Heritage Sector Resilience Plan 2022-24

Introduction

Our heritage is one of England's most precious assets. The public identify heritage as one of the top three things that makes them proud of their country. Over the past two years, the benefits of local heritage have been in the spotlight; providing safe places for people to engage with each other and connect with their local environment, and helping to limit the negative impacts on their wellbeing as a result of the pandemic.

However, the pandemic dealt a serious blow to the heritage sector in England, as it did to many aspects of public life, creating new challenges and bringing existing ones into sharper focus. Whilst the Culture Recovery Fund and wider government support measures played a vital role in staving off the collapse of the heritage ecosystem, it remains under significant threat. It is vital that the heritage sector now comes together, to build on the investment received and work collaboratively to bolster the heritage sector, ensuring the conservation of and access to our heritage for current and future generations.

The Heritage Sector Resilience Plan is designed to provide a clear roadmap to a robust and resilient heritage sector. This can only be achieved through a collaborative approach in which everyone with an interest plays their part. The Historic Environment Forum can operate as a facilitator, but the success of the Plan will only be achieved if the whole sector engages with it and contributes to the delivery of the agreed priority actions.

What is resilience?

Our working definition of resilience for the purposes of this Plan is that the heritage sector in England:

Has the right knowledge & expertise

- Is continually learning, both from each other, subject experts, and other sectors;
- Made up of organisations & businesses with solid and progressive business models, that adapt to changing circumstances, bounce back from knock-backs, and with (where appropriate) greatly reduced reliance on single funding streams;
- Has a robust skills pipeline, and develops diverse individuals from a wide range of backgrounds;
- A sector that is well served through local authority expertise.

Is appreciated and appropriately-resourced

- Nationally - a sector that is recognised for its wide-reaching benefits, by the public and government;
- Locally - is greatly appreciated and proactively supported across the community.

Actively serves its community

- Recognises the role it plays in its local community, and for the public in England, and prioritises their needs.

Is well connected and collaborative

- A sector that has shared objectives and vision for what success looks like, is collaborative, and is closely engaged with local/regional networks and groups, through which to share best practice, and explore innovations together;
- A sector that can use its connected nature to better prepare for forthcoming challenges and changes (such as climate change).

Objective

The Sector Resilience Plan takes this ideal, places it in the context of today, and proposes a way for the heritage sector to work together to become more resilient, ensuring it remains capable of playing a full part in helping the country to deal with the major challenges of our times.

Plan overview

The Plan is structured around five themes which taken together will significantly strengthen the resilience of the heritage sector in England.

Under each theme a series of priorities for action are identified, both suggestions for Government action, and priority activities for members of the heritage sector. Not all the actions will be progressed simultaneously. In some cases, further work is needed to scope out the priorities for action, and others will be actioned as capacity allows.

It is intended to agree priorities for action that link with shared measures of success so that HEF can monitor progress in delivering the plan over the coming years and new initiatives can be evaluated against this framework.

Target audience

The Plan is written for three audiences:

- The **heritage sector**: to establish a blueprint for how the sector – organisations and individual practitioners – can work together to develop greater resilience.
- **Government**: to identify the asks of and actions required from Government to support the sector towards greater resilience.
- **Other stakeholders**: to alert other organisations with an interest in – or relationship to – the historic environment, to the role they can play, and the benefits they can derive, from engaging with resilience priorities.

Scope of plan

This plan for enhancing the resilience of the heritage sector in England covers both "Heritage People & Organisations" and "Heritage Assets".

In scope

Heritage People & Organisations

Those that:

- Operate heritage sites open to the public or host events at heritage sites (e.g. a castle, historic house, historic park, garden or landscape, industrial heritage monument or open air site/museum including mobile heritage).
- Work or volunteer in sites or places open to the public that occupy an historic structure, site or landscape (including places of worship).
- Undertake heritage specialist activity (digital engagement, professional advice, planning advice, inspections, surveys, excavations, fieldwork, repair, conservation, construction in/on historic buildings or on sites with heritage significance).
- Own or occupy a Heritage Asset.
- Operate businesses (profit and not for profit) in historic premises, for example an events business in a listed building.

- Participate in community engagement activities including research, stewardship and public education.
- Those who provide professional support to the heritage sector.
- Organisations that own, manage, curate or investigate Heritage Assets and engage Heritage People.

Heritage Assets

Designated and other Heritage Assets that include:

- Nationally listed buildings, scheduled monuments, protected wrecks, registered parks and gardens and registered battlefields.
- Cultural World Heritage sites.
- Conservation areas.
- Other non-designated sites such as archaeological sites, locally listed buildings, historic landscapes, marine environments, other historic areas, collections of historic buildings etc.
- Historic buildings that contain museum and/or archive collections.
- Digital and physical archives of archaeological investigations, particularly from developer-funded investigations.
- Mobile heritage (historic planes, trains, boats, automobiles).

Out of scope

For the purposes of this Plan, those parts of the heritage sector that work with museum collections, and in education and learning are out of scope as they are likely to be covered more comprehensively elsewhere. Intangible heritage is also out of scope.

The role of the Historic Environment Forum (HEF)

For each of the themes below, HEF will play a facilitating role, as well as driving progress against some specific actions. It is committed to continuous improvement of how it facilitates progress against the plan, encourages communication with the wider sector, and through ensuring the greatest engagement with, and impact from, the outputs of the plan.

Review

The plan will be reviewed annually, with reports provided to HEF and published online. Progress against actions identified in the plan will be reviewed at regular HEF meetings throughout the year.

The DCMS will be kept updated regarding progress against the plan, and any changes in priorities.

Five themes of resilience and priority actions

1 Skills

2 Strong Governance

3 Climate Change

4 Diversity & Inclusion

5 Embedding Heritage in Wider Public Policy

1   Skills

Our sector is built on the strength of our people – but without enough skilled experts, and the related demand for their expertise, we cannot ensure a resilient heritage ecosystem and secure the huge benefits it brings.

The pandemic and the climate crisis have created new challenges, but these new challenges are building on old. Chronic skills gaps were only compounded by the loss of heritage construction activity during the pandemic. Heritage organisations have necessarily, and significantly, reduced the number of opportunities for emerging and early career professionals, an already lacking area, increasing concerns over the future of the workforce. A lack of diverse routes into, and routes to progress through, heritage careers is threatening the sustainability of the workforce further. At a local government level, we have seen the loss of a third of conservation and archaeology specialists in local planning authorities over the last ten years. Finally, chronic market failures encourage the hiring of non-heritage or non-professional experts to work on heritage assets, introducing unnecessary risks to our heritage assets' longevity and the public benefits that can be realised by understanding them better. Low demand, low pay and low recognition mean that what are otherwise extremely rewarding and beneficial careers are not attracting, or retaining, the people they should.

The sector must work together to simultaneously develop the supply of, and demand for, specialist heritage skills, growing the diversity of individuals and skills in the workforce.

Recent research has also indicated a lack of the basic (non-heritage specific) business skills in the sector which are important for future resilience.

A resilient sector will have the following attributes:

- Heritage Careers are respected, recognised and appropriately waged, with demand for heritage skills high.
- Sufficient skilled workforce to increase understanding, inform decisions and manage heritage assets in the long term

Priority Asks of Government:

1. Broaden and provide subsidy for the range of opportunities for people to develop career pathways in specialist skills in a flexible manner, and communicate these effectively.
2. Reduce VAT to zero rate on repairs and maintenance to designated heritage assets that are open to public access. Such a policy would likely result in an increase in repair and maintenance on properties and therefore a stimulus for heritage and everyday construction work.
3. Continue the work of the Kickstart Scheme through new initiatives and reduce restrictions on allowing sole traders to participate to support the routes into the heritage sector for those on Universal Credit.
4. Extend the Heritage Schools programme. to enable school children with lowest social mobility to find out about, and value, local heritage; creating a sense of place and identity building confidence in communities and opening up new career paths for young people.

Priority actions for the Sector:

Immediate:

1. **Develop a new, cross-sector forum** to bring the many ongoing conversations together, to discuss ongoing skills challenges, trial new approaches, and maintain a close overview of the changing picture.
2. **Reconvene the Heritage Skills Demand topic group**, with a view to developing a prioritised plan of action to both increase awareness of the cost, efficiency and quality benefits of employing heritage expertise, and improve the ease of access to heritage skills.

To Follow:

3. Consider scope for grant giving to create greater incentives, and expectations, to provide training and knowledge sharing as part of capital works.

4. **Promote and encourage good/improved practice** to ensure every organization is doing what it can to address the skills challenges. For example: Making best use of government initiatives, such as Kickstart, to create new placements for a diverse range of young people; promote the use of innovative in-work training schemes and approaches; encourage engagement by heritage organisations with local school and college work experience programmes, to raise the profile of heritage careers etc.

5. **Mapping and signposting existing schemes, to develop non-heritage specific skills** (digital, engagement etc). Use this map to identify gaps and horizon scan for future opportunities.

6. **Engage with and support promotional campaigns** to raise awareness of the value of professionalism in heritage and the career opportunities it provides.

2   Strong governance, business models and capacity

The basics of good internal governance, flexible and adaptable business plans, and strong, collaborative external networks are of central importance to ensuring ongoing resilience across heritage sector organisations, particularly as we have many SMEs and third sector organisations. Whilst these principles and features of good practice cut across all types of organisation, a focus on these skills, competencies and capacities will ensure that we are best equipped to reach our heritage goals.

Through gaining a greater understanding of best practice in development and maintenance of business plans and governance models, supported through greater sharing of experience and best practice, the sector can work towards a position where:

- Governance models are strong and adaptive.
- Business models are as robust as possible, financial management is effective and community benefit is sought and delivered.
- A culture of collaboration and support is established and self-sustaining.

Priority Asks of Government:

1. **Better recognise the contribution of the heritage sector to the economy through reflection of heritage sector employment in Standard Occupational Codes and Standard Industrial Classification codes**, and, ultimately, through the development of a heritage sector satellite account.
2. **Provide support for marketing and tailoring of support for skills development in governance and business planning** for third sector and SME organisations to the needs of the heritage sector.

Priority actions for the Sector:

1. **Improve targeting and accessibility of current support**: Survey existing support, and signpost for heritage organizations. Be mindful to provide a narrative that will resonate with the diversity of the heritage sector.
2. **Improve the offer for Heritage**: Assess gaps/needs or where demand for services is higher than supply and develop understanding of barriers to engagement and develop proposals/make the case for additional support/training/advice.
3. **Demonstrate best practice**: Build a collection of case studies to illustrate best practice for a variety of heritage organisations.

3   Climate change

Climate change is one of the most challenging issues of our time, with potentially hugely negative consequences for our people and our heritage that directly impact our resilience. Our heritage is directly threatened by the changing climate – from floods to extremes of heat – but it is also affected by people's responses to climate change, often through unintended negative consequences of actions intended to reduce carbon emissions or improve resilience of our built heritage. With the oldest building stock in Europe, the government and the sector must prioritise sensitive retrofit in line with the best understanding of the day, to help deliver against the Government's commitment to reach net zero emissions by 2050. In doing so, it is a priority that the sector is supported in finding sustainable, long term solutions to ensure we effectively respond to our environmental responsibility whilst protecting the fabric of the historic environment where possible. Support should recognise the complexities of quick wins in relation to the bigger picture challenges we face in the coming years and respond to growing evidence and understanding of both the threats of climate change and possible mitigations/adaptations. The sector must also be resourced to make the necessary changes.

More generally our heritage can contribute to the climate resilience of places and communities, both rural and urban. To facilitate this work, it is also vital that the role that our heritage does and can play in meeting the challenges of climate change, as well as the level of the threat posed to it, is well understood, both in government and by the public.

A resilient sector will have the following attributes:

- Our heritage, both natural and built, can withstand the new and growing climate challenges, to contribute to the unique character of local places.
- The role that heritage must, and does, play in meeting the climate change challenge is recognized both within and outside the sector.
- A sector that is helping to tackle climate change, with historic building stock carbon neutral/carbon negative, and organisations that have reduced their carbon footprints.

Priority Asks of Government:

1. **Government to facilitate the involvement of heritage organisations at all stages of climate planning.** Ensure BEIS and DLUHC work closely with the sector and with other stakeholders to ensure that the policy and the current SAP/EPC tools are revised so as to be effective in achieving 2050 net zero targets as quickly as possible without unintended negative consequences for building fabric, occupier health, or heritage significance.

2. **More specifically, embed historic environment considerations during discussions and policy making regarding the adaptation and mitigation of the built environment.** In particular, ensuring policies regarding the retrofitting of traditional buildings recognize and respond to the expertise of historic environment experts, ensuring sensitive and effective adaptation, and incentivizing repair and recycling through fiscal incentives, such as VAT reform and other means.
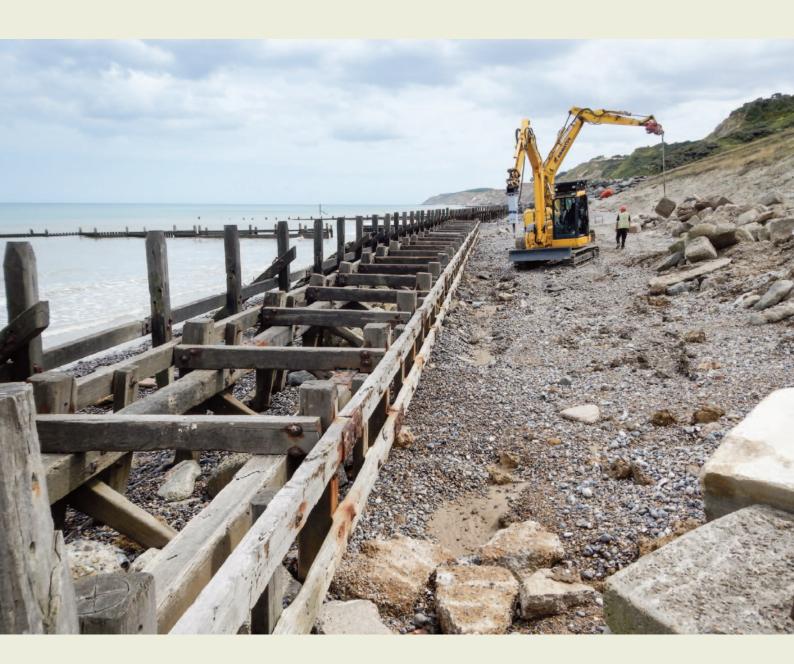
Priority actions for the Sector:

Immediate:

1. **Demystifying the challenges and providing the right support.** Urgent work is required to clarify for government, funders and the sector, the key obstacles to climate change mitigation. This includes evidencing the funding gap; clarifying the skills and knowledge required within organisations and identifying where they are lacking, and developing the confidence of those in the sector to make informed decisions – primarily through advice and support when considering the unique circumstances of each asset. The Historic England Advice Note on Climate Change is a priority deliverable.

2. **Supporting sustainability:** Develop and deliver an action plan to support small and medium size organisations to develop and deliver their own sustainability plans, providing advice regarding how to start; signposting to existing materials; producing a baseline calculator, etc.

3. **Maintain and grow the Heritage Responds resource** to inspire and guide heritage organisations and to demonstrate our role in tackling climate change to those outside the sector.

To Follow:

4. **Provide a forum to maintain oversight of the evolving challenges heritage sites and organisations are facing** with regards to climate change.

4   Diversity and Inclusion

Our heritage connects us to the past, helps to shape our identity and our understanding of who we are today. A resilient heritage sector is inclusive of and accessible to everyone in the local community. While there is considerable uncertainty about what our future holds, the fact that we are moving towards a more socially, politically and economically diverse future is certain. For our heritage sector to retain its relevance and therefore ensure resilience, it is vital that our heritage reflects an increasingly diverse society.

However, we know that at present our heritage sector is falling short of this ambition. There is a lack of diversity amongst existing heritage visitors, workforce and volunteers, a lack of inclusivity within heritage sector decision-making, and there are economic barriers to participation. It is vital that we in the sector are supported to take immediate steps to redress this imbalance, and look towards building a resilient sector that:

- Recognises and understands the significance of a wide variety of heritage to a diverse range of local people, enjoying widened support as a result.
- Is inclusive and supports a diverse range of people to actively participate in heritage through co-creation, early engagement, knowledge sharing and empowerment locally.
- Employs people who reflect the diversity of the communities in which they work, including in decision-making and governance roles.

Priority Asks of Government:

1. **Government develops a shared understanding across key departments (DCMS, DLUHC, DfE, DEFRA) of the vital role played by heritage in place-making** and its potential to help address diversity and inclusion challenges. Government ensures heritage is actively considered as part of the coordinated government response.

Priority actions for the Sector:

Actions in progress or to begin imminently:

1. **Development of an online Diversity and Inclusion Hub**, to provide advice, signpost available support, share standardized data collection templates, and offer an online community of practice to encourage and enable mentoring and community support for all kinds of heritage organisations looking to increase the diversity of their staff and audience.

To Follow:

2. **Address the lack of diversity in employees and on boards.** Identify best practice in sectors where this has been successfully addressed. Ensure access to a bank of tools and resources to support best practice in this area.

3. **Consider how to assist with the collection of annual comprehensive data about the diversity of the workforce, volunteers and governance boards** from across the sector and create an annual action plan to address the issues.

4. **Consider actions to address under representation as a condition of funding in grant funded programmes using public money.**

5. **Promote the benefits of engaging staff and volunteers from diverse communities**, through the telling of stories from inspirational organisations, and sharing the research to demonstrate the benefits.

6. **Encourage local communities to seek out engagement from diverse communities.** E.g. Encourage engagement of organisations of all sizes with local heritage and archaeology groups/societies, to help them grow and increase engagement from diverse audiences and reaching new communities. Support could be financial, offering exclusive access, or opportunities to visit sites of interest. Plus, co-ordination and promotion of events and festivals such as Heritage Open Days and CBA Festival of Archaeology).

5   Embedding heritage in wider public policy

Heritage does not exist in isolation – it is part and parcel of our local communities, our economies. It is part of our daily lives and it impacts us as individuals every day. It is vast, and for our heritage to be truly resilient it must be recognised and supported as such. Our local and national policies on the environment, land use, climate change, wellbeing, and levelling up to name a few, all impact heritage, and heritage has a role to play in furthering these policy aims. As such, consideration of and investment in heritage should be at the heart of many national priorities and policies. As representatives of the heritage sector we must ensure the connections and interdependencies are both well understood and evidenced. If we can support the sector to better show the direct benefits of both engaging and investing in heritage, we can help reach the following long-term goals:

- Support (funding, fiscal, regulatory, promotional) provided to heritage by the UK government is consistent and reliable.
- Heritage is regularly included in wider social, economic and environmental policies, increasing the impacts and benefits of those policies.
- Audiences are aware of the wider benefits of engagement with heritage and provide increasing support for local and regional assets.

Priority Asks of Government:

1. Ensure heritage outcomes are integrated into the planning system, regeneration strategies and place-based investment programmes (e.g. UK Shared Prosperity Fund).
2. Develop approaches to Culture and Heritage Capital.

Priority actions for the Sector:

1. **Act as a central repository of evidence**, both qualitative and quantitative, to demonstrate the wider benefits of investment in the historic environment. This should include statistical data from evaluation of programmes, and case studies, that can be used to raise awareness of the wide-reaching benefits of a thriving heritage sector to decision makers both inside and outside government. Such a repository can also be used defensively, such as when seeking to protect existing Environmental Land Management protections, or the reduction of VAT for repairs and maintenance of designated heritage assets.
2. **Upskill organisations and individuals to access non-heritage funding schemes.** Explore opportunities to upskill small and medium size heritage organisations to increase the chances of success when bidding for non-heritage specific funding pots. For example, providing advice on the use and presentation of evidence, storytelling and narrative.
3. **Accelerate the work of the HEF Historic Environment Protection Reform Group (HEPRG)** in developing proposals to improve the planning and listed building consent system, informing the wider planning reform agenda and bringing forward solutions for simplifying and speeding up the current system of protection where the benefits are universal.
4. **Connect heritage jobs / careers to the green jobs market** to raise awareness of the value of professionalism in heritage, the career opportunities it provides, and the contribution heritage could make to developing a green economy

Glossary

BEIS   Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
DLUHC   Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
DCMS   Department for Digital, Culture, Media Sport
DEFRA   Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

Historic
Environment
Forum