to reach more diverse audiences.



Overall, outputs from New Wave demonstrate that investing time and energy into collaborating with young audiences helps organisations to deliver exciting new programming, with 87 per cent agreeing their events were innovative and pushed the boundaries of their usual work. Most notably, organisations were able to diversify their audiences and redress the under-representation of young people through adopting a co-creation model.

[Read the full impact review and learn more about the events delivered as part of the project.](#)



Image 1: A collage of New Wave events from 2024. © Heritage Open Days

Image 2: Two people solving clues at Crewe Lyceum's 'Haunted History' event. © Crewe Lyceum Theatre

Image 3: Young collaborators stood by a New Wave roller banner at the Pankhurst Centre. © Pankhurst Centre





## Heritage, Wellbeing and Visual Impairment

Banbury Heritage project was devised by Age UK and funded by Historic England. It looked at how co-creation amongst older people using heritage could help meet their needs and enhance their wellbeing. It began with community mapping and recruitment, resulting in a group of participants of older people, largely with visual impairments and mobility challenges. Detailed predictions on outputs and outcomes were not possible as the cohort was not predetermined.

Using place and community as a starting point, this project explored formal and informal local heritage, identified by the group as of common interest. Group members researched aspects of historical interest with input from local heritage experts and archives, visited heritage sites, shared experiences and undertook creative practice. Meetings took place at a local Arts Centre, museum and heritage assets. The physical barriers to access experienced by participants demanded a creative and iterative approach as well as a bespoke evaluation process.

The group identified stories and images to contribute to final



project outputs. Ideas for which were co-created and included an audio-recording of a book on local heritage in Banbury (which had been illustrated by a participant's mother); the construction of a tactile mosaic which represented Banbury; a legacy film with contributions from participants and AI digital postcards which represented stories of participants and their memories of Banbury. In addition, the project has produced a legacy resource archive which will help to form a 'blueprint' for other heritage practitioners to use via the [Creative Later Life website](#). This includes dedicated webpages, a series of podcasts

on co-production, a recorded learning event on a radical approach to evaluation and an evaluation report.

Research by Age UK shows that older people themselves believe 'creative and cultural participation' to be the number one positive influence on their own wellbeing when ranked against other determinants. The results of this project showed how connection was a key to unlocking many doors to wellbeing; that it was a resource for coping with the past, present and future; that it created confidence and enabled valuable shared experiences and moments of discovery.



Image 1: Visitors to Upton House as part of the Banbury Heritage project. © Reproduced courtesy of Age UK Oxfordshire.

Image 2: Banbury Heritage group participants making a tactile mosaic with artist Tom.

© Reproduced courtesy of Age UK Oxfordshire





## Festival of Archaeology 2024

In 2024 the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) ran their annual Festival of Archaeology, continuing a hybrid format of on-the-ground and online events across the UK. The theme was Archaeology and Community, with Headland Archaeology as principle sponsor.

2024 also saw the production of a five-year impact report for the Festival. From 2020 to 2024, over 2,000 events were delivered by more than 1,000 event organisers, resulting in over 1 million engagements and a reach of 358,984,239. Participants showed consistently high levels of engagement and learning across the period – with growth in the number of females, young people, and people from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Also, levels of participation from those identifying as having a disability was consistently above the national profile.

The 2024 Festival opened at the Scottish Crannog Centre, Perthshire, with a day of traditional crafts and Iron Age activities and the launch of the Archaeological Achievement Awards. With free access to the



site, over 450 visitors attended – a new record, and double the site's average summer weekend numbers.

Partnering with English Heritage, the CBA's youth event (ages 8–16) was held at Chester Castle and curated by members of the CBA's Youth Advisory Board and EH's Young Producers. Hands-on activities, demonstrations, and a tour of the castle grounds highlighted the site's rich history and the conservation work happening there today.

The Festival's closing event, attended by over 2,500 people, was delivered in collaboration with the NT at Hardwick Hall. Alongside a 'heritage marketplace', activities for visitors of all ages included demonstrations, tours, medieval music and child-friendly Tudor jousting.

CBA's Archaeology and Community Theme Day included guidance on creating a free digital map with Geovey, the announcement of the winners of the Marsh Community Archaeology Awards, a Drink and Draw event with Gosh Comics, and the launch of a new Young Archaeologists' Club activity pack. Other digital activity across the fortnight included two This Is Archaeology lectures, blog-based event A Day in Archaeology, the early career conference hosted by CBA and the ClfA Early Careers Special Interest Group, and the X-based #AskAnArchaeologist Day.

Over the 16 days of the Festival, 435 unique events were delivered by 233 event organisers, providing 767 opportunities to engage with archaeology.





## Festival of Archaeology Youth Event at Sheringham Park

As part of the 2024 Festival of Archaeology, and as one of the National Trust's Children and Young People Hubs, Sheringham Park approached the Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) to run an archaeological day for its members (aged between 8 and 16) in July.

The event was co-created with the YAC leader, collaborating on content to make sure the day was relevant and appropriate for the group. To avoid any barriers to participation, Sheringham Park offered to either fund the cost of the YAC group's travel or their lunch. They also removed the property parking charge, and ensured all relevant risk assessments and safeguarding requirements were in place.

In the morning the group walked to Howe's Hill Tumulus, discussing its history as well as recent and potential investigations. The afternoon took in a variety of wartime archaeology, including a selection of trenches, two different pillboxes, a spigot mortar position, roadblock sockets and a section of anti-tank ditch on the coast.



The results from the event's evaluation were extremely positive. The group enjoyed being able to get in the pill boxes and climbing up the Howe's Hill Tumulus. The day was rated by all as either 4 or 5 out of 5, with interest in taking part in future events. Suggested activities around test pitting/excavations proved popular.

Staff at Sheringham Park found forming a relationship with the local YAC group very beneficial, and plan to build on this in the future.



## Archaeological Achievement Awards 2024

Celebrating the best of archaeology from across the UK and Ireland, the Archaeological Achievement Awards are coordinated by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA), supported by a judging panel of representatives from the archaeology and heritage sector.

The awards comprise five categories, designed to show how archaeology relates to wider society, health and wellbeing, and place. The winners from each category are shortlisted for the Outstanding Achievement Award.

The CBA undertakes all administration relating to the awards, working with the judging panel to develop categories, nomination forms, criteria and guidance. The CBA also organises the awards ceremony, and manages funding, sponsorship and promotion.

The 2024 awards were launched in July at the Festival of Archaeology event at the Scottish Crannog Centre. Alongside online sessions and a video on the nomination process, the CBA highlighted two 2023 winners:



[Nick Henderson spoke on the Uncovering Roman Carlisle project](#), winners of the Public Dissemination or Presentation Award, and [Nina O'Hare spoke about the Roots In Time project](#), winners of the Archaeology and Sustainability award and the Outstanding Achievement Award.

A total of 45 nominations was received across the five awards categories. The 2024 Archaeological Achievement Awards ceremony took place on Friday 22 November at the Temple of Peace, Cardiff, with 100 guests from across the archaeology and heritage sector in the UK and Ireland. Hosted by bi-lingual Welsh poet Rufus Mufasa, the event included welcome talks from CBA Director Neil Redfern and Jack Sargeant, Welsh Government Minister for Culture, Skills and Social Partnerships, and a keynote speech by Jane Henderson, Professor of Conservation at Cardiff University, on Conservation Benefits For All.

CBA published a [report of the event](#) online, while the CBA YouTube channel posted the [event livestream](#), sponsored by Heneb, with a playlist of videos relating to the awards.



### The winners were:

- Archaeology and Sustainability Award (sponsored by National Highways) 'Fair Game: Valuing the Bio-cultural Heritage of Fallow Deer', University of Exeter
- Public Dissemination or Presentation Award JustALittleRoo
- Learning, Training and Skills Award (sponsored by Archaeological Management Solutions) Irchester Field School
- Engagement and Participation Award (sponsored by University Archaeology UK) Bryn Celli Ddu Public Archaeology Project
- Early Career Archaeologist (sponsored by The Royal Archaeological Institute) Kieran Manchip and Rosie Crawford
- Outstanding Achievement Award Bryn Celli Ddu Public Archaeology Project.

Image 1: Representatives of Bryn Celli Ddu Public Archaeology Project winners of the Public Dissemination or Presentation Award and Outstanding Achievement Award (left and centre) with Gwilym Hughes from Cadw, sponsors of the Outstanding Achievement Award. Image 2: Keynote speaker Jane Henderson, Professor of Conservation at Cardiff University. © CBA





### Affordable Housing Project: Keelmen's Hospital

The Grade II\* listed Keelmen's Hospital, Newcastle, was constructed in 1701 as an almshouse for retired or sick keelmen and their families. Keelmen worked on the keels – flat-bottomed boats that carried coal from the banks of the shallow Tyne to ships that were too large to sail up the river. The hospital cost £2,000 to build and was paid for by the city's 1,600 keelmen themselves, who set up a charitable trust and initially agreed to contribute one penny a tide from the wages of each keel crewmember.

Unloved and unused since 2009, the building is on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register. A new proposal is now on the cards to save this important building by returning it to its original role of affordable housing.



In 2024, with funding and technical advice from HE, a feasibility study was commissioned by Tyne & Wear Building Preservation Trust and Newcastle City Council. Following this, the Architectural Heritage Fund (with support from HE) awarded a Project Development Grant towards the cost of design team fees – this was to support the Trust in preparing to apply for further funding, building control and planning permission. In September 2024 The National Lottery Heritage Fund awarded initial development funding

to help Tyne & Wear Building Preservation Trust and Newcastle City Council progress plans to undertake detailed survey and design work for the project.

The proposal is to convert Keelmen's Hospital into 20 one- or two-person flats, with the potential for specialist uses, including co-housing, specialist care support and sheltered housing. This will bring the building back into community use and create affordable new homes in central Newcastle.



## Heritage Network Youth Forum

As the voice of young people in the heritage sector, the Heritage Network Youth Forum comprises members aged 18–30 who are either interested in careers in heritage or working as early career heritage professionals. In March 2024 a number of members formed a placemaking group to create a manifesto from the perspective of young people in the sector, expressing their thoughts and opinions on the priorities for the built environment. Members of this group were from across

the UK with a range of experience and interests.

The group met regularly online to discuss different aspects of placemaking, and to look into best practice and examples in the built environment. Drawing on their research and discussions, they put together the manifesto. It sets out their priorities through a series of interlinked themes, set out in order of priority. Each section contains a brief narrative explaining the theme, followed by examples of what the group would like to see and questions to prompt further thinking or discussion about place.

The manifesto was completed in September 2024 and presented by members of the group at Heritage Network's annual conference in Dunfermline. Grace McAdam,



Izabella Maar and Laura Dunham explained the manifesto to conference delegates and led a workshop where delegates worked collaboratively to create their own manifesto points. Going forward, the group are looking to make a second version of the manifesto with case studies and examples from across the UK.



## New Approaches to Professional Accreditation Process for Archaeologists

Making the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) and the archaeological discipline more inclusive, and removing any unintended barriers to professional accreditation, is an integral part of the Institute's Strategic Plan.

Findings from the qualitative inequalities research report for the archaeological sector, and responses to surveys from applicants for CIfA membership, identified that there are barriers in the accreditation process that deter archaeologists from applying.

During 2024 CIfA held a series of focus groups and 1-2-1 meetings with members, particularly those who are neurodivergent, to gather feedback on the barriers. Based on their valuable comments, CIfA drew up a list of actions to review and address. These included:

- reviewing language and wording

- reviewing the amount of information on the website, and how it is collated
- considering other ways in which applicants can provide information to support their applications which may not be in the form of a written submission.

Having commissioned external advice on the use of plain English and more accessible ways to present information, CIfA made key changes – including the restructure of their webpages, and the ways in which competence requirements for each grade of accreditation are presented.

CIfA will be measuring the effectiveness of these measures through continued feedback surveys, to ensure they have addressed unintended barriers

that were previously stopping people from gaining professional accreditation.

## Case Study



### A Blossom Barge Adventure

Organised by the National Trust (NT) team at Dunham Massey, a Blossom Barge departed from Manchester's Castlefield Bowl dock on 23 April 2024 for a return cruise along the Bridgewater Canal to Broadheath, at the edge of the Dunham Massey estate. Outbound were 29 extremely excited primary school children, from King's Road Primary School in the heart of Manchester. On the return journey was a group of adults from local community group The Pavilion Project, which works with adults and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).

Prior to the event, the NT visited Kings Road Primary School to deliver a workshop about how important blossom is for pollinating insects. The children lino-printed images of blossom onto fabric, which was made into bunting to decorate the barge, and made tie-dyed blossom T-shirts to wear on the day.



The aim of the event was to educate people about the importance of blossom, while also demonstrating connectivity between urban spaces such as Castlefield Viaduct and rural settings such as Dunham Massey.

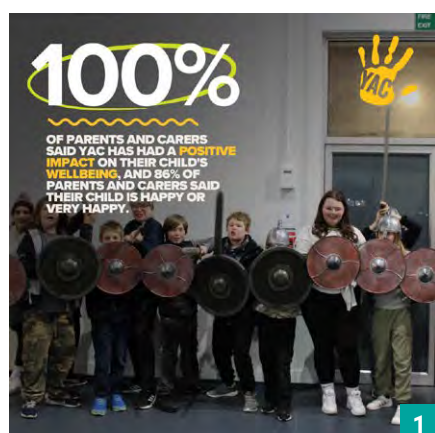
On boarding the barge at Castlefield Viaduct, the children were each given a brown paper bag containing a blossom-spotting sheet, a pencil and a Manchester 'Bloomtown Map', and enjoyed five activities: wild-flower seed ball making, blossom origami, blossom bunting, writing blossom haikus, and making plant music with local community

interest company, Sow the City. They disembarked at a community café, where they entertained service users from The Pavilion Project with blossom songs, reciting poems, and describing the crafts they had done onboard. The community group's return trip was an afternoon tea cruise, with blossom spotting along the way.

Such initiatives educate and create lasting memories to inspire the next generation, they demonstrate that nature is accessible to all, and they motivate future conservationists to be the protectors of our planet.

*Image: Blossom Day Barge from Castlefield Bowl to Broadheath. In celebration of the joy of blossom, on 23rd April 2024 we took a 'Blossom Barge' from The Castlefield Viaduct in central Manchester, along the Bridgewater Canal to Broadheath (at the edge of the Dunham Massey estate). Accompanied by teachers and students from King's Road Primary School.*  
© National Trust Images/Paul Harris





## Young Archaeologists' Club Impact Study

In 2024 the Young Archaeologists' Club (YAC) recruited an external contractor to pilot activities and evaluation strategies aimed at members, in person and online, to demonstrate the qualitative and quantitative impact of participation in the YAC and to provide a methodology for future impact assessment on an annual basis. In addition, YAC utilised the gathered data to create an impact report for participating YAC groups (10 per cent of English clubs).

The results of the study were incredibly positive.

The key takeaways were:

- YAC has a powerful impact on enjoyment and nurtures a deeper, long-term passion for archaeology, heritage and/or history
- YAC nurtures an interest in archaeology, heritage and/or history outside of sessions and encourages families to explore those interests together
- YAC is making a significant impact on members' interest and readiness to pursue archaeology, heritage and/or history in the future
- The knowledge and skills that members learn at YAC have a positive impact on their confidence at school
- YAC nurtures teamwork, communication and creativity, and has a wider impact on these skills outside of YAC
- Overall, members and their parents reported high levels of positive well-being
- Parents and carers identify a clear and direct link between increased happiness and participation in YAC, both short term and, in some cases, long term
- YAC members feel welcome and have a strong sense of belonging.

The outcomes around wellbeing and belonging are particularly relevant when considered in relation to the demographic data collected as part of YAC's annual census. For example, c.25 per cent of members are neurodivergent and c.21 per cent from non-white British ethnicities, indicating that the YAC provision is a welcoming and safe space for young people (and adult volunteers) with different lived experiences.

YAC has successfully secured funding to roll out its Impact Study for a further three years, enabling them to build and act on data in a sustained and meaningful way. YAC is also in the process of developing and implementing a new theory of change model for the network and its branches, based on the learning from the initial pilot study.





## Holloways: England's Lost Worlds, A Natural England Project

Natural England's definition of nature encompasses natural beauty, wildlife and geology – as well as our cultural connections with the natural world. A pilot project funded by NE is seeking to understand the significance of holloways (sunken paths or lanes), which cover the landscapes of England and have the potential to deepen and extend connections between people and nature.

Carved deep into the ground over centuries of movement, they form a complex network of wildlife-rich corridors.

To date, the project has undertaken a range of targeted surveys and wider engagement including ecological surveys, 3D laser-scanning and drone imagery, citizen-science and AI-led mapping work, alongside partner-working with records centres, researchers, universities and interest groups.

At [Symondsburry Estate](#) in Dorset, the project has led to a bespoke visitor offer centred on the natural and cultural heritage of Shute's Lane, including a publication, walking tours, storytelling events and educational visits. Public and media interest in the project has

been widespread, with features in Country Life magazine, [BBC News](#) and Radio 4's [Open Country](#) among others. The power of holloways to inspire and engage a diverse audience is evident, creating a truly multi-disciplinary project that embodies the interplay between our cultural and natural landscapes.

Access to nature is at the heart of NE's work, exemplified in projects such as the England Coast Path, People and Nature Survey, and Green Community. It is hoped that future funding will allow this project to expand nationally, to realise the extraordinary potential for holloways to help people get inspired, be engaged, and go out and explore.



## 4. Embedding Heritage in Wider Policy

Local and national policies – looking at issues from financial sustainability to inclusion, climate change to wellbeing – have a major impact on the heritage sector, which in turn is part and parcel of our daily lives, our communities and our economies. Initiatives to ensure heritage is at the heart of wider thinking include partnership working with policy makers, exchanging knowledge and creating shared strategies, heritage training for the non-sector workforce, clear financial reporting, and setting universally understood standards.



### Heritage Debate 2024: The Future of Funding for the Heritage Sector

The 15th annual Heritage Debate, hosted by The Heritage Alliance (THA), brought together sector leaders, professionals and volunteers to explore solutions to funding challenges facing heritage today. For the first time, the debate was made available free for all delegates, increasing accessibility and sector-wide participation.

[Balancing the Books: How Should the Heritage Sector be Funded?](#), now a publicly available recording, is an essential resource for all stakeholders invested in the sector's future and its financial sustainability in an uncertain economic climate.

The debate featured an expert panel chaired by Carole Souter CBE, Chair of THA, with Caroline Underwood OBE, CEO of the Philanthropy Company, representing philanthropic and charitable giving; Claudia Kenyatta CBE, Director of Regions at Historic England, representing public funding; and Alex and Oli Khalil-Martin, custodians of the Crooked House, Lavenham, representing commercial income generation. It explored the

benefits and challenges of public, private and philanthropic funding models.

As part of the digital programme, HEF worked in partnership with THA to produce a series of case studies showcasing different models of funding heritage, representing a diversity of views on the subject. These examples ranged from community ownership projects to national heritage assets, and [remain available for reference on the website](#).

Through bringing together diverse viewpoints and expertise, Heritage Debate 2024 catalysed important conversations about financial sustainability that continue to shape sector strategy.



## What is your organisation's main source of funding/income?

160 responses



## World Heritage Sites as Ambassadors for Peace

The 1945 UNESCO Constitution starts with the declaration 'That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'.

It could be assumed that this *raison d'être* of UNESCO's mission remains at the heart of the organisation's work. However, while there is still some high-level acknowledgement of the aspiration, little appears in the day-to-day work of UNESCO. Of UNESCO's six cultural conventions, only one (the 2005 Cultural

Diversity Convention) includes the word 'peace' – just once. The 1972 World Heritage Convention (WHC), regarded as UNESCO's most successful convention, does not mention peace in its text or any of the nomination or managerial processes, nor in the operational guidelines. All practical aspects of the WHC relate to heritage management issues; all interpretation at sites relates to archaeology, history or natural aspects of the site.

The idea that every World Heritage Site (WHS) could become an Ambassador for Peace (AfP) was one of the research objectives of the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection & Peace, established at Newcastle University in 2016. The AfP project is not going to stop armed conflict, but it could be a small contribution in helping build momentum towards the aspiration of peace.

With the support of the UK National Commission for UNESCO and World Heritage UK, the Newcastle team carried out desktop research on whether any WHSs actively promote UNESCO's *raison d'être* (little evidence was found). They then ran practical activities supporting UK WHSs to include peace in their management planning processes and interpretation. Now, nearly half of the UK's 35 WHSs have implemented some changes to their work.

In February 2025 a [report](#) was submitted to the World Heritage Committee, outlining the results of the UK trial. It recommended that an international project replicate the trial, to be reported on at the 2026 World Heritage Committee meeting with the anticipation that WHS documentation would be modified to better reflect UNESCO's original *raison d'être*.



## The National Lottery Heritage Fund 10-Year Strategy

Following the publication of [Heritage 2033](#) in 2023, The National Lottery Heritage Fund (the Heritage Fund) reached the first anniversary since the launch of National Lottery Heritage Grants. The Heritage Fund is continuing to offer funding from £10,000 to £10million, for all types of heritage with most decisions made at local level. Over the lifetime of Heritage 2033, the Heritage Fund aims to invest £3.6 billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players. National Lottery Heritage Grants fund innovative and ambitious projects that share the Heritage Fund's vision for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future.

Heritage 2033 is the Heritage Fund's ten-year strategy which is centred around a simplified framework of four investment principles:

- **Saving heritage:** conserving and valuing heritage for now and the future.
- **Protecting the environment:** supporting nature recovery and environmental sustainability.
- **Inclusion, access and participation:** supporting greater inclusion, diversity, access and participation in heritage.
- **Organisational sustainability:** strengthening heritage to be adaptive and financially resilient, contributing to communities and economies.

Heritage 2033 outlines a set of [strategic interventions](#), designed to provide long-term, large-scale investment to proactively tackle heritage issues, accelerate new ideas and address gaps. The first five of these initiatives have been launched over the last year, including over £3.5million to projects in Heritage Places, part of a £200m strategic initiative to help

places thrive, as well as a package of support with £15million of funding through the Nature Towns and Cities partnership. Landscape Connections was launched in July with a commitment to invest £150million in large-scale projects that revive landscapes, support nature recovery, and enhance connectivity for people and wildlife.

Enabling flexibility and the ability to respond swiftly when required, other initiatives include targeted funding for Heritage in Need such as Places of Worship where the Heritage Fund will invest a minimum of £15million in projects that have a strategic impact at a regional or national level over the next three years.

2024 marked 30 years since the first lottery ticket went on sale and 30 years since the Heritage Fund was established to distribute good causes income to heritage projects. Reflecting on this important milestone, the Heritage Fund celebrated the difference that funding has made for heritage, people, communities and the environment, across the length and breadth of the UK.





## Regeneration News From the Architectural Heritage Fund

This past year was the second in the Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF)'s current strategy period, set up to fund, support and inspire heritage-led regeneration projects and environments in which such projects can thrive. During this period, the AHF has partnered with Historic England, the Pilgrim Trust and The National Lottery Heritage Fund to award, across England, 61 early-stage grants totalling £699,348 and three loans totalling £300,000. The investment team also arranged five additional loans worth £579,000 via partnership programmes.

While the AHF supports new projects to develop, they have also celebrated openings of buildings conserved with the help of the DCMS-funded Transforming Places through Heritage programme. This included The Buttermarket in Redruth, Cornwall, where one of the AHF's Heritage Fund-supported Heritage Development Trusts (HDTs) has



led the conversion of a town-centre market building into a food hall and community venue. Redruth Revival and the other 18 HDTs gathered for capacity development workshops and networking at sites across the UK.

The AHF also expanded partnerships with peer organisations across the community and social investment sectors to ensure that as much funding as possible is accessible to heritage projects. With Locality and diverse other partners, the charity served on the delivery consortium for the Community Ownership Fund (COF) – through that work, and wider early-stage funding, nearly one-fifth of all projects in receipt of COF grants benefitted from AHF support. The AHF also partnered with both

Key Fund and Social Investment Business (SIB) to bring critical financing to install energy efficiency and green energy generation systems to heritage projects in England. Additionally, they partnered with SIB on the Thrive Together fund, providing blended grant-loan financing to support projects in rethinking business models, diversifying income and growing resilience.

The AHF continues to work closely with government departments, HE and other funders to champion heritage-led regeneration. Adaptive reuse of heritage can promote community cohesion and grow local economies, and AHF looks forward to announcing new programmes in the spring to enable even more initiatives next year.





## Co-Defining Resilience Thresholds and Place-Based Impact Investment Through UNESCO Sites

In 2024 the UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) designed and delivered a series of workshops to support multiple UNESCO-designated sites to exchange knowledge and generate strategies for addressing shared challenges. Thanks to continued support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, in 2025 grant funding is being made available for UNESCO sites to turn strategy into reality.

The objective of the workshops was to encourage greater synergies between UNESCO-designated sites across the UK. This brand-new approach to network-building aims to increase reliance on local knowledge and devolved decision-making. The workshops responded to HM Treasury's areas of research interest (horizon-scanning and futures techniques) and national consensus on the need for increased devolution. A small team delivered the workshops in six locations across the UK, engaging 87 per cent of the UK's network of 60 land-based UNESCO-designated sites.

At each workshop participants were split into mixed designation groups – Biospheres with World Heritage sites, Creative Cities with Geoparks etc. Having discussed the different phenomena they were experiencing at site-level – across social, technological,

economic, environmental and political themes – they mapped areas of confluence and democratically selected 3–5 challenges to address collaboratively. Practical and realisable solutions were co-designed to collectively manage threats and realise opportunities.

Thanks to continued support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, UKNC is now distributing a series of community grants to test and catalyse some of the ideas that emerged from the workshops. In line with the Heritage Fund's current investment principles, the grant scheme offers flexible funding to deepen and formalise network collaborations, encouraging sites to achieve external partnership funding to support innovative and collaborative approaches to protecting and promoting heritage.



## Heritage and Social Prescribing

With the government's focus on re-building the NHS, tackling challenges around young people's mental health and health inequalities, and promoting neighbourhood health centres and community care, the role of social prescribing is becoming ever more pertinent. Since the publication of its [Wellbeing and Heritage strategy](#) in 2022, Historic England (HE) has led the heritage sector in embedding wellbeing in its work, including building on its collaboration with the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP).

Innovative partnerships with the Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise (VCFSE) sector and the health sector helped a wide range of heritage organisations to successfully test the use of heritage activities for social prescribing. This provides new opportunities to ensure the heritage sector is embedded in health, social care and community development policies, and to further raise its profile in the wellbeing area.

Projects such as [Heritage Connectors](#) and [Heritage Buddies](#) showed how volunteering can promote heritage social prescriptions, while initiatives



such as [Project Rejuvenate](#), [Archaeology on Prescription](#), [Kirkham's Heritage Health and Wellbeing Programme](#) and the [Heritage Link Worker](#) demonstrated the potential of wellbeing archaeology and local heritage to support those who struggle most. The latter three projects were shortlisted for the first Heritage Social Prescribing Award, at the International Social Prescribing Conference in 2024. Heritage Link Worker was the winner. Their project evaluation showed a significant improvement in participants' mental health, wellbeing and physical health, as well as reduced usage of health service (more than 60 per cent of participants had increased WEMWBS scores, and 26 per cent of participants had reduced

their usage of health services, while 28 per cent had reduced their medication usage). For the Wessex Project Rejuvenate pilot, 70–90 per cent of the participants reporting increased school attendance and engagement with lessons, alongside levels of self-controlled behaviour and overall positivity.

Heritage and community sites across the country, such as [Delapré Abbey](#), [Bramley Baths](#), [Gorton Monastery](#) and [GL11](#) offered excellent examples of how heritage can host, support and be integrated in the development of neighbourhood health centres, in the shape of wellbeing community hubs offering wrap-around health and support services for the local people.



Image 1: Heritage Link Worker – Heritage for Wellbeing project participants at an archaeological excavation at Arminghall Henge, Norfolk. Image 2: Participants in the Heritage Link Worker heritage social prescribing project as captured in an artistic collage by one of them. © The Restoration Trust



The results of all this work informed the development of the [Heritage and Social Prescribing Advice Hub](#), launched in March on NASP's website through the Prescribe Heritage webinar. The Hub includes practical guides for social prescribers and heritage professionals, a whole plethora of resources, case studies, videos and articles, as well as evidence

on the use of heritage for wellbeing and social prescribing. It was built in collaboration with the sector-wide Heritage and Social Prescribing Community of practice, facilitated by Historic England and the Council for British Archaeology, and the Social Prescribing Link Workers Advisory Group, co-ordinated by NASP.



## Exporting Cultural Property

Managed by the British Museum, the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS) was established to record archaeological objects found by the public (mostly by metal detectorists) to advance archaeological knowledge. Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, the scheme recorded 81,980 finds within 52,564 records.

The PAS also advises on whether detector finds of cultural importance should leave the UK as part of the Export Licence regime – administered by ACE on behalf of DCMS. This applies to any find over 50 years old, with most (98 per cent in 2024) being exported to North America by finders on detecting holidays in the UK. Just 6 applications were made by European finders at metal-detecting rallies, indicating that event organisers need to do more to support the legal reporting of finds, including Treasure.

Working with ACE, a new form was introduced in 2024 to encourage finders from abroad to record their finds with the PAS before they are exported (it is not a legal requirement). To put this in context, 300 applications were made for 23,658 finds in 2024 – it is estimated that at least 20 per cent of the total number might have been considered 'recordable' under the PAS guidelines. This represents a loss to our heritage.



Currently the PAS database ([www.finds.org.uk](http://www.finds.org.uk)) is being rebuilt by Numiko on behalf of the British Museum. The new platform will enable the public to log their finds, providing at least a basic record of an item, which may (or may not) be fully recorded later on; the PAS does not have the resources to fully record all finds. This will be an important mechanism to support the recording of finds destined for export, and to ensure important archaeological information is captured before objects leave the UK permanently.

Image 1: Early Medieval strap-end recorded with the PAS that has been exported abroad.

Image 2: Roman brooch recorded with the PAS that has been exported abroad. © Heritage Open Days & Squeaky Pedal



## The Heritage Manifesto 2024: Uniting The Sector

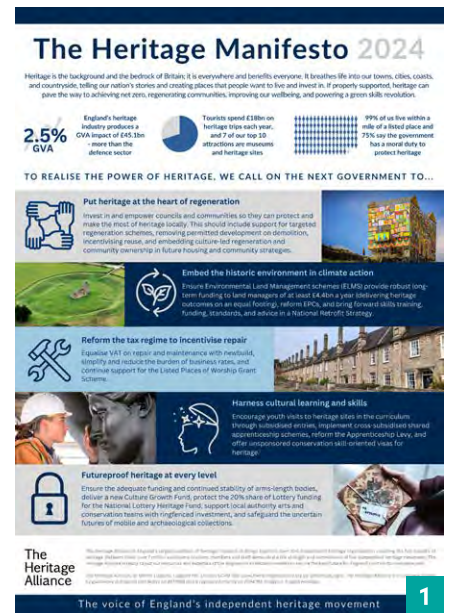
In July 2023, following extensive consultation with members about the needs of the heritage sector, The Heritage Alliance (THA) published the Heritage Manifesto 2023. The release generated over 66,000 interactions on social media, and received public endorsements from dozens of heritage organisations.

A refreshed version, the [Heritage Manifesto 2024](#), was published in spring 2024, incorporating new

heritage counts data, updated policy asks, and recent findings on the impact of the cost-of-living crisis. (The latter was published as a comprehensive report: [On the Brink: Heritage in the Cost of Living Crisis](#)).

The 2024 manifesto was later included in an advocacy toolkit designed to help sector organisations engage more effectively with local MPs and other decision-makers, around the 2024 general election. It focuses on five key areas: regeneration, climate action, tax, cultural learning and skills, and futureproofing the sector with sustained funding.

Following each release, THA sent 720 letters to decision-makers and politicians. This comprehensive



approach resulted in a busy parliamentary engagement programme, successfully engaging all major parties with THA to demonstrate how heritage can provide positive solutions to public policy challenges.

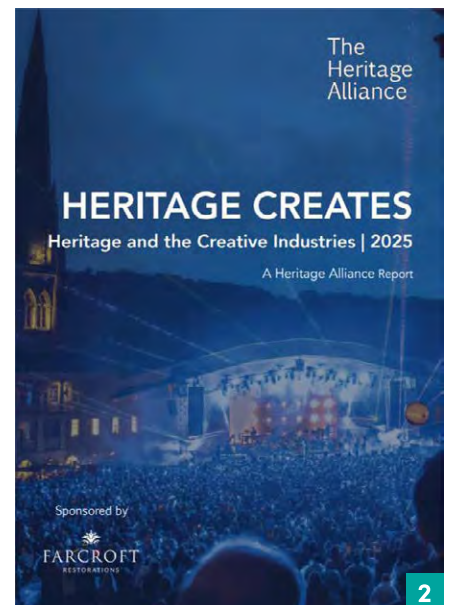


## Heritage Creates: Report on Heritage and Creative Industries

In 2025 The Heritage Alliance (THA) launched the Heritage Creates report, an updated exploration of the relationship between the heritage sector and creative industries in England. It builds on the foundation of the 2019 publication 'Inspiring Creativity, Heritage and the

Creative Industries', which summarised available evidence and showcased cross-sector partnerships.

The timing of this update is significant, as the creative industries continue to flourish and capture the attention of both public and policymakers. The evidence base for heritage's integral contribution to these industries has grown substantially since the original publication. With a new government emphasising the creative economy, alongside the emergence of new technologies and stronger commitments to inclusion, 2025 presented an ideal opportunity to revisit this important relationship.



The report is organised into five thematic chapters: Heritage as a Host, Heritage as a Muse, Heritage as a Creative Practice,



Innovative Partnerships and Inclusive Partnerships. How Britain's heritage underpins the success of contemporary creative industries is highlighted in multiple ways – historic settings provide venues for cultural activities, ranging from poetry recitals to pottery studios; heritage directly inspires new creative expressions in fashion, film and other media; and heritage organisations often serve as partners for creators and innovators seeking new ways to engage audiences and develop technologies.

Despite the challenges of recent years – including the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and changes in international relationships – the heritage and creative sectors have demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. Their collaborative efforts have produced innovative ways to achieve more with limited resources while broadening impact and engagement.

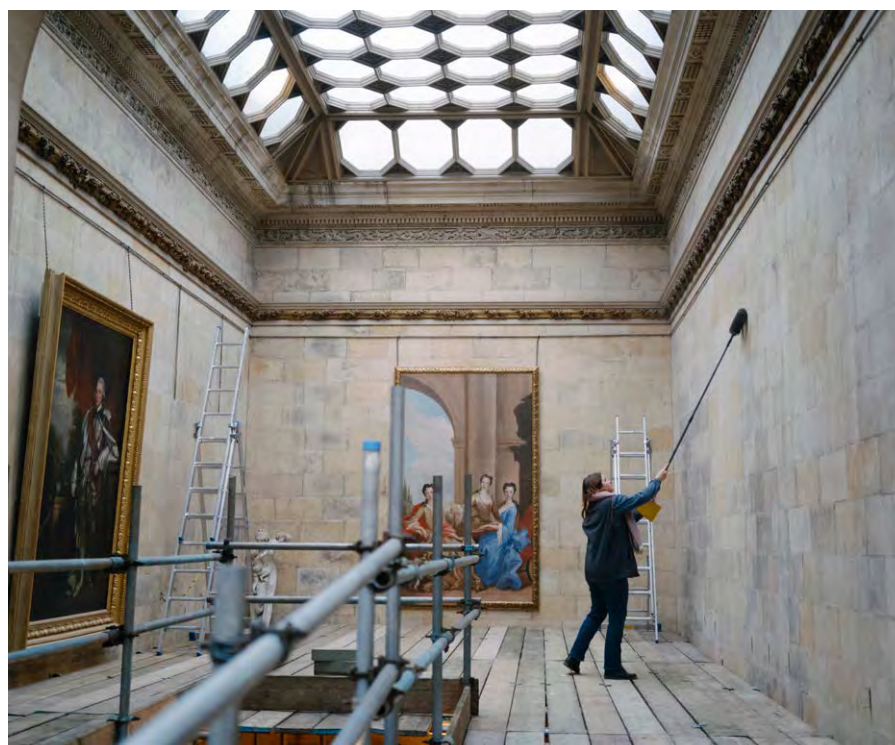
The report serves as both a celebration of successful partnerships and an inspiration for future initiatives that can provide employment opportunities, enhance community engagement and promote enjoyment of heritage and culture. It reinforces the importance of sustainable investment in the heritage sector to preserve history while fostering contemporary creativity.



## Historic Houses: VAT and Listed Buildings Report

Historic Houses (HH) published a [report on VAT](#) and listed buildings in January 2025. Carried out by Harlow Consulting, the research found that the current system of charging VAT on repairs and maintenance of listed buildings is exacerbating the backlog of much-needed repairs on some of the UK's best-loved buildings.

The findings suggest that changes to the heritage sector's VAT rebate scheme would help protect heritage tourism sites. Moreover,



it would help to boost economic growth and widen access for the public to these attractions. Ultimately, the scheme would be a secular counterpart to the Listed Places of Worship scheme, where DCMS recognises that VAT on repairs can negatively impact decisions to make necessary maintenance to listed buildings.

HH estimates that extending eligibility for the existing rebate scheme to listed buildings that are open to the public for at least 28 days a year would cost not much more than £6m, and yield as much as £5.5m in additional vital repairs and maintenance.



## Heritage Crime Programmes

Heritage crime programmes run by Historic England (HE) continued over the past 12 months, including training for law enforcement and heritage professionals, and community volunteers. This training has now been extended to volunteer police and fire cadets. Work continues with local commissioners and mayors to integrate heritage assets and the wider historic environment within the remit of all police services and community safety authorities.



In November 2024 an awareness week tackled anti-social behaviour and heritage crime. This included training for an additional 62 heritage crime officers and volunteers, and a national webinar to showcase the effectiveness of partnership-working. Members of the National Rural Crime Network were invited to a policy round-table, hosted by HE. Proposed priorities included:

- legislation to introduce a legally binding National Rural and Heritage Crime Strategy
- establishing a rural and heritage crime advisory group to the government
- promoting projects to engage younger people who may be at risk from the influence of crime and anti-social behaviour
- HE to become a named body in the Crime and Disorder Act
- the development of Task and Finish Groups, chaired by a police and crime commissioner, to provide significant development in assisting the government in its mission to deliver 'safer streets'.

Also in 2024, HE developed a training programme in partnership with the National Infrastructure Crime Reduction Partnership for scrap metal dealers and local authority and law enforcement professionals to identify heritage metals.

In addition, dealers were made aware that they should understand the legal obligations of holding a scrap metal dealer's licence, and should consider undertaking training to ensure they understand the updated Supplementary Guidance Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013. The Act requires dealers to keep records of metal received and disposed of, including documents to verify the name and address of the supplier and the payment. Dealers are advised to delay payment if uncertain provenance needs verification, and required to keep records for three years.



Image 1: Mark Harrison, Head of Heritage Crime, Historic England presents presenting PCSO Ian Norton with his Heritage Crime Officer uniform patch. © Historic England. Image 2: Poster highlighting the types of heritage metals that maybe offered for sale. © Historic England. Image 3: Merseyside Police Rural, Wildlife and Heritage Crime Team. © Merseyside Police.





## Climate Change Policy

Historic England (HE) continues to advise local and national government on the development of climate change policy – ensuring awareness of the positive role heritage can play in climate action, such as through climate resilience and the retrofitting of historic buildings for energy and carbon efficiency.

One key area of focus over the past year has been the reporting on cultural heritage actions in the [third National Adaptation Programme](#) (NAP3).

From 2025/26, HE will work with DCMS and cultural heritage organisations across the sector to inform the development of targeted actions to adapt heritage assets to climate change impacts within the fourth NAP, running from 2028–2032.

HE has supported DCMS and other sector organisations to submit evidence for the [fourth UK Climate Change Risk Assessment \(CCRA\)](#), developed by the Climate Change Committee. HE's focus is to ensure that it considers the full range of heritage assets – from individual assets and sites to whole landscapes, and relevant climate risks and adaptation options. This has included a response to the [first call for evidence](#) in September 2024, and will support the inclusion

of targeted heritage commitments for government within the fourth NAP.

On the broad topic of retrofit, HE is working to support the development of government policy in several ways, including:

- responding to relevant government consultations, for example on Energy Performance Certificates, Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards etc.
- engaging with external partners, such as the National Retrofit Hub and the Grosvenor Group through the Heritage & Carbon project
- working to produce effective [retrofit guidance](#).

*Image 1: Seaford Head, a chalk downland landscape in East Sussex, is experiencing increasing coastal erosion, with significant cliff collapses in recent years, and is expected to worsen due to climate change. © Historic England*

*Image 2: Hurst Castle, situated on a shingle spit, faces significant coastal erosion threats, leading to structural issues and potential collapse, as evidenced by the 2021 collapse of a section of the east wing. © Historic England*



## Lake District Interpretation Strategy

The English Lake District World Heritage Site (ELDWHS) has produced a high-level interpretation tool to provide an action plan for delivery of interpretation by the Lake District National Park Partnership. Its aim is to better communicate the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the Lake District. Focusing on cultural and historical interpretation, the strategy can help local residents gain expertise in heritage management, storytelling and guiding, contributing to the development of specialist skills, engagement with heritage and protecting the site through volunteering.

The interpretation strategy also enables businesses to present a clear consistent message to their customers about the ELDWHS. Through a refresh of the WHS branding, the strategy encourages local spending by highlighting local businesses and sources



of produce, such as local lamb, which supports the traditional farming system of commons grazing, or the use of local wool to produce tweed.

A 13 Valleys Trail celebrates the 13 valleys of the Lake District and provides interpretation to identify the OUV in each valley, encouraging people to walk and enjoy the region. An early promotion was the 13 Valleys Ultra Trail Race. A survey found that 88 per cent of participants knew that the race route celebrated the Lake District's 13 unique valleys. When asked if their understanding of the Lake District had changed, responses highlighted how the WHS designation fosters environmental awareness and a sense of belonging. The Trail continues

the work of previous successful community engagement, such as the Coniston Coppermines project where children from local schools learned of their town's mining heritage.

In summary, the interpretation strategy blends historical storytelling, cultural heritage, environmental education and business branding practices – and highlights the region's rich past whilst fostering a sustainable future for local businesses, thriving communities, and responsible visiting.



Image 1: Aerial view of 13 Valleys Trail Event. © The great Run Company  
Image 2: Runners views on the route and WHS. © The great Run Company  
Image 3: Interpretation panels for the Coniston Copper Mines. © LDNPA





## Durham Cathedral: More Than an Eyecatcher in the Landscape

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) states, when determining applications, that 'local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting'. But what is setting – a boundary, a line on a map or, in Durham's case, an inner and outer demarcation, based on topography, views and vistas?

In 2023 Durham County Council, the Cathedral, the university, the Parish Council and Historic England agreed to co-fund a setting study for this World Heritage Site (WHS). Its purpose was to provide a robust evidence-base to articulate the role that setting plays in the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the site, in order to inform planning decisions, local plan making, estate planning and the design of developments in the city and beyond.

The consultants combined site visits with reviewing historical information, artistic depictions, the Historic Environment Record, and current and previous management documentation, alongside mapping satellite



imagery, LiDAR and reviewing strategic viewpoints using Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) as an analytical tool. Discussion papers reviewed the WHS boundary and the need for a buffer zone. A draft toolkit presented a simplified process for assessing the impact of development.

A substantial draft baseline setting report, with a detailed Vantage Point Analysis of annotated photographs, was issued in autumn 2024. This extensive study describes and illustrates nine zones of a changing kinetic and multi-sensory experience of setting, influenced not only by the landscape/built environment but also by the soundscape.

The new Durham City Conservation Area Management Plan and emerging WHS Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) will align with, and draw on, the study. Together with the emerging WHS Management Plan, these tools will ensure the OUV of Durham Castle and Cathedral is conserved and enhanced for future generations to enjoy.



Image 1: Durham Castle and Cathedral. © Graeme Hall

Image 2: Co-creating the values of World Heritage workshop, February 2024. © Hsiao-Chiang Wang





## The Role of Historic Parks and Gardens in the 21st Century

In early 2025 the Gardens Trust worked on an advocacy initiative to highlight the role of historic parks and gardens in the 21st century. These heritage assets are a readymade toolbox to help address many key social issues, including:

- growing the economy – historic parks and gardens support well-designed development with ready-made access to pre-existing greenspace; they also add hugely to the UK's tourism economy, being one of the biggest drivers in this field, nationally and internationally
- meeting the challenges of the climate emergency – while landscapes have historically supported the provision of energy use and generation, they are critical today in supporting nature recovery, especially as older, established landscapes support biodiversity significantly more than newly created open space
- fostering safer streets – public parks play an important role in social cohesion, by offering places for play and recreation, and to come together and build communities
- reducing demand on the NHS – parks help by offering free-to-access places to exercise and enjoy fresh air, critical for health and wellbeing
- nurturing opportunity for all – an active parks and gardens sector supports inclusive access to leisure and also offers a range of accessible career pathways.

These headlines have been shared with politicians and other key sector organisations, increasing an understanding of historic designed landscapes as being more than simply interesting and beautiful heritage assets. A report outlining these contributions will be published by the Gardens Trust in autumn 2025, and can be accessed via [www.thegardenstrust.org](http://www.thegardenstrust.org)



# List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>ACE</b>	Arts Council England	<b>Icon</b>	Institute of Conservation
<b>AES</b>	Agri-Environment Schemes	<b>IEMA</b>	Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment
<b>AfP</b>	Ambassador for Peace	<b>IHBC</b>	Institute of Historic Building Conservation
<b>AHF</b>	Architectural Heritage Fund	<b>IStructE</b>	Institution of Structural Engineers
<b>ALGAO</b>	Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers	<b>LETI</b>	Low Energy Transformation Initiative
<b>BBP</b>	Better Buildings Partnership	<b>LPOW</b>	Listed Places of Worship Scheme
<b>BRE</b>	Building Research Establishment	<b>NAP3</b>	The National Adaptation Programme
<b>CBA</b>	Council for British Archaeology	<b>NASP</b>	National Academy for Social Prescribing
<b>CBO</b>	Church Buildings Support Officer	<b>NE</b>	Natural England
<b>CCRA</b>	Climate Change Risk Assessment	<b>NHLE</b>	National Heritage List for England
<b>CCUH</b>	Climate Change and UNESCO Heritage project	<b>NRCN</b>	National Rural Crime Network
<b>CGT</b>	County Gardens Trust	<b>NT</b>	National Trust
<b>CIBSE</b>	Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers	<b>NZCBS</b>	Net Zero Carbon Buildings Standard
<b>CIfA</b>	Chartered Institute for Archaeologists	<b>OUV</b>	Outstanding Universal Value
<b>CITB</b>	Construction Industry Training Board	<b>PAS</b>	Portable Antiquities Scheme
<b>COF</b>	Community Ownership Fund	<b>PCC</b>	Parochial Church Council
<b>DAERA</b>	Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland)	<b>RIBA</b>	Royal Institute of British Architects
<b>DCMS</b>	Department for Culture, Media and Sport	<b>RICS</b>	Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
<b>DEFRA</b>	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs	<b>SEND</b>	Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
<b>EH</b>	English Heritage	<b>SPD</b>	Supplementary Planning Document
<b>ELDWHS</b>	English Lake District World Heritage Site	<b>SSSI</b>	Site of Special Scientific Interest
<b>ELM</b>	Environmental Land Management scheme	<b>THA</b>	The Heritage Alliance
<b>ENGO</b>	Environmental Non-Governmental Organisation	<b>UKGBC</b>	UK Green Building Council
<b>FAME</b>	Federation of Archaeological Managers and Employers	<b>UKNC</b>	UK National Commission for UNESCO
<b>HDT</b>	Heritage Development Trust	<b>UKRI</b>	UK Research and Innovation
<b>HE</b>	Historic England	<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<b>HEAA</b>	Historic Environment Advice Assistant	<b>VCFSE</b>	Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise
<b>HES</b>	Historic Environment Scotland	<b>WHC</b>	World Heritage Convention
<b>HESCAPE</b>	Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England	<b>WHS</b>	World Heritage Site
<b>HH</b>	Historic Houses	<b>YAC</b>	Young Archaeologists' Club
		<b>ZTV</b>	Zones of Theoretical Visibility

# Thank You

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