

World Heritage in the UK 2025 – 26

**An annual compilation by World Heritage UK of activity relating to
World Heritage within the UK and its overseas territories**

State Party

47COM

A UK Delegation, including officials from DCMS and Historic England, attended the 47th session of the World Heritage Committee in July 2025 at UNESCO in Paris. Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape, Derwent Valley Mills, The English Lake District, and Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey including Saint Margaret's Church were examined by the Committee. The UK secured amendments to draft decisions for Cornwall and Derwent Valley Mills to, as best as possible, address factual inaccuracies and impractical recommendations.

State of Conservation Reports (48COM)

The 48th session of the World Heritage Committee took place in Busan in July 2026. Four State of Conservation Reports were submitted by the UK to the World Heritage Centre between November 2025 and January 2026: Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey including Saint Margaret's Church, Tower of London, Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites, and Gough and Inaccessible Islands. These reports will form the basis of the Committee's examination of the sites at July's meeting.

UNESCO correspondence

Correspondence with UNESCO regarding UK World Heritage Sites, outside of the State of Conservation Reporting cycle, was regular. For example, 45 'paragraph 172/174 notifications' were submitted to the World Heritage Centre between April 2025 and March 2026.

Tentative List sites

DCMS and Historic England International have continued to support sites on the UK's Tentative List. Birkenhead Park was submitted to the World Heritage Centre and ICOMOS for Preliminary Assessment and the 'City of York: historic urban core' received a Preliminary Assessment Feedback Report in autumn 2025. The East Coast Flyway site underwent a UK-based Preliminary Assessment Appraisal, receiving feedback from an expert panel convened by DCMS. Little Cayman Marine Parks and Protected Areas also received further support from DCMS to develop their Preliminary Assessment ahead of submission to UNESCO in the future.

Stakeholder engagement

The World Heritage Advisory Group, chaired by DCMS, continued to meet approximately every six months to gather key UK World Heritage organisations and discuss national level World Heritage issues. DCMS also convenes meetings with sites subject to State of Conservation Reporting at least every six months to discuss progress made pertaining to World Heritage Committee decisions and requests.

DCMS and Historic England International attended World Heritage UK's Spring Workshop and Annual Conference, as well as meetings of the All Party Parliamentary Group for World Heritage throughout 2025/26.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

Implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage saw an open call for submissions for the inventories of living heritage in the UK open between December 2025 and March 2026. The inventories are expected to be published later this year, and will be followed by a public consultation on safeguarding.

World Heritage All Party Parliamentary Group

World Heritage UK were invited to become the Secretariat for the new All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on World Heritage. It was initiated in October 2025 and is chaired by Jonathan Davis MP for Mid Derbyshire which includes the Derwent Valley Mills WHS. Chris Blandford, WHUK President, is providing joint leadership and knowledge sharing for the APPG.

Over 70 MPs and Peers have WHSs or part of these in their Constituencies. The purpose of the APPG is to encourage and influence action by Government to increase the support for raising the profile and awareness of UK WHS values and benefits, to commit more fully to improved funding for UK WHSs to enable them to be more self-sustaining and to develop a national strategy for UK World Heritage over the next 10 years integrating this with wider Government agendas.

Between November 2025 and March 2026, a programme of topic discussions with guest speaker experts (including some WHUK Trustees and Members) raised awareness of World Heritage for MPs and Peers. Topics have included World Heritage in relation to planning reform, tourism, education and engagement, soft power, and the future of World Heritage in the UK. A session on climate change and its effects on WH will be held in June 2026. A formal Parliamentary debate led by the APPG Chair was held in November. Attended by 20 MPs, the debate was focused on the 80th Anniversary of the creation of UNESCO and its impact in the UK.

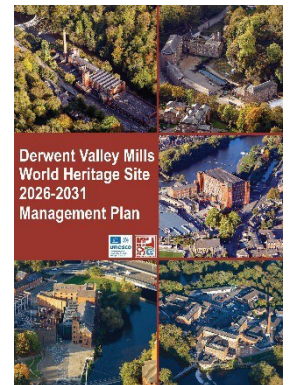
A stage two APPG programme will be established shortly, to run late 2026 and into 2027, with further topic sessions and another formal Parliamentary debate in late 2026 to discuss future directions for UK World Heritage.

Derwent Valley Mills WHS

A New Management Plan for the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site

All UNESCO World Heritage Sites require a Management Plan and the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Partnership is responsible for compiling the management plan for the site on behalf of His Majesty's Government (who are the State Party signed up to the World Heritage Convention).

Throughout 2025 the DVMWHS Partnership have been working together to review progress and develop the objectives and actions for 2026 – 2031 to protect, conserve, present and transmit this site in alignment with UNESCO requirements. Thanks go to our sites, organisations, communities and volunteers for all their input and help throughout this process.



The DVMWHS Technical Group and Strategic Boards have agreed the Management Plan and it has now gone to UNESCO for Technical Review. It is hoped that the new Management Plan will be adopted in mid-2026 and we can keep working together to keep the Derwent Valley Mills a great place to live, work, visit and enjoy.

When approved the management plan will be available to read at:

<https://www.derwentvalleymills.org/about-the-derwent-valley-mills/the-management-plan/>

Economic Assessment for the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site

In June 2025 AMION Consulting was commissioned by the DVMWHS Partnership to undertake an Economic Value Assessment of the World Heritage Site. The purpose of this assessment is to establish a clear understanding of the current economic value that the DVMWHS contributes to the local and regional economy. It was also to assess the potential future economic value that could be realised through delivery of an emerging Development Framework.

The Development Framework will be a follow up commission using the findings of the economic assessment to help secure funding to produce it. The aim of it is to guide the long-term sustainable growth of DVMWHS, it will set out a coordinated vision for investment, regeneration and conservation across the DVMWHS while safeguarding its OUV.

The Economic Impact Assessment evaluates the contribution of the DVMWHS to the local and regional economy in terms of employment and Gross Value Added (GVA). The economic assessment findings are that the DVMWHS currently contributes around £140m to the local economy and it could raise an additional £188m to the local economy with a Development Framework.

New chapter for Cromford Mills

Cromford Mills is entering an exciting new chapter as The Arkwright Society secures £1.369m in development funding from The National Lottery Heritage Fund to begin essential planning and design work to transform its landmark Building 1 and public spaces at the entrance to the site.

Recruitment of the design team has happened with work continuing over the next year. Public and stakeholder engagement will form a key part of the project as well as the development of the Activity Planning focused on skills and learning. The Society's Strategic Partnership with the University of Derby forms an important part of this with so many opportunities to support student learning.

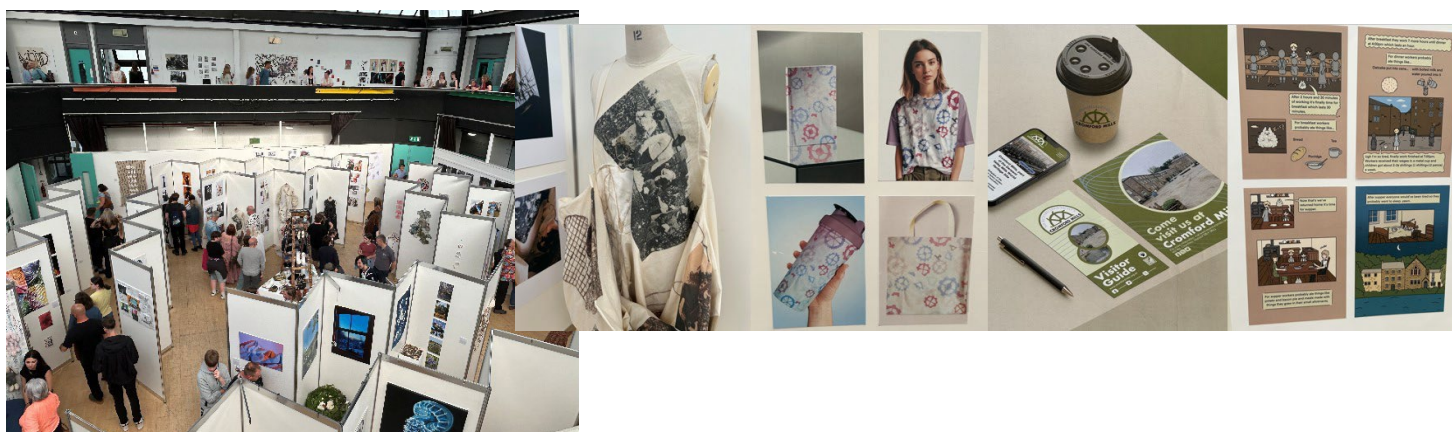
The journey ahead is ambitious: the Society will need to raise over £1.5m in match funding while ensuring the site remains open and for the Charity to continue its educational and community focused work. Community and visitor support will be crucial in the months ahead. Every donation, visit, partnership and advocacy helps safeguard these remarkable buildings within the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site.

Students impress with creativity and employability skills inspired by the Derwent Valley Mills

Level 3 Art and Design Students at Chesterfield College worked with the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site (DVMWHS) to respond to professional briefs. The project aimed to develop professionalism, employability and develop skills in their chosen artistic medium. Georgina Greaves from the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site (DVMWHS) coordination team acted as the “client” for the students providing professional briefs for the students to respond to using animation, illustration, textiles and graphic design. Students visited sites and created products appropriate for on-site shops, redesigned the branding for Cromford Mills, created textiles art responding to the Global Cotton Connections of the Derwent Valley Mills and animated and illustrated stories about the mills for children.

The work was of an incredibly high standard and demonstrated how a World Heritage Site can be used to inspire the next generation of artists, designers and creatives.

You can see a full video of the project here: <https://www.derwentvalleymills.org/discover/learning-for-all/learning-adults/chesterfield-college-projects-with-dvmwhs/>



Looking forward to an important commemorative year

2026 is an important year for Belper and the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site. It is the 250th anniversary of the Strutts’ first cotton mill opening in Belper, the first step towards the creation of the world’s first cotton mill town; it will be 300 years since the birth of Jedidiah Strutt, the man behind the building of that mill and the work to create a community around it; and it is also 25 years since the Derwent Valley Mills were inscribed on UNESCO’s World Heritage Site list.



A whole range of activities have started and have been really well supported. More are planned to mark these anniversaries, many of them happening in Belper where a volunteers have come together to provide a wide range of events to tell the story of Jedidiah and the town’s development since 1776, under the ‘Belper 250’ banner.

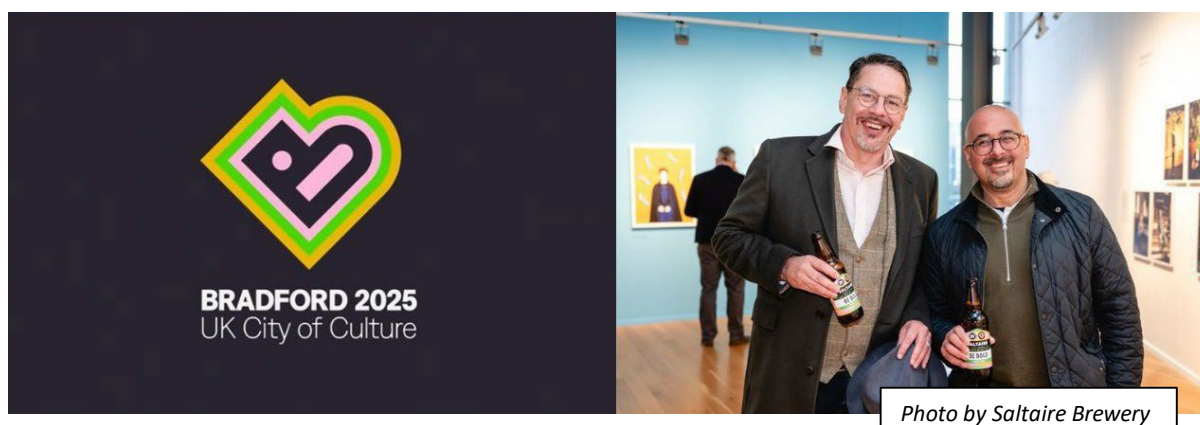
There are also 250th anniversaries at Cromford, for Arkwright's Second Mill and for North Street, some of the earliest industrial housing in the world. A special weekend, including access to a Landmark Trust property on North Street, on 19th and 20th September. Later in the year celebrations will be shared with New Lanark WHS and Saltaire WHS who share the 25th anniversary inscription with the DVMWHS.

To find out more about these events visit www.belper250.co.uk

Saltaire WHS

2025 was Bradford's year to shine as the **UK City of Culture** which held events in Saltaire. Salts Mill hosted and is home to the Hockney Gallery and Robert's Park hosted the Painting in the Sky event, a drone display celebrating the work of David Hockney which featured the Diner Dog that David Hockney created for his friend Jonathan Silver (newest owner of the mill). Watch the video of the event found at <https://bradford2025.co.uk/event/painting-the-sky/>

Saltaire Brewery, partnered with Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture and created a special limited-edition beer called Be Bold - <https://saltairebrewery.com/>



Saltaire was also the host to the **10th anniversary Annual Conference** for WHUK where we welcomed delegates to Victoria Hall and accompanied by all our government representatives; Lord William Wallace, MP Anna Dixon, and Cllr Alex Ross-Shaw along with our sister UNESCO designation Bradford City of Film.

Our newly appointed World Heritage Site Officer was also part of the event.



L-R: conference delegates outside Victoria Hall; Bradford City of Film's Rachel Bottomley, Saltaire WHS Officer Brandi Hall-Crossgrove, Bradford Council's Saira Ali, Shipley's Member of Parliament Anna Dixon, Lord William Wallace and WHUK Chair Paul Simons; conference in action.

The WHS Officer is fostering the relationship with the next generation through the partnership with Shipley College to protect our site for future individuals. Here is Brandi Hall-Crossgrove, presenting and touring the site to Shipley College's Tourism & Heritage Students.



Jodrell Bank WHS

It has been an eventful year for the Jodrell Bank Centre for Engagement, marked by a significant leadership transition and the celebration of a major institutional milestone. Professor Tim O'Brien joined as Director in October 2025, also serving as Associate Director of the Jodrell Bank Centre for Astrophysics. A co-founder of the Bluedot festival and co-author of the nomination documents that led to Jodrell Bank Observatory's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2019, Professor O'Brien brings a long-standing commitment to communicating science and its cultural significance to the widest possible audience.

At the heart of this year's programme was the celebration of Jodrell Bank's 80th anniversary, marking eight decades of discovery and connection with the universe. To honour the occasion, the public were invited to participate in Cosmic Threads, a community quilt project developed with textile artist Anne Kelly. The response was extraordinary, with over 200 submissions from local, national, and international contributors exploring themes ranging from personal memories of the Lovell Telescope to interpretations of the site's wider cultural significance. The finished artworks were displayed in a dedicated exhibition from January to March 2026, with plans underway to give them a permanent home on site. The anniversary programme also included the introduction of Southside Tours in September 2025, offering visitors a rare opportunity to explore the birthplace of radio astronomy through expert-led tours of the historic grounds.

The summer months brought a rich programme of events that underlined Jodrell Bank's unique position at the intersection of science, culture, and community. The site welcomed European Space Agency astronaut reserve John McFall for an inspiring day of school sessions, public talks, and a behind-the-scenes tour of the Lovell Telescope. The Summer Solstice weekend proved equally memorable, featuring Soul II Soul founder Jazze B in conversation with historian David Olusoga, followed by a DJ set in the First Light Pavilion. The following day's solar-themed celebrations included carnival performances by Global Grooves, a new science show, Lovell Lectures with Professor Philippa Browning, and an evening performance by Afrobeat artist Sens Sagna.



The year also broke new ground in community engagement with Tails and Telescopes on 22 March, the site's first ever dog-friendly day, inviting visitors to explore the Cheshire countryside alongside the Lovell Telescope. The event was warmly received and reflects Jodrell Bank's continued commitment to welcoming wider audiences.

Forth Bridge WHS

World Heritage Site Management Plan 2025-2035

A working group was formed to update the Management Plan, and pre-draft engagement took place in June 2025. The draft plan consultation was launched in December 2025 and concluded at the end of March 2026. The working group is working to finalise the plan for stakeholder approval in summer 2026. Members of the working group represent key stakeholders: Network Rail, Historic Environment Scotland, Transport Scotland, VisitScotland, Fife Council and City of Edinburgh Council.

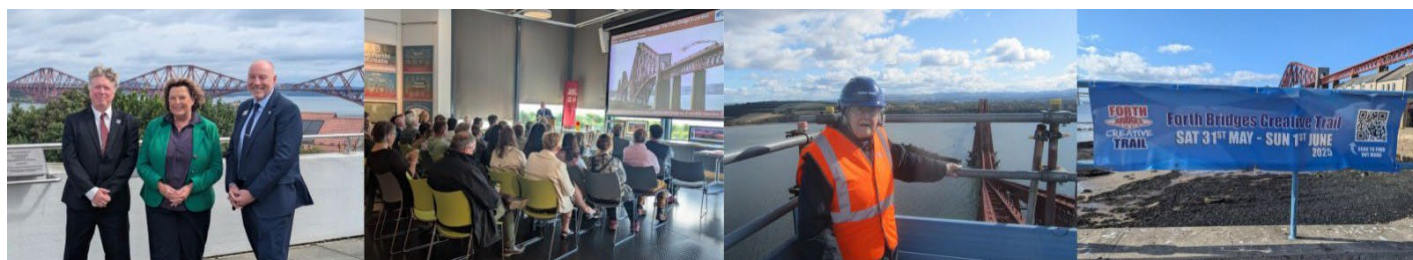
Celebration of 10 years as a World Heritage Site

The Forth Bridge marked its 10th anniversary as a UNESCO World Heritage Site on 5th July 2025 with a free public exhibition and presentation. The exhibition was visited by the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and was open over 3 days and then extended over the summer holiday period. The evening presentation's keynote speaker was Dr Miles Oglethorpe who gave a talk entitled "Celebrating Industrial World Heritage" covering how the Forth Bridge World Heritage nomination came about, and where it fits into the wider context of the representation of Industrial Heritage on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Events

The Forth Bridge continued to host two key charity events. Barnardo's Your View in September has now raised over £450,000 in the 7 years it has taken place. Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland added a further £100,000 donations through sponsorship of an abseil from the bridge in October 2025.

The Forth Bridge team took part in the Railway 200 celebrations in October at Edinburgh's Waverley station and supported a new community arts event, the Forth Bridges Creative Trail, in May.



Moravian Church Settlements – Gracehill WHS

The first full year since inscription has been a busy one. There was increasing interest in the site which was reflected in greater visitor numbers. We were delighted that Mid and East Antrim Borough Council supported the production of a new visitor guide and that work started on a new Village pathway which will hopefully be completed next year. In addition, the council, in partnership with the Department for Communities have agreed funding for a Site Coordinator.

During the year we were delighted to take a group from Gracehill to visit our sister site in Christiansfeld, Denmark. This was a wonderful celebration of our partnership as well as a real opportunity to learn from others.

Another highlight of the year was the visit of Her Excellency Ambassador Anna Nsubuga, UK Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO for a celebratory event in the village when she presented the official certificate of Inscription before an audience of residents, politicians, including the deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, and visiting dignitaries.



Image: Gracehill Old School

We were also joined on this occasion by visitors from Bethlehem, USA including a group of 20 students from the local University.

We look forward to building on these relationships and developing the full potential of the site and our partnerships in the years to come.

Great Spa Towns of Europe WHS

State of Conservation Report

We received some encouraging news after submitting our State of Conservation Report in 2024. The World Heritage Committee adopted Decision 47 COM 7B.97, acknowledging the progress made across The Great Spa Towns of Europe and does not require a full State of Conservation report for future decision-making. We are now only required to submit a joint updated report in December 2026 for review by the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies. This outcome represents a significant vote of confidence in our management approach.

A milestone also came from the City of Bath this year, which has a dual UNESCO World Heritage Site inscription (1987 and 2021). Its new World Heritage Site Management Plan has been approved by the council – thought to be the first management plan combining two inscriptions in the world!

Property Management Plan

We've started the review and refresh of our Property Management Plan, and the review of the 11 local management plans of our towns. We ran a Visioning Exercise at our General Assembly in Bad Ems, Germany, last autumn. We also conducted a comprehensive scoping review following UNESCO best practice and the 'Enhancing Our Heritage Toolkit 2.0'. Working with a Site Managers' working group, we assessed achievements since inscription: including establishing joint governance; management and monitoring systems; devising a Responsible Tourism strategy; and creating a young people-led Youth Forum. We also identified priorities: such as improving the Management Plan's structure to be attribute-focused and outcome-oriented; addressing gaps in climate

adaptation, disaster risk reduction and tourism carrying capacity; and completing the transition to participatory governance that actively involves communities and young people in decision-making.



Image: Delegates at The Great Spa Towns of Europe take part in a Visioning Exercise at their General Assembly in Bad Ems, Germany, October 2025. © Thomas Heuchemer

Youth Forum

The GSTE's Youth Forum has taken full form and is being embedded in our governance. A representative group is invited to speak at our General Assembly twice per year, sharing their perspectives and priorities to the Mayors, political representatives, Site Managers and other delegates. They have also shared presentations at major events (such as the Thermal Tourism Congress in Budapest in June 2025). We've seen groups start social media accounts to document their participation with World Heritage, including running stalls at public events and attending events - they have taken things into their own hands. A budget has been set aside to implement their ideas each year.



Image: The Great Spa Towns of Europe's Youth Forum participates in General Assemblies © Michael Illek

The Great Spa Towns of Europe enrolls with Preserving Legacies

In April 2025, The Great Spa Towns of Europe started working with Preserving Legacies, a global organisation dedicated to advancing climate adaptation solutions for cultural heritage sites. Led by National Geographic Explorer Victoria Herrmann and funded by the National Geographic Society, Preserving Legacies runs an annual three-year programme called the Climate Custodian Cohort. Four participants from across our spa towns (Bath, Spa, Vichy and The GSTE) are currently enrolled, advancing their skills, training and connections to adapt our World Heritage Site to prevent the impacts of climate change. Preserving Legacies highlighted that working with a serial, transnational World Heritage Site with a wide network was a significant step forward, allowing them to scale their work at a much faster rate.

<https://www.greatspatownsofeurope.eu/preserving-legacies/>



Image: Anne Pirard (bottom row, second from left), Site Manager of Spa, Belgium, at a workshop with Preserving Legacies (c) Anne Pirard

Climate Vulnerability Index in The Great Spa Towns of Europe

Baden bei Wien, a spa town in Austria, has pioneered climate adaptation work in The Great Spa Towns of Europe using the Climate Vulnerability Index. The town ran a three-day workshop for Site Managers across the World Heritage Site, which spans seven countries, sharing knowledge, experience and resources. This project was featured in News In Conservation magazine, published by The International Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, and highlighted on the cover page. As well as being part of The Great Spa Towns of Europe, Baden bei Wien is Austria's first site with UNESCO World Heritage status and the first climate model region in Austria. The town is conducting a scientifically sound analysis of climate stress factors with James Cook University (Australia), aiming to record climate vulnerability and develop a model that can serve as a practice-oriented tool for other cultural heritage sites and climate model regions. The final report on the research project is due to be published in spring 2026 and will create a basis for future urban development decisions.

<https://www.greatspatownsofeurope.eu/news/cvi-workshop/>

Image: Group photo at the Climate Vulnerability Index with City Counsellor Franz Schwabl. Baden bei Wien, Austria© Sophie Natter

Rail Europe Campaign

The Great Spa Towns of Europe partnered with the European Historic Thermal Towns Association to promote rail travel with Rail Europe - one of the biggest rail operators in Europe. Designed for international travellers, the company allows travellers to book multi-operator journeys with ease. As well as fitting the structure of a serial transnational World Heritage Site, this campaign promoted responsible travel to an audience of millions.

<https://www.greatspatownsofeurope.eu/raileurope/>

Great Western Railway Campaign

The City of Bath, a double-inscribed World Heritage Site, took part in a joint campaign with a group of UNESCO sites in South West England to promote rail travel with Great Western Railway. A new digital platform was launched, Explore UNESCO South West Trails, providing two-day itineraries to each WHS. The project highlights how rail travel can unlock easy access to multiple trail starting

points, supporting low-carbon travel while celebrating the rich diversity of heritage across the South West.

<https://unesco.org.uk/news/unesco-uk-launches-trails-guide-in-partnership-with-great-western-railway-to-inspire-sustainable-exploration-across-the-south>

Tower of London WHS

The Tower Remembers

To mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, a ceramic poppy installation was displayed at the Tower of London from May to November 2025. Drawing on nearly 30,000 poppies from the 2014 artwork Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red, loaned by the Imperial War Museums, the installation created a powerful site of remembrance.

Poppies flowed from the White Tower and formed a crater-like 'wound' at its centre — referencing the Tower's own experience of bombing during the Blitz. Poet Laureate Simon Armitage was commissioned to create a new poem, *In Retrospect*, reflecting on the enduring symbolism of the poppy.

Medieval Palace

In 2025, the Medieval Palace at the Tower of London was comprehensively reinterpreted, with a new display exploring the 13th-century households and wider world of Henry III and Edward I, who both presided over a pivotal period in the Tower's development.

Rich textiles, vibrant wall paintings and a newly commissioned soundscape bring the interiors to life, while hands-on models and replica objects provide interactive opportunities for visitors. The result is a more immersive and engaging experience that highlights the sensory richness of the medieval world.

Beano: Mischief at the Tower

During February half term 2026, over 50,000 visitors took part in an immersive Beano-themed trail. Families followed Dennis the Menace's time-travelling adventure, encountering historic figures including Elizabeth I, William the Conqueror and Guy Fawkes, culminating in a photo opportunity inside the restored time machine.

Flight, Camera, Action!

For October half term, the Tower marked the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII with a live, theatrical experience exploring its wartime past. Inspired by the story of a decorated American war pigeon, visitors encountered a fictional 1940s film crew recreating events, blending humour with historical storytelling.



Images L-R: Poppies Installation © HRP/Imperial War Museum; HRP & Beano © DC Thomson & Co Ltd; Flight, Camera, Action © HRP

Conservation

In 2025–26, a programme of conservation and access improvements continued across the Tower of London, reflecting a dual commitment preserving the historic fabric and improving the visitor experience.

Recent access reviews identified a range of opportunities, from small-scale enhancements such as improved signage and facilities to more ambitious interventions supporting step-free access. A significant milestone was the installation of a new lift to the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, providing step-free entry and improving access to the crypt for the first time.

Major fabric conservation also progressed, including a masonry and stone conservation project at the Middle Tower and Causeway, the Tower’s principal entrance, which began in 2025–26. Alongside essential repair works, the programme created opportunities for careful cleaning and conservation of historic features, including the heraldic crest on the Middle Tower.

Sustainability

Sustainability work at the Tower of London made measurable progress in 2025–26, contributing to Historic Royal Palaces’ long-term ambition to become Nature Positive and Carbon Net Zero by 2050.

Ecological surveys at the Tower of London are strengthening understanding of biodiversity across the site. A UK Hab and Biodiversity Net Gain baseline has been established, with 2026 surveys including bat monitoring and butterfly surveys led by Yeoman Warders and residents. Early findings show diverse wildlife, including kestrels, red-listed house sparrows and starlings.

Energy reduction efforts also delivered significant results. Gas consumption fell by 61% (3.4 GWh) compared with the baseline year and by 19% year on year, equating to a reduction of 567 tCO₂e (roughly equivalent to 2,800 short-haul flights). These savings were largely achieved through improved heating system management and staff behaviour change.

In parallel, design work began to decarbonise the Tower’s largest building, alongside feasibility studies for further major systems across the site.



Images L-R: Medieval Palace; Middle Tower Conservation; Younge People Animals; all © HRP

Schools, Teachers and Digital Learning

The Tower welcomed 130,000 pupils across Key Stages 1–5 through curriculum-linked workshops exploring themes from Norman conquest to crime, punishment and remembrance. HRP’s Schools Access Fund enabled 10% of pupils to visit free of charge, with additional support for travel and facilitated sessions, helping to reduce financial and geographic barriers.

Programmes included:

- Primary learning: Workshops such as Fire! Fire!, Knights and Castles and Gunpowder Plot, combining storytelling, role play and historic settings.
- Secondary learning: Enquiry-led sessions examining topics including the Normans, Elizabethan prisoners and religious persecution.
- New pilots: A hands-on castle-building workshop exploring Norman power and architecture.
- Home education: A dedicated event for nearly 300 home-educating visitors featuring object handling, trails and encounters with historic characters.
- Supporting teachers: Teacher engagement remained central, with CPD provision including a residential course on the Normans and a KS1 historical enquiry webinar. The new Inspiring History Teaching Awards attracted over thousands of nominations, with the winner to be announced in June 2026.
- Digital: Digital provision expanded significantly, with new curriculum resources including 360° films, SEND-accessible wordless story about Elizabeth the I’s childhood and the launch of a dedicated “Teach with Us” YouTube channel. Content ranged from individual historical figures to global contexts and is adaptable for onsite and remote learning

Community Programmes

The Tower’s community programme reached over 12,000 participants, working with 150 local partners and focusing on reducing barriers to engagement. The Community Access Scheme (CAS) remained central, offering free visits, tailored support and facilitated activities to groups facing financial, cultural or health-related barriers.

Key strands included:

- Children and families: Pilot outreach and onsite activity, including creative workshops and nature-based programmes linked to the moat.
- Relaxed Openings: Dedicated sessions for SEND and neurodivergent visitors, supported by sensory resources and adapted environments.
- Community Co-creation: Collaboration with Tower Hamlets-based partner Stitches in Time to produce a new tapestry for the Medieval Palace.

- Young people: Pilots exploring skills, careers and creative practice, including work experience through the Imagining Animals programme.
- Tower Remembers: Six events connected to the poppy installation engaged 489 serving personnel, veterans and families, alongside wider community participation

Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites WHS

In April 2025, the National Trust celebrated 100 years since the start of Alexander Keiller's excavations at Windmill Hill. Between April 1925 and 1929, thousands of objects were discovered at the ancient monument which today lies within the WHS, including Neolithic pottery sherds, flint tools, animal bones, traces of wheat, and human remains. These discoveries initiated Windmill Hill's significant contribution to our understanding of British prehistory, as **some of the first evidence for the life of early farming communities in Britain**. Agriculture continues to define and shape the landscape today. An exhibition in the Alexander Keiller Museum during the centenary year displayed a selection of the objects uncovered, and information on the legacy of the Windmill Hill excavations.

In spring 2025, English Heritage began constructing a new learning centre at Stonehenge, made possible thanks to the generous support of donors. Facilities include a re-created Neolithic Hall for living history, a STEM-focused Discovery Lab and digital studio. Volunteers are helping to construct the new Kusuma Neolithic Hall using experimental archaeology and historically authentic materials. The design of the structure is inspired by the nearby prehistoric settlement Durrington Walls within the WHS.

English Heritage's Operations Director Stonehenge and West, Steve Bax, said:

*"Around 48,000 children visit Stonehenge on free school trips every year, and a further 12,000 on our expert-led Discovery Visits. At Stonehenge, students can trace the impact of human activity on the environment, learn how prehistoric engineers raised the stones, explore the relationship between the sun and Stonehenge and discover how geophysical surveys can uncover buried secrets. **Our new facilities aim to make these STEM topics far more accessible to students who struggle to engage with them in a traditional classroom environment.** We want them to come away asking themselves: if the Stonehenge builders could create something incredible thousands of years ago, without calculators and computers, why can't I?"*

In May 2025 Visit England granted VisitWiltshire Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) status. VisitWiltshire continues to ensure the WHS is featured in international visitor itineraries, for example recently partnering with VisitBritain to promote Stonehenge and Avebury as part of [a new high-profile 5-7 day itinerary for international visitors along the Great West Way](#).



Images L-R: From a collection of Harold St George Gray photographs of Windmill Hill © Alexander Keiller Museum; Local schoolchildren break ground on Stonehenge's new learning spaces using Neolithic tools © English Heritage; © LoGa Culture

Over the summer, visitors to Avebury were invited to try a number of locative games using their smartphones. The **locative gaming technology research project** saw the National Trust partnering with Bournemouth and Southampton Universities to engage visitors on-site and virtually in narratives focussed on both Avebury henge and the wider Avebury landscape. The project blends Avebury's physical Neolithic landscape with digital, augmented reality (AR), and mixed-reality gameplay. These immersive experiences are part of the [international LoGaCulture research project](#) and allows players to explore hidden archaeology, walk in the footsteps of ancient people, and solve puzzles.

In October 2025, **Wiltshire Council adopted a pivotal planning document for the WHS** following a spring public consultation. It sets out how the landscape around Stonehenge and Avebury will continue to be protected for future generations to experience and understand. This new [Supplementary Planning Document](#) (SPD) now informs decisions for proposed developments that may affect the setting of the Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments and the unparalleled archaeological landscape.

Also in October 2025, the **Wiltshire & Swindon Local Nature Recovery Strategy was adopted**, with measures to maintain, enhance and create more calcareous grassland in the WHS. **Agri-environment schemes, supported by Natural England**, continue to be delivered by local land managers with mutual benefits for nature and archaeology. In the last year, the **National Trust completed the initial phase of reseedling** to revert all National Trust owned land in the Stonehenge landscape that was under arable cultivation to **species rich chalk grassland**, with further enhancement of species diversity. And in November 2025, the **North Wessex Downs National Landscape Management Plan (2025-30)** was [launched](#), reaffirming the commitment of partners to protect and enhance one of southern England's most treasured natural environments, including the Avebury landscape.

In 2025 **two new independent Chair positions were appointed in the WHS Partnership**, Sarah Nichols as Chair of the Executive Board and Andy Miller as Chair of the Expert & Stakeholder Group, following the ratification of a new partnership governance structure. Work has started this year on the **review and update of the WHS Management Plan**, for completion late 2027.

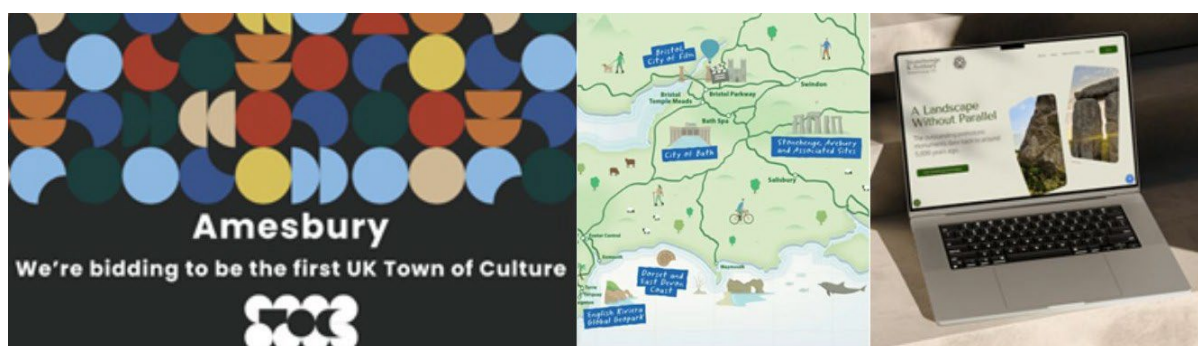
In Spring 2026 **Amesbury Town Council bid to be the first UK Town of Culture in 2028**. The home of Stonehenge, Amesbury has a vibrant community and rich history dating back thousands of years. The submission marks the first stage of a national competition led by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The [bid sets out an ambitious and community-driven vision](#) for a year-long cultural programme designed to inspire pride, participation and opportunity.

A new **UNESCO UK trail to inspire sustainable exploration across the South West** launched in spring 2026 in partnership with Great Western Railway. New website [Explore UNESCO South West Trails](#) helps visitors and residents to discover the region's rich cultural and natural heritage by rail and bus. In Wiltshire, a [two-day Wiltshire World Heritage itinerary](#) starts at Salisbury train station, traveling to Stonehenge and onto Devizes by bus. The next day, take the bus to Avebury before finishing at Swindon train station. The trail includes museums, market towns and the iconic monuments and landscape of Stonehenge and Avebury WHS.

Following severe flooding in January 2024, Avebury Manor has undergone extensive restoration and has now re-opened to the public. This work included **relocating thousands of artefacts from the Alexander Keiller Museum** to a new archive in the Manor's library. In addition to the physical archive, the four-year [Avebury Papers](#) Arts and Humanities Research Council funded project has

been working to digitise, explore and share the multimedia archive of Avebury's Neolithic origins and its subsequent life-history. This year saw the **completion of archive digitisation and further research on the material held in the Alexander Keiller Museum Archive**. The project is a collaboration between Southampton, Bristol and York Universities, the Archaeological Data Service and the National Trust, with support from Historic England and English Heritage Trust.

This year saw **the launch of three new websites related to the WHS**. The new [Avebury and Stonehenge Archaeological and Historical Research Group \(ASAHRG\)](#) website is an online hub for WHS research with key documents, mapping, and upcoming selected publications. Furthermore, a new website for the [Avebury Society](#) provides useful information about local talks and projects, , such as the [Drawn](#) and [Quartered](#) exhibition featuring a selection of people who have been inspired by or stayed in Avebury over the years, and a recently commissioned comprehensive bibliography of books relating to Avebury. A refreshed website for [Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Site](#) offers enhanced information about the WHS and how it is cared for, as well as links to partner learning opportunities and how to explore the landscape, its monuments and collections.



Following the first pandemic lockdown, [research project Places of Joy](#) examined how people were using visits to heritage sites such as Avebury during this time and the role heritage sites played in their wellbeing. The initial project, supported by Historic England and the Heritage Alliance with the Universities of Southampton, Cambridge and Surrey and the National Trust, found that single visits to heritage sites have clear subjective wellbeing effects in increasing happiness and reducing anxiety. This year, **'Places of Joy 5 Years On' has sought to collect further data to understand how people's responses may be similar or different to those during the pandemic** to understand if anything has changed or whether the motivations and experiences of the pandemic have had a lasting effect on visitors

Looking ahead, WHS partners are preparing to mark the 40th anniversary of inscription as one of the first seven UK WHSs – both locally, including a community celebration held by The Avebury Society, and nationally with the other six WHSs.

City of Bath WHS

There are a number of interesting projects in the City of Bath WHS that have either been recently completed or ongoing. The Bath River Line project, completed earlier this year has improved access to the river and path that runs alongside it for pedestrians and cyclists, and introduce wayfinding, seating, and information boards. This was a collaborative, participatory, and multi-disciplinary project led by Bath and North East Somerset Council. This included the City of Bath WHS Manager, who provided advice and guidance on the heritage of the river in being pivotal to the city's development, and how the project could relate to the delivery of the WHS Management Plan actions.

The National Trust's Reconnecting Rooms project at the Bath Assembly Rooms is now in full flow. The National Trust took back the Assembly Rooms from Bath and North East Somerset Council at the end of the lease period several years ago, having housed its Fashion Museum for many decades. The emphasis is to breathe new life into the building and undertake extensive restoration to celebrate its architecture and history as the social hub of the city, with a vision to reinstate this role as a place for social activities for the community and visitors alike. It's an unusual undertaking for them as an urban site and property, with much of their property being in rural locations, and therefore is a foray into the unknown. The Grade I listed Bath Assembly Rooms was designed and built by John Wood the Younger in 1777, and despite suffering severe damage in the World War II German bombing raids of 1942 retains its significance as one of the key architectural masterpieces of the WHS and its OUV. The works are uncovering aspects of the building hitherto covered and hidden for many decades, and this is leading to a greater understanding of the building and how it was used, including a stone plunge pool and extensive kitchens. The City of Bath WHS Manager has been extensively involved in this incredible project for the WHS since its inception and is looking forward to its completion in 2027.



Bath will be hosting the Great Spa Towns of Europe General Assembly in December 2026, and the City of Bath WHS Manager is assisting the GSTE WHS Manager in organising and making preparations. This is no mean feat at any time of the year, but the famous and popular Bath Christmas Market will be happening at the same time therefore adding to the challenge, but it will hopefully add to the experience of visiting GSTE WHS colleagues.

Durham Castle & Cathedral WHS

2025/6 was a busy year at Durham Castle and Cathedral WHS. Durham City Conservation Area Management Plan and the [2025-2035 WHS Management Plan](#) went through public consultation and are now pending adoption by Durham County Council. A major study leading to a three volume Conservation Management Framework and Gazetteer was completed on Durham Castle. Durham University invested £2.7 million in establishing new academic posts in cultural and natural heritage in a project called Heritage 360. A Castle Research Group brings together specialists from different disciplines from within the University and beyond.

Fellows' Garden opened as part of new investment in the gardens and designed landscape setting of the World Heritage Site and a Setting Study informed new guidance for developers on the World Heritage Site. The garden will host Durham Fringe Festival in 2026.

The Cathedral commenced work to bring back into use spaces in the Deanery Undercroft and the Chapel of the Holy Cross to form a new Centre for Pilgrimage and Prayer as a flagship project in its Cathedral 2033 strategy.



In November the biennial Lumiere festival of light (image by Graeme Hall) brought some 80 artists to Durham. Since its inception in 2009 the festival has attracted 1.3 million visitors and generated £43 million of economic impact for Durham.

In December 2025 Durham celebrated being accepted into UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities. A new Learning City Team brings together formal and informal learning providers

to collaborate and share resources and develop a shared strategy for lifelong learning.

The Historic Town of St George and its Related Fortifications WHS, Bermuda

In June 2025 The St George's Foundation launched its Education Programme, a four-part curriculum unit which generates an understanding of, and appreciation for, our UNESCO World Heritage Site and Bermuda's cultural heritage.

The programme is matched to the Bermuda Government Department of Education Primary 5 Social Studies Scheme of Work and Standards and delivers age-appropriate, thought-provoking material to give the students a fuller understanding of international UNESCO World Heritage Sites, Bermuda's World Heritage Site, the history of Bermuda as a British military outpost and the development of fortifications.

This allows them to develop an understanding of heritage and articulate the importance of preserving cultural heritage sites by encouraging a sense of shared responsibility for the world's cultural heritage.

Ferry Point Park, a site with four centuries of British masonry fortifications, is visited for on-site learning by 250 students and educators, and online learning sessions are held before and after, focusing on the War of 1812 and the social and economic impact of war on the St George's community.

The SGF Education Programme was repeated in October 2025, is now embedded in the Government primary school curriculum and takes place annually. <https://sgf.bm/public-school-pupils-tour-ferry-point-park/>



The Flow Country WHS

Following on from the inscription in 2024, The Flow Country World Heritage Site has continued to make good progress over the past year with work focused on project development, long-term planning as well as peatland restoration delivery.

Governance and Management

The Flow Country Partnership Manager and the World Heritage Site Co-ordinator came into post in summer 2025 which brings the total Flow Country Partnership staff up to six with one intern employed across partner organisations supporting the delivery of peatland restoration.

Governance structures for the World Heritage Site have been re-established and strengthened. The World Heritage Site Steering Group reconvened in September 2025 and now meets quarterly, supported by a Management Group as well as Tourism, Communication, Funding and Planning Working Groups.

Management Plan

The Management Plan has been updated post-inscription and is currently undergoing a Strategic Environmental Assessment prior to The Highland Council adopting it as a material consideration later in the year. We're looking ahead to establishing an Action Plan and starting to deliver on some of the actions outlined within the Plan.



Sustainable Tourism Strategy

A Sustainable Tourism Strategy is currently being developed with consultancy support from Blue Sail, overseen by our Tourism Working Group. Community consultations were held in late 2025 and spring 2026 which provided some fantastic and engaging feedback on what the WHS can bring to tourism in the local area. Publication of the strategy is expected in June 2026 and we're looking forward to establishing next steps and taking the Strategy into the delivery phase.

Local engagement and fundraising

Local engagement has been strong, with the Flow Country Partnership attending school events, careers and science fairs, stakeholder engagement site visits, peatland education activities, conferences as well as wider community events. Further events, including hosting peatland roadshows, are planned for later in the year.



Partnership working and profile-raising activities have continued to build momentum. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Caithness Broch Project to support delivery of the Big Broch Build; while fundraising efforts have been supported through activities such as Prof. Roxane Andersen's remarkable 100km traverse of the Flow Country on World Heritage Day, a significant achievement that helped raise both funds and the profile of the World Heritage Site.

Studley Royal and Fountains Abbey WHS

Throughout 2025/26, Studley Royal Park including the ruins of Fountains Abbey has continued to be a place where history, heritage and creativity come together. The past year has welcomed new audiences, fostered creative partnerships, and enhanced visitor experiences through a programme of events, installations and restoration work. From large-scale contemporary artworks set against the abbey ruins, to renewed access to historic spaces and investment in heritage accommodation, these milestones reflect our commitment to preserving the past while inspiring present and future generations.

Luke Jerram's Helios, October 2025

Luke Jerram's iconic sculpture shone inside the spectacular ruins of Fountains Abbey. The seven-metre diameter sculpture was suspended in the nave, where visitors could experience the artwork from multiple viewpoints within the ruins, as well as enjoy extended views through the grand East Window while walking towards the water garden. The event proved a major success, with sunrise, sunset and daytime openings attracting tens of thousands of visitors across four days.



‘Between Chaos and Light’ an instillation by Ed Kluz

A new art instillation in Fountains Hall ran from the summer solstice (21 June) to the winter solstice (21 December) 2025. The exhibition invited visitors to step into a transformative experience in that bridged past and present through sound, video, and sculpture. Its opening marked the first step in shining a spotlight on Fountains Hall as a place of people, stories and lived experience.



The celebration of World Heritage Site Day 2025

In April 2025, the site celebrated World Heritage Site Day with a weekend-long garden party. Visitors enjoyed live music from the Ebor String Quartet, took part in traditional games, and had the opportunity to mingle with Georgian characters, bringing the site’s history to life.



The renovations of Fountains Cottage

In January 2026, Fountains Cottage and the Boot Room (two of the site’s 14 holiday cottages) closed for major renovation works. The cottages were combined and refurbished to create a 5 Acorn (equivalent to five-star) holiday cottage, now able to accommodate up to eight guests. Built in 1749 as a farmhouse, Fountains Cottage retains its character across three floors, with exposed stonework and beams showcasing its historic charm.



These highlights showcase just some of the achievements and memorable moments from the past year, demonstrating the continued significance of Studley Royal Park including the ruins of Fountains Abbey – a site cared for by the National Trust – as a place of national and international importance.

The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales WHS

Once again it was a busy year. Here are just a few of the highlights.

We're still a comparatively young site, and so the wellspring of activity in the wake of a successful inscription is still very much upon us. Various projects have now reached operational phase, some are complete, as we continue to utilise World Heritage Status for the betterment of our communities. Since receiving the designation, Cyngor Gwynedd and its partners have secured over £38 million of investment into the area, this is alongside partner grants, as well as private sector investment in assets and sites across the slate landscape.

Llewyrch o'r Llechi

A cultural regeneration programme in the World Heritage Site, worth £36 million. Funded by UK Government, with contributions from partner organisations. A good example of utilising World Heritage status in order to draw in additional funding into our slate valleys.

Working with communities in the World Heritage Site, elements of the project include:

- Llanberis: £6 million of funding towards the large-scale redevelopment of the National Slate Museum, as well as improvements to nearby Parc Padarn Country Park
- Bethesda: development of a heritage centre and community space, new sound, lighting and soundproofing at the nearby Neuadd Ogwen concert venue, improvements to the local cycle route and footpath infrastructure
- Blaenau Ffestiniog: renovation of Yr Aelwyd building, for use as a space for younger audiences and the hosting of community events
- A substantial suite of conservation programmes
- A wider package of support of town centre improvements is in place across other communities in the slate landscape, including public artworks



Images L-R: Neuadd Ogwen, Bethesda; Yr Aelwyd, Blaenau Ffestiniog; Public Artwork, Tywyn

LleCHI LleNI: Our World Heritage Site, Our Pride, Our Future

In September 2025 the World Heritage Site's community project 'LleCHI LleNI' was one year old. The project, worth £2 million over five years (2024-2029), is funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund and partners. A people-centred project, with the heritage, culture, language and unique character of our slate communities at its heart.

Between September 2024 and September 2025 the project:

- hosted or contributed to 48 events:
 - celebrating our quarrying heritage
 - caring for the landscape
 - developing skills in our communities

- facilitating a sense of well-being
- worked with 1957 attendees (including 1188 children and young people) during events and activities across Gwynedd
- allocated grants worth £117,174 to 21 community groups

Thematic Sessions

During the year we held two thematic sessions where partners and stakeholders discussed markets and marketing in the World Heritage Site. This ties in with our Gateway and Network Strategy, whereby the National Slate Museum, when reopened, will serve as a gateway to other areas in the World Heritage site, using the story of slate to encourage visitors to explore further afield (in a sustainable and responsible manner).

Annual event

Our annual event was fully booked (Neuadd Ogwen, Bethesda). This was an opportunity to reflect on some of our successes during the past year or so. Community representatives were amongst those presenting.



Images L-R: Young Slate Ambassadors (part of LleCHI LleNI project); Guided walk, LleCHI LleNI project; Annual meeting, Neuadd Ogwen, Bethesda

Management Plan review

We're in the final stages of conducting a midpoint review of our World Heritage Site management plan. This is not a re-write as such, but we have:

- included updates and corrections to existing information
- tracked progress against actions for the first 5 years since inscription
- formulated a revised action plan

Partners and stakeholders provided input into the process.

Further Information

Follow us on social media – it's @LlechiCymru (Instagram, Facebook, Bluesky).

Our latest update document: Llechi Cymru Update March 2026

Our most recent annual report: Annual Report 2024_25

Website: <https://www.llechi.cymru>

Dorset and East Devon Coast (Jurassic Coast) WHS

2026 is the 25th anniversary of the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site and stakeholders have been invited to run or link events to the celebrations throughout the year. To date this has involved a huge variety of opportunities to learn about, engage with, and help look after the Site, from beach cleans, to guided talks and walks, family activities, and arts exhibitions. It's a fabulous cross section

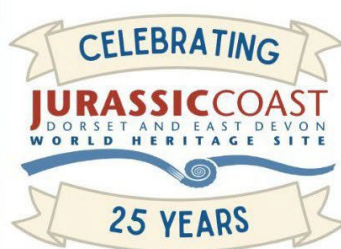
through the ways people connect to the site. Events are still running till the end of 2026. Evaluation after that will hopefully provide useful evidence to support site management and stakeholder programming plans.

In spring and summer 2025 the Devonshire Association ran a programme of events celebrating the county's UNESCO heritage, including a day-long seminar, field visits and online talks. Devon has a lot to be proud of, being home to a Geopark, Biosphere, City of Literature, an entry on the Memory of the World register, and part of one cultural and one natural World Heritage Site, the latter being the Jurassic Coast. You can learn more about the project here [Celebrating Devon's World-Class Heritage 2025 – The Devonshire Association](#)

Our project to create new bespoke guidance for impact assessments on the Jurassic Coast is going well and is now into its second year. Exploring how the concepts of integrity, setting, and cumulative impact should be applied to natural, geological OUV has been a challenging but fun process, leaving everyone involved scratching their heads and thinking very hard indeed! What is emerging is a novel framework for assessing impacts and refreshed ways of thinking about the Site itself. Crucially, it has revealed that the scarcity of World Heritage and geological heritage expertise is a key issue that has no easy answer.

Early in 2026 we were delighted to see our community of fossil collectors come together to nominate Fossil Collecting on the Jurassic Coast to be included on the UK inventory of Living Heritage. We believe it has a very strong case as a long standing and continuing craft that exists in direct response to the natural landscape of the Dorset and East Devon Coast. Responsible fossil collecting has always been a key part of managing the Jurassic Coast WHS and we hope to see a successful application so that this intangible aspect of local culture, with deep connections to the Site's OUV, is properly recognised. Here is the brief description from the nomination;

Fossil Collecting and preparation on the Jurassic Coast catalysed British palaeontology and remains integral to local culture and the management of this World Heritage Site. The practice of fossil collecting incorporates the general public, amateurs and professionals. Their skills and discoveries are a continual source of inspiration, learning and science.



Ironbridge Gorge WHS

Acquisition of Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust by the National Trust

In October 2025, DCMS announced that they would be providing £9 million of funding to support the handover of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust (IGMT) to the National Trust. This has secured the long-term future of our WHS's most significant heritage assets and some of our key tourist attractions, including 10 museum sites. The transfer successfully took place on 2nd March, and we are working closely with the project team to ensure a smooth transition.

Celebration of 60 years of Ironbridge Gorge Museums Trust

Following the announcement of IGMT's transition to the National Trust, work has been undertaken to celebrate the work which safeguarded our most significant heritage assets. Most recently, this has included a large £5.5 million conservation project, completed in spring 2026, focusing on the listed buildings and scheduled monuments, funded by the National Heritage Memorial Fund. This including re-roofing projects at Coalbrookdale, stabilisation of the Blists Hill Brick and Tile Works, replacement of the pyramid roof above The Old Furnace, and clearing and repointing work to the Blists Hill Iron Furnace. A commemorative book has also been published by IGMT to celebrate 60 years of conservation work.

Launch of our WHS Management Plan 2027-2037 project

With the end of our current management plan approaching in 2027, the WHS Steering group launched a project to establish our next Management Plan. Work has been undertaken to gather evidence to inform this plan including stakeholder engagement and a public survey generating 640 responses. Work will continue to progress the management plan through 2026.



The Ironbridge Park and Ride and Planning Surgeries returned in 2025

Telford & Wrekin Council continued its commitment to supporting residents and visitors in the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site with a new programme of free, pre-bookable one to one planning surgeries throughout 2025. Ironbridge Gorge Park and Ride also returned over the summer, offering a simple, sustainable and affordable way to visit.

Business successes to celebrate

Book Nook, Ironbridge's book shop celebrated its success by expanding into neighbouring premises and expanding its community offer which includes a book club and meeting space. The Courtyard café, a popular tea room launched an expanded menu and extended product range. River Bloom, a new flower boutique and gift shop had a successful opening in Ironbridge and is now a popular stop for both locals and tourists.

Telford & Wrekin Council celebrated a new inclusive living development in Ironbridge

12 brand new supported living homes have been built across the WHS, to foster an inclusive approach for those in need. Their locations were carefully selected to have minimal impact on our heritage value whilst also ensuring residents are within established communities.

Events to celebrate

The WHS hosted a series of successful events through the year, including the 20th anniversary of the Walking Festival, and the very popular Christmas light switch-on. These attracted thousands of

people to the WHS, the majority of whom are from local and surrounding communities. These benefitted not only the WHS's economy, but also those of local artisan businesses.



Pontcysyllte Aqueduct & Canal WHS

Management Plan Mid-Point Review

Work is on-going, collating the final amendments to the final draft plan. We are on track to bring the draft plan for approval to the June Board meeting before submission to UNESCO. The proposed draft will include details around human resources and the core budget.

Levelling Up Funding Updates

- JC Edwards Community Garden and Wall restoration:
 - An opening event was held on Friday 12th December, which was well attended by local councillors, community councillors, community members and other guests
 - The new garden stands on the historic site of the former JC Edwards Brick & Tile Works, once a major local employer where generations of people from Trevor and the surrounding area worked. The project honours that legacy while creating a new attractive and accessible public space for residents and visitors
 - The new garden adds to the ongoing investment within the wider Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site, following a feasibility study funded by the Clwydian Range National Landscape team and further helps in reinforcing its status as a place of international significance, local pride, and shared history



- Trevor Basin Improvements:
 - Stepped Access: Tenders have been received
 - Riverside Walk: Contract awarded; works due to start in April for 16 weeks
 - Pedestrian Footbridge: solutions are under investigation
 - Education Centre: Shed removal is planned. Planning approval obtained
 - Chirk Railings: work completed



- WHS Car Park:
 - Work is ongoing towards discharging the planning conditions, the lease and future revenue cost implications for site management

Planning, Landscape and Conservation Delivery Group

- A working group is being set up to review the Supplementary Planning Guidance, it will include updates such as guidance on solar panels, wind turbines and lighting and reference the recent Dark Skies supplementary planning guidance: Planning for the Conservation and Enhancement of Dark Skies in Wales
- Further to this the National Landscape are involved in a Wales-wide working group looking at the impact of artificial light on heritage assets and finding ways to improve energy efficiency whilst not impacting the historic asset
- The group will continue to review significant planning applications in the round, including the latest Kronospan application for new biomass facilities
- Other notable applications which have been reviewed by the group include; an application to convert The Royal Hotel in Llangollen into apartments and the expansion of Bryntysilio Outdoor Education Centre (above the Horseshoe Falls)
- Examples of best practice Heritage Impact Assessments and Design and Access Statements within the WHS have been shared across the group
- Cadw have been contacted by Llangollen Railway regarding historic graffiti findings which are an example of pre-war storytelling and the team are working with the building inspector to look at ways to preserve the findings

Visitor Management & Economic Regeneration Delivery Group

- The group has been working on auditing footfall counters along the WHS' 11 miles and identifying priority locations to install new ones. The proposal is to add these to the existing network of counters used by the National Landscape, to unify the data across the whole site
- A meeting was held with paddle sport businesses in the WHS, to discuss how to work more supportively between sectors and ease some of the issues occurring with the increasing demand and growth in this area. The discussion included:
 - Health and safety amongst the different users on the canal and river, whether that be paddlers, boaters, walkers or cyclists and the possibility to develop a code of conduct
 - Education and awareness of the Universal Outstanding Value of the WHS, so businesses and their communities can both understand and share this understanding of the heritage significance
 - The need to create more access points
- The group would like to take forward developing a Recreation and Access plan for the WHS in the next financial year

- Refurbishment of the Trevor Basin Visitor toilets has begun and is due to finish in March. Funded by Brilliant Basics, the refurbishment will provide refreshed toilet facilities, with a new Changing Places facility, cassette disposal for boaters, new information boards and landscaping improvements around the entrance

Community Advisory Group (CRT) – Community Heritage and Placemaking Project

An initial application has been submitted and has been accepted; the group will work on developing a full application to be submitted by March.

Anniversaries

- The Chirk Aqueduct celebrates 225th anniversary since the construction in 1801
- The Visitor Management Group will work on a plan for a series of events throughout the year to celebrate the anniversary
- Celebrations will kick off with a day of events on Sunday March 22nd facilitated by CRT's Community Advisory Group and will include several activities including a Floating Market

Blaenavon Industrial Landscape WHS

This year marks a major milestone for the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape as it celebrates 25 years as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Inscribed in 2000, Blaenavon World Heritage Site stands as one of the most important and best-preserved industrial landscapes in the world. Over the past 25 years, Blaenavon has welcomed visitors from across the globe to experience its unique heritage. From the iconic Blaenavon Ironworks to Big Pit National Coal Museum, its landscapes and communities together tell a powerful story of industry, innovation and resilience.

To mark the 25th anniversary, a free concert was held at Blaenavon Workmen's Hall. Attended by around 300 people, the event was a vibrant cultural celebration of the town. Featuring performances from local groups including the Blaenavon Male Voice Choir, Blaenavon Town Band, Adhoc Theatre Company, the Blaenavon World Heritage Site Youth Ambassadors and local primary school pupils, the evening was a great success and reaffirmed the importance of this global accolade to the local community.



Images L-R: Blaenavon Male Voice Choir; Blaenavon Town Band

Representatives and partners involved in managing the site highlighted the anniversary as a chance to celebrate the people and partnerships that have supported Blaenavon's heritage over the past 25 years. The concert also provided an opportunity to reaffirm a shared commitment to protecting and promoting the site for future generations.

Pupils help preserve Blaenavon's past

Primary school pupils have put together a time capsule to mark the 25th anniversary of Blaenavon becoming a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Blaenavon Heritage VC Primary School pupils created artwork, written reflections, and personal messages about life in Blaenavon to add to the capsule, which was buried in the school grounds.

The project was done in partnership with Blaenavon Town Council who came up with the idea, and the steel capsule was supplied by local firm GOS Engineering.



Year 4 pupil Isobella said: “We had so much fun doing the pictures and poems to go in the time capsule. I did a picture of my favourite thing in Blaenavon”. Fellow pupil Carter added: “I hope people enjoy looking at all the lovely things when they dig it up.” Nikki Westwood, Eco Coordinator at Blaenavon Heritage VC Primary School, said: “Pupil voice was at the heart of this project. It not only deepened the children’s understanding of our local heritage, but also encouraged them to think about sustainability, community responsibility, and the legacy they will leave for future generations. “This authentic learning experience linked perfectly with the aims of our Eco Schools programme and help strengthened the pupil’s sense of place and citizenship.”

The project concluded with a celebration event at the school, where the children were recognised for the positive contribution, they have made to their community, alongside Blaenavon Mayor Lewis Evans and councillors. Pupils also recorded a podcast with Town Councillors discussing the time capsule project. Listen to the podcast and find out more on the school’s website: <https://bhvcprimary.com/eco-council/>

Giant’s Causeway WHS

At the Giant’s Causeway, work continued on the removal of coins inserted into the basalt columns. With ongoing support from the National Trust, the WHS Steering Group, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, and additional funding from the Geologists’ Association Curry Fund, a specialist stonemasonry team and trained volunteers have now removed the majority of coins from the site.

A public awareness campaign led by the National Trust attracted global media attention, including coverage on local and national television and radio, as well as international media outlets in France and the United States. UK print coverage included The Guardian, The Telegraph, and The Independent, while online coverage featured publications such as Smithsonian Magazine, Taipei Times, and Gulf News. The campaign is estimated to have reached an estimated audience of 3.3 billion people.

Since the removal work and the introduction of enhanced visitor messaging, there has been a notable reduction in the number of coins being inserted at the site. Any new coins that are identified are now quickly removed by site staff and volunteers, helping to prevent further damage to this internationally significant geological feature.

The project has highlighted how effective partnership working can deliver conservation benefits while raising awareness of the importance of protecting the UK’s World Heritage Sites among a global audience.



Video showing the stone mason remove the coins:
<https://www.facebook.com/reel/847611657625996>

Images © National Trust / Giant's Causeway

Heart of Neolithic Orkney WHS

New Management Plan 2025–2035

Historic Environment Scotland and Orkney Islands Council, as the formal Management Plan signatories, have published a draft Management Plan for HONO covering 2025–2035, currently out for public consultation.

It is the third such plan for the Site (following those of 2008 and 2014) and sets a ten-year framework underpinned by six long-term Aims looking ahead to 2050, sixteen strategic Objectives, and a rolling Action Plan (the first covering 2025–2027).

Key features of note:

- Climate emergency is given much greater prominence than in previous plans, following a 2019 Climate Vulnerability Index assessment which identified sea level change, precipitation change, and storm intensity/frequency as the principal threats to OUV by 2050 – with coastal erosion at Skara Brae and footfall erosion at the Ring of Brodgar already requiring active intervention
- Tourism and access remains a central theme: visits to the monuments reached an estimated 269,000 in 2022 (against a 2019 high of 327,000), with cruise passengers a major driver of seasonal peaks. The plan commits to better visitor dispersal and peak-time management rather than blanket access restriction
- Community involvement has been strengthened in response to consultation findings (the 2020 "Community View" report and Place Standard exercises), with commitments to at least one annual community event, a plain-English summary of the Plan, and an aspiration for a West Mainland elected member to sit on the Steering Group
- Governance continues through the HONO WHS Steering Group (HES and OIC as core members, with HIE, NatureScot, RSPB and the UHI Archaeology Institute as Advisory Partners), meeting at least twice yearly, with a biennial public Delivery Report and a formal mid-point evaluation scheduled for 2030

World Heritage Site Programme

Significant progress has been made on the Programme over the past 12 months, supported by a Programme Team including two Project Officers as well as external consultancy. This has included design, modelling, and engagement around all three of the Programmes Project areas – Movement, Visitor Experience, and Education and Innovation.

In particular, progress has included:

- Concept designs for the proposed Orientation Centre in Stenness, based on an agreed scope and list of functions. Ongoing land negotiations have continued in order to secure space for these buildings
- Work has begun on an Outline Interpretation Plan for the World Heritage Site, commissioned by Historic Environment Scotland and involving external consultants. The work will establish the key themes, story-telling mechanisms and structures that can then lead to detailed design and implementation
- A study into movement around the WHS, including active travel and pathways, sustainable transport, and cruise and trade visitors, has begun. This is aligned strongly with the Stenness Place Plan, a local plan focusing on the needs of local communities. In March 2026, the Programme Team discussed emerging ideas with local residents and industry stakeholders, and received positive feedback
- A recruitment process has begun to identify a new Visitor Experience Manager for the Programme, focusing on the Orientation Centre project and interpretation among other things
- Partnership development work has taken place with a range of organisations, including Robert Gordon University, Visit Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, UHI University, Sustrans, and others. Discussions have also been held with the National Lottery Heritage Fund, following Orkney's designation as a Priority Place for the Fund



We are working towards submitting our Outline Business Case for approval by the UK and Scottish Governments, as part of the Islands Growth Deal, in September 2026.

Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey and St Martin's Church WHS

On 25th March the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally was installed at Canterbury Cathedral. In the week before her installation, Archbishop Sarah Mullally made a pilgrimage from St Paul's Cathedral to Canterbury Cathedral. She is the first archbishop to do so in modern times. Her pilgrimage took her to churches along parts of the Via Britannica and Augustine Camino.

Canterbury Christchurch University, one of the partners in the WHS, hosted a symposium in September 2025 on Sustainability and Spirituality; building ecologies of hope. A key objective of the day was to promote the importance of sustainability and spirituality within research and study programmes. The event was well attended.

Steering group members from Canterbury Christchurch are also contributing to a project within the Local to Global flagship programme by the UK National Commission for UNESCO, funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, that strengthens and connects UNESCO Designated Sites across the UK. Canterbury is participating alongside Heart of Neolithic Orkney, Studley Royal Park including the Ruins of Fountains Abbey, Durham Castle and Cathedral, and the Tower of London. The project aims to exchange and develop best practice, focusing on storytelling across World Heritage Sites, while communicating sustainability messages through heritage interpretation.

Both the English Heritage managed St Augustine's Abbey and St Martin's Church continued to see an increase in their visitor numbers during 2025. They continue to work in partnership, including with the Cathedral, and other WHS stakeholders to deliver events and enhance the joint visitor experience across each component of the property. One such event was a short talk about Queen Bertha and a pilgrim prayer followed by a mini pilgrimage from St Martin's, where she used to worship, to the Cathedral, to commemorate International Women's Day.

Early 2026 saw the conclusion of works to the Christ Church Gate – the ceremonial entrance to Canterbury Cathedral and the last major architectural project before the dissolution. From 2015, conservation works addressed severe weathering and failing earlier repairs through cleaning, stabilisation, and selective stone replacement. Repairs included carved stone string courses, shield and date stones, indent repairs, and replacement blocks to the gate pilaster. New carving, based on surviving medieval detail, was modelled, cast and hand carved by cathedral masons and a scheme of polychromy was reintroduced. These works have transformed the entrance to the Cathedral Precincts and give visitors a sense of the gate's colourful appearance in the 15th century.

Much of the work was carried out by the Cathedral Stonemasons, who continue to work across the Cathedral Precinct but also more widely in the city, helping to sustain an important heritage skill in Canterbury. Canterbury Cathedral is also a founding member of the Cathedral Workshop Fellowship, an association of 14 Anglican Cathedrals that provides education and training for Cathedral craftspeople.

Access without obstacle is a central pillar of all cathedral projects. New improved accessibility and interpretation in the cloister quarter, with the introduction of a temporary ramp, has transformed access to previously hard to reach areas of the precincts.



A minor boundary amendment was submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in January 2026 for examination at its 48th session to recognise the buffer zone of the WHS.

Work on an updated Management Plan for the Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey and St Martin's Church WHS has continued across 2025 and into 2026. An online public consultation is planned for 2026. The Management Plan includes attributes of OUV for the first time and sets out a new governance structure for the WHS to ensure the three sites within the WHS work in partnership to positively manage the WHS.

Images © Historic England

English Lake District WHS

Overview

The last year saw sustained progress in strengthening the management, understanding and celebration of the English Lake District's Outstanding Universal Value (OUV).

Partnership working across authorities, landowners, communities and the tourism sector underpinned delivery, with a particular focus on aligning the Lake District Partnership Plan to World Heritage requirements, advancing interpretation, improving sustainable access, and refreshing capacity in coordination and engagement.

Lake District Partnership Plan

Following extensive partner and community input over the past 18 months, the Lake District Partnership Plan 2025–2030 was finally approved, with a strengthened World Heritage perspective throughout:

- **OUV Integration:** The Plan now embeds OUV attributes, indicators and risks within its policy framework and delivery schedules, ensuring that landscape-scale decisions on farming and forestry, visitor management, nature recovery, settlements, and infrastructure, amongst others, explicitly consider their potential effects on the Site's attributes and integrity
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** A streamlined monitoring matrix links Partnership Plan outcomes to OUV condition indicators, enabling efficient State of Conservation reporting and early identification of emerging pressures (e.g. recreational pressure at sensitive valleys, piecemeal erosion of vernacular character, and cumulative landscape change)

Interpretation Strategy

Implementation of the multi-year Interpretation Strategy progressed across three strands:

- **Coherent Core Narrative:** A concise, audience-tested narrative, people, place and productive landscape, now anchors World Heritage Site interpretation. Terminology, tone of voice, communication channels and a shared brand toolkit were finalised to promote consistency across the Partnership and the World Heritage Site
- **Priority Hubs and Gateways:** Design development advanced for touchpoints, pilot wayfinding and viewpoint interpretation. Content structured around lived farming heritage, Romantic cultural associations and the evolving relationship between conservation, climate and traditional practice is further being developed

- **Community and Skills:** The FiPL grants scheme continues to support World Heritage Site interpretation panels, while volunteer-guided OUV walks, training modules for front-of-house staff and guides are being developed with partners, in order to increase confidence in explaining OUV succinctly and accurately

Access and Sustainable Travel

Coast to Coast National Trail upgrade: The Lake District National Park Authority is one of six authorities working with Natural England to upgrade Wainwright's Coast to Coast to a National Trail. The trail was first described by Wainwright in his book first published in 1973. At around 192 miles in length, and often frequently tackled as a continuous two-week journey, the route traverses through three National Parks across some of the UK's most spectacular scenery from St Bees (Cumbria) to Robin Hood's Bay (North Yorkshire). It's widely believed to be the UK's most popular long-distance path.

The project, led by Natural England, and funded by Defra, formally started on the 1 Nov 2022, and is due to be completed by the end of March 2026.

The Lake District World Heritage Site section of the trail has benefited from surfacing repairs, drainage improvements, sensitive way marking and habitat protection at pressure points. Works are planned to respect landscape character and heritage features, with temporary diversions and construction methods selected to minimise visual and physical impacts on OUV attributes.

Visitor Movement: Seasonal shuttle enhancements and improved active-travel links between key hubs have reduced peak-season pressures at popular valleys. Updated travel messaging is to be developed by Sarah Williams with transport partners which will begin to shift trip planning towards lower-impact choices, supported by clearer pre-arrival information.



Images L-R: Cycling the C2C Path at Ennerdale © Ade Gidney; Reays' Wasdale shuttle bus © Philip Higgins

UNESCO Engagement and Reporting

Monitoring: Routine correspondence under paragraphs 172/174 was maintained for relevant proposals, with early engagement helping to avoid or mitigate potential adverse impacts. Preparatory work for the State of Conservation report due later in 2026 is well underway, including a refreshed record of attributes and a consolidated casework log.

New Lanark WHS

New Lanark's Management Plan 2025-2030 was launched in January 2025, alongside representatives from local and national partners, stakeholders, and members of the community. We are now working closely with these partners, and our community, to ensure we meet the objectives set out in the plan, securing the preservation, enhancement and sustainable future of New Lanark for years to come.

Our volunteer programme continues to grow, along with the vital contribution volunteers make to our World Heritage Site. We now have a community of 30 volunteers, including Green Space volunteers (who maintain Clearburn Park and our Roof Garden), Learning Volunteers (who support school visits and workshops), and Archive, Visitor Centre and Events volunteers. In 2025-2026, volunteers contributed over 900 hours of their time, including supporting school visits, maintaining our collections, creating a soundscape for the Village Store, and uncovering new research into the people of New Lanark. One of our volunteers was named "Volunteer of the Year 2025" at VASLAN's Awards Evening which recognised their outstanding contribution to the local community. During 2025, we also collaborated with the heritage sector's volunteer organisation, Make Your Mark, to streamline our programme and ensure that our handbook and policies reflect best practice across the sector.



Images L-R: New Lanark volunteers at our coffee morning; New Lanark buildings

We have continued to work in partnership with the University of Southern Indiana to host summer internships on site. Following the arrival of our first International Tourism and Marketing Intern in summer 2025, we are currently hosting a History Intern for summer 2026. This exchange programme has strengthened links between New Lanark and New Harmony (the site of Robert Owen's attempt to replicate New Lanark's social model). The partnership continues to develop positively, and we are looking forward to continuing to build meaningful international connections.

At a local level, we launched a new free Community Talks programme, delivering sessions to over 150 community members (so far) across venues including the local library and church guilds. Our learning programme welcomed 2,947 pupils and students in 2025-2026. New workshops on hydropower and sustainable communities were successfully piloted with both primary and university students. Our Sensory Stories collaboration with Stanmore House School (2024–2025) has now been embedded within the programme, leading to increased engagement with ASN schools. This work was also featured in GEM's (Group for Education in Museums) June 2026 Learning Places Case Study (#36).



Images L-R: Learning session in the Historic Classroom; NL volunteer at the VASAN Awards; Sensory Story session with a ASN group.

We have further expanded access through the introduction of Sensory Storytime within our Mini Mills offer for young families, creating new opportunities for early years' engagement. In partnership with Historic Environment Scotland's Gaelic Language Team, we delivered a programme of family-friendly Gaelic activities to mark Gaelic Week in February 2026, including Gaelic-language guided tours and Gaelic-themed storytelling sessions.

We continue to support postgraduate placements from the University of Glasgow, with students from Museum Studies, Material Culture and Museum Education MSc programmes contributing to projects such as the development of a Sensory Storyboard Map – a vital resource for improving accessibility for diverse audiences.

Looking ahead to 2026-2027, we plan to expand the learning programme through the development of STEM workshops and a suite of digital learning resources. Investment in staff and volunteer development also remains a priority. In collaboration with Museums Galleries Scotland, we are enhancing skills and training across the team. This includes supporting a member of staff undertaking an MGS Technician Modern Apprenticeship, providing valuable accredited, hands-on experience.

Maritime Greenwich WHS

Re-opening of Cutty Sark for Maritime Greenwich DLR Station

Spring this year saw the re-opening of the Cutty Sark for Maritime Greenwich DLR station, part of East London's Docklands Light Railway network following a major refurbishment and facelift with the installation of four new state-of-the-art escalators. During the closure, TfL delivered a series of additional improvements including new local artwork installed in collaboration with Visit Greenwich and Maritime Greenwich WHS celebrating Greenwich. Cutty Sark DLR is a key arrival point for 3m visitors p.a. to the WHS.

A Wayfinder Programme was delivered between August 2025 and March 2026 in partnership with Volunteer Centre Greenwich and Visit Greenwich, with funding from the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF). The programme provided a visible, welcoming presence in the town centre, with 27 trained local volunteers offering wayfinding, travel advice and local information. The

contribution of the volunteers and staff was acknowledged at an event on board Cutty Sark on 14 April.



Magic of the Silver Screen at the World Heritage Site

This year, Maritime Greenwich celebrated 100 years of film with a Guinness World Records™ Award. The Old Royal Naval College, a key WHS partner and Elstree Studios made history setting an official Guinness World Records™ Award for the largest gathering of people dressed as film and TV characters – with 874 people dressed as screen characters flocking to the UNESCO World Heritage Site in celebration of filmmaking.

This year marks 100 years since the Old Royal Naval College was first used as a filming location and the centenary of the iconic Elstree Film Studios. In honour of this shared centenary, fans of all ages transformed the UK's No.1 filming heritage location into a spectacular real-life movie set. Crowds of families, set-jettlers and film lovers come together dressed as 45 characters from 30 world-famous productions, stepping into the roles of favourite heroes, villains and TV icons, including Bridgerton's Queen Charlotte, Jack Sparrow, Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, Batman, Indiana Jones and many others.

The Old Royal Naval College and Elstree Studios have hosted some of the most iconic moments in film and TV over the last 100 years. Together, the two iconic institutions united their legacies to deliver a once-in-a-century cinematic celebration. Bringing a true backstage experience to life across Greenwich's iconic venue, the day marked a century of cinematic history where heritage and Hollywood, cementing the Old Royal Naval College's status as one of London's must-visit cultural destinations.

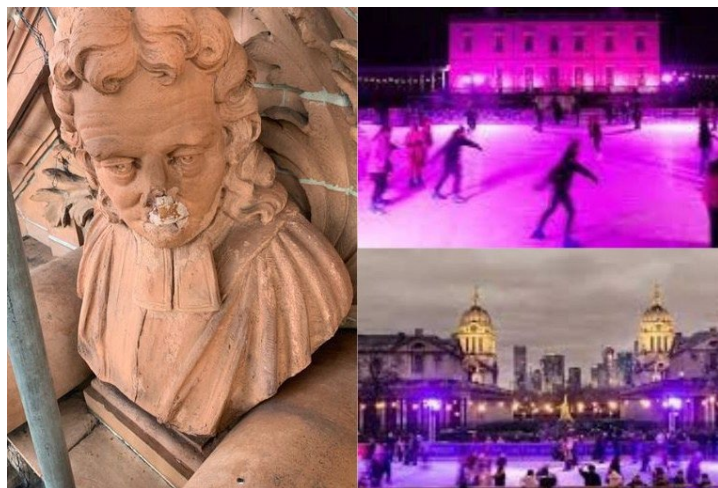
Royal Observatory Greenwich - Launch of the First Light Project

During this period and following significant fundraising successes, RMG broke ground on the First Light project at the Royal Observatory Greenwich.

First Light is a landmark capital transformation of the iconic Royal Observatory Greenwich. Vital repair to the listed buildings, creative and sensitive architectural interventions that improve cross site visitor experience and narrative, and improvements to access solutions so everyone can enjoy all that the Observatory has to offer (including lift access to the Great Equatorial Telescope for the very first time) are driving the project. All this alongside impactful public engagement programmes with grow audiences and visitation to the Royal Observatory Greenwich - all inspired by the awe and wonder of our universe.

With funding in place, we have been able to start work in the Victorian terracotta 'South Building', originally called the New Physical Observatory; working with skilled crafts people to repair the roof and replace the terracotta ornamentation.

Fundraising continues to raise the full project cost, and we remain on track for a spring/summer 2028 grand opening.



Royal Museums Greenwich - The Return of the Queen's House Ice Rink

This year the World Heritage Site welcomed back the Queen's House Ice Rink in November 2025. 60,000 skaters participated in the experience, between late November and early January driven by a stronger press and marketing campaign (in partnership with Visit Greenwich).

An increased number of students from the University of Greenwich skated due to a targeted discount campaign. The Ice Rink is a great addition to Christmas at Greenwich with events at the Old Royal Naval College, and the market making Maritime Greenwich an attractive Christmas destination.

St Kilda WHS

St Kilda Annual Report 2025- 26 for WHUK

Weather has always impacted life on St Kilda and continues to do so, affecting work and travel and making or breaking visitors' travel dreams. Last year significant rainfall in early August led to a massive landslide on the slopes above the village, permanently changing the landscape and damaging and destroying some of the unique drystone work.

Fortunately, we have recorded all upstanding features, not only accurately mapping them but also photographing them. Working with the British Geological Society we hope to identify the higher risk areas and review our management approach.

Seabirds

St Kilda is inscribed under two World Heritage Site criteria for the vast and diverse seabird colonies. Every year we monitor population (how many birds we have), and productivity (how successful are they breeding), at select plots and key species to better understand trends.

The gannet census indicated nearly 60 000 pairs and was a great relief indicating that the impact of the avian flu outbreak in 2022/23 on the St Kilda colony was not as great as elsewhere. Great skuas made a modest recovery after their population was devastated by avian flu. The kittiwake population also increased but is still 75% lower than their peak 25 years ago. Overall, most seabird species numbers are significantly lower than they were at the start of the century.



Images L-R: Aftermath of landslide on St Kilda; gannet census Boreray (© National Trust for Scotland)

Research

A key outcome of the St Kilda Management Plan is to enhance opportunities for research and knowledge sharing.

Researchers from the University of Birmingham have been studying the genetics and behaviour of the St Kilda wren, a sub-species of the European wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) and investigating the phenomenon of island gigantism.

Research projects tracking Manx shearwaters and Leach's storm petrels were also undertaken.

The long running Soay Sheep Project continued, not only looking at population statistics but also looking at impacts on vegetation, parasites and immunology and genetics.

The management of the feral sheep is currently being reviewed internally in parallel with an external review by the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission looking at feral animal populations across Scotland.

Maintaining the Cultural Heritage

Every year we undertake a repair and maintenance programme and try to focus repair works in April or August/ September, when they will have less impact on nesting birds and visitor enjoyment.

The most challenging job was the repair of a large cleit (a unique drystone structure on St Kilda) associated with a story of kidnapping and Jacobite conspiracy.

This cleit had suffered a major collapse in early 2022 and was a challenge to repair safely. It is one of the largest cleitean on Hirta, built on sloping an uneven ground; to access the upper walls required the construction of a bespoke wooden platform to facilitate safe access for the dykers.

This was a team effort involving engineers, carpenters and dykers. By finding a working solution we now have a proven method of repairing some of the larger cleits.

Engagement

St Kilda is very difficult to visit, and we try to keep people informed and engaged through our website stories, Ranger diaries and social media. We also attend the St Kilda Club Annual meeting, a group of St Kilda enthusiasts who support our conservation work by running the shop and events.



Images L-R: Repaired cleit on Hirta; summer sunset St Kilda; cleit repairs in action, Hirta (© National Trust for Scotland)

Special Interest Groups – Industrial Heritage

2025 saw the Industrial WHS Special Interest Group (IH SIG) which is chaired by Saltaire WHS Officer make a strong move forward on their joint communication projects with the Local to Global (L2G) funding initiative hosted by UNESCO UK (UKNC). This fund's stipulation is to see UNESCO designations coming together. The L2G Midlands and North Group decided to put a bid together to include 22 different UNESCO designations (WHSs, Geoparks, & City of's) together to create an Industrial Heritage Digital Trail. The bid was submitted in June 2025 and the funds received in December 2025. The digital trail should be released soon on the WHUK website with a celebration happening June 27th 2026 for all the sites involved.

The work with the British Library has finally found funding to move forward with a pilot project to start collecting oral histories from Industrial WHS designations.

2026 started with a WH webinar series revisiting Industrial Heritage (IH). Back in 2024, six WHSs were covered in the first IH webinar series. This second series included those IH Sites that missed out two years ago, and ended with the launch of the upcoming IH Trail.

Special Interest Groups – Climate Emergency

WHUK established the Climate Emergency Special Interest Group (SIG) in 2021, in recognition that climate change, and related nature degradation are the most pressing issues facing the world today and the most significant long term conservation risk for its member WHSs, and their management responsibilities include helping reduce the speed at which climate change is happening and to adapt to the changes it is causing.

The SIG's membership includes urban WHSs and wider landscape Sites plus heritage organisations such as Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland, Cadw and the National Trust, which want to share information and emerging best practice for mitigating and adapting to climate change.

The Group is promoting awareness and best practice among the WHUK community through:

- improving WHUK members' understanding of the concept of climate change

- raise awareness of the challenge of climate change for WHSs, including the need for both mitigation and adaptation actions
- raise awareness of best climate change practice in relation to heritage
- signpost WHS managers to the necessary tools and advice to address climate change issues
- investigate how potential tensions with conservation approaches might be resolved
- influence potential funders to acknowledge the impact of climate change on heritage and align future funding opportunities accordingly

In 2025 the CE SIG met 4 times with discussions and presentations on the National Trust toolkit for managing impacts of climate change, which is hoped will lead to UK WHSs participating in a Climate Impact Adaptation Pathway project in the coming year; UNESCO guidance on renewable energy issues for WHSs; the latest Periodic Reporting cycle findings with regard to climate and nature related risks; and UNESCO's World Heritage Regional Action Plan. It also helped WHUK's Events Committee with organising a climate emergency focused two-day workshop in Westminster in April, to disseminate and discuss climate change research and the solutions being pursued in World Heritage Sites. It continues to provide information and content on climate and nature action for the World Heritage UK website – www.worldheritageuk.org/climate-action

World Heritage UK

For details of World Heritage UK's activities during 25/26, please visit www.worldheritageuk.org/resources/, and select WHUK Governance from the menu. There you will be able to read and download the World Heritage UK Review 2025/26.

Index to individual reports; all updates written and provided by individual sites:

World Heritage Site	Page(s)
Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd	Nil return
Durham Castle and Cathedral	17 – 18
Giant's Causeway and Causeway Coast	29 – 30
Ironbridge Gorge	24 – 26
St Kilda	38 – 40
Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites	14 – 16
Studley Royal Park including the Ruins of Fountains Abbey	20 – 21
Blenheim Palace	Nil return
City of Bath	16 – 17
Frontiers of the Roman Empire (Hadrian's Wall and Antoine Wall)	Nil return
Palace of Westminster and Westminster Abbey including St Margaret's Church	Nil return
Canterbury Cathedral, St Augustine's Abbey and St Martin's Church	31 – 33
Henderson Island (Pacific)	Nil return
Tower of London	11 – 14
Gough and Inaccessible Islands (Atlantic)	Nil return
Old and New Towns of Edinburgh	Nil return
Maritime Greenwich	36 - 38
Heart of Neolithic Orkney	30 – 31
Blaenavon Industrial Landscape	28 – 29

Historic Town of St George and Related Fortifications, Bermuda	18
Derwent Valley Mills	3 - 5
Dorset and East Devon Coast (Jurassic Coast)	23 - 24
New Lanark	35 - 36
Saltaire	5 - 6
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew	Nil return
Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape	Nil return
Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal	26 – 28
The Forth Bridge	7
Gorham's Cave Complex, Gibraltar	Nil return
The English Lake District	33 - 34
Jodrell Bank Observatory	6 - 7
The Great Spa Towns of Europe	8 – 11
The Slate Landscape of Northwest Wales	22 - 23
Gracehill Moravian Church Settlements	8
The Flow Country	19 - 20

World Heritage UK
c/o Chappell Associates
Westfield House
Bratton Rd
Westbury BA13 3EP
August 2026