

FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL

THE POWER OF HERITAGE IN A CHANGING WORLD | 2026

A Heritage Alliance Report



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'This new report from The Heritage Alliance powerfully demonstrates how heritage connects the UK to the wider world through shared learning, cultural exchange and collective responsibility. The breadth of international partnerships showcased here reflects the sector's resilience, imagination and generosity. As a member of the UK Soft Power Council, I am proud to see how this work strengthens the UK's cultural presence worldwide. At a time of profound global challenge, these endeavours remind us that heritage is a vital force for connection, collaboration and hope.'

Lord Mendoza CBE
UK Soft Power Council

'World Monuments Fund is pleased to support the publication of this report. It portrays Britain's rich and dynamic heritage sector as exceptionally well placed to play a growing role in the country's evolving soft power agenda.

There is much to offer and to gain from deepening cross-border exchange. This report reveals a vast field of opportunity, as the catalytic role of heritage preservation for communities and society becomes ever more recognised. Central to this are strong, well-grounded peer-to-peer relationships, nurtured through ongoing investment.

As World Monuments Fund in Britain, we look forward to continuing to play our role as 'Window on the World': sharing solutions to build resilience in the face of the many challenges confronting cultural heritage worldwide.'

Magnus von Wistinghausen
Executive Director, World Monuments Fund Britain

'As the world becomes an even more uncertain place, it is now more important than ever to engage with our European and international colleagues. We share a common belief that heritage matters and makes a positive difference to peoples' lives, so we need to keep talking, sharing and learning from one another. This report illustrates the scale at which we are already working, but we can achieve more with the support of government and the wider Heritage Alliance membership'

Rob Woodside
Chair, Europa Nostra UK

'In a time of geopolitical uncertainty, the positive connections which the UK's heritage organisations make with communities of interest in other countries is vital to build cultural understanding, develop skills and experience, and learn from each other. Heritage matters, and the case studies in the report demonstrate the passion and commitment of our sector to build global connections as we collectively strive to look after and celebrate what is important to us.'

Ian Baxter
Professor of Historic Environment Management,
Heriot-Watt University

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A Message from our Chair and CEO

The Heritage Alliance (hereafter referred to as THA) has supported its members and driven forward advocacy and engagement within the international space for many years as an essential connector between decision-makers and funders and the independent heritage sector. Our sector is broad and deep, with over 200 organisations in our membership alone - ranging from the National Trust to small volunteer-run local charities. Much expertise resides in these small organisations, and colleagues across the globe are often as interested in our organically grown models of civic engagement, including THA's own, as much as our conservation expertise. They, and we, are interested in dialogue and partnering for mutual learning and exchange. Many of the global challenges we face, from climate change to fostering peace and dialogue, require global and truly collaborative approaches. Whilst decision-makers sometimes refer to policy activity as 'soft power', this is also about cultural dialogue and

engagement and building a better collective future for society, economies and the environment.

Our quarterly international network engages nearly 80 organisations and was created in response to sector need and desire to collaborate, connect and learn from each other's experience of international working. With generous support from Heriot-Watt University, this group has now been running for several years and builds on earlier conferences and events from 2018-19 onwards and as part of Heritage Dialogues supported by the University of Oxford during the Covid-19 pandemic. The group brings together organisations active in the international space to discuss current policy priorities and progress advocacy objectives, as well as regularly hosting updates from DCMS, the British Council and Arm's Length Bodies. It has acted as the expert reference group for the creation of this report - particularly timely as we anticipate the government's Soft Power Strategy imminently.

In 2018, we produced our first case-study-rich [report](#) on the contribution of the heritage sector to international policy and practice,¹ with further [case studies](#) following in 2019,² and we regularly respond to government consultations and inquiries, most recently the Foreign Affairs Select Committee's [inquiry](#) on soft power.³ We have also been invited to represent the sector on a number of internationally-focused working groups, such as the British Council's Cultural Diplomacy Group and advisory groups coordinated by DCMS such as the UK-China Group. We have represented the sector on delegations abroad, including to India in 2017 as part of the ICOMOS Conference where our CEO, Lizzie, spoke about the history of heritage protection in England alongside India's Minister for Culture and the British Council,



Image credits: Picture taken by our CEO, Lizzie-Glithero West, at an ICCROM meeting of senior global heritage colleagues in Rome, October 2025 © Lizzie-Glithero West

and to Siena and Berlin to discuss continued collaboration with European Colleagues through the process of the UK's exit from the European Union. Last year Lizzie also attended a collaborative workshop on Heritage Foresight with international colleagues convened by ICCROM.

Alongside our advocacy work, in recent years, the Alliance has provided practical sector support in the international sphere, from piloting a Travel Grants Scheme supported by the British Council in 2019 and development of an international section for the [Heritage Funding Directory](#) (now fully integrated),⁴ to the maintenance of a sector guidance hub during the UK's exit from the EU. Recently, we have been supporting the launch of the UK's first [inventories of Intangible](#)

[Cultural Heritage](#) (ICH)⁵ - on the back of the ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage - by acting as a community support hub. Heritage bodies internationally continue to express an interest in the Heritage Alliance model and we have greeted delegations to the UK, including from Serbia, China, Brazil, and Taiwan; spoken at British Council facilitated partnership events focused on Vietnam; and welcomed interns from Italy and Germany to the office to spend time with us. We are always happy to share our learnings and facilitate knowledge exchange with international partners.

Lizzie Glithero-West, CEO
Carole Souter CBE, Chair

Introduction

In today's swiftly-changing international climate, making a commentary on the state of affairs can feel futile.

Yet the constant flux also underlines the importance of setting out the position of our sector in relation to this international context, both to acknowledge and celebrate the impactful work that has been done by our members around the world, and to make a case to government for why international activity and collaboration should be supported and deepened.

Our rich heritage and culture make a significant contribution to the UK's soft power, with the UK ranking sixth in the [Global Soft Power index](#) for culture and heritage.⁶ Our heritage continues to play a key role in 'Brand Britain'. Heritage tourism, for example, supports thousands of jobs and makes a substantial contribution to the Gross Value Added (GVA), with an [estimated](#) spend of £12.5bn from international tourists in 2023 alone.⁷ According to the 2024 Visitor Attraction Survey, 7 out of 10 of the most popular paid visitor attractions in England are heritage attractions, whilst our World Heritage Sites are [central to heritage tourism in the UK](#) and can contribute greatly to our global standing.⁸ Furthermore, in a survey of 18-34 year olds in 19 of the G20 nations, [23%](#) thought the UK was in the top three most attractive countries in the world as a source of arts and culture.⁹

Not only is our heritage vitally important for attracting tourism into the UK, but it enables us to directly inform, shape and contribute to

some of the world's most pressing issues – from climate change, conflict and international development, to supporting conservation and education programmes. In myriad ways – as this report will show – THA members are projecting a positive image of the UK internationally, whilst addressing some of the world's most intractable problems in partnership with global heritage organisations.

The last [International Report](#) published by THA was written in 2018 and showcased the work of Alliance members across all seven continents. The original report put forward a set of recommendations to bolster international activity.

Seven years on, it is an understatement to say that much has changed since 2018.

Certain features, however, do persist. As attested by the updated survey data and case studies gathered for this report, it is heartening to see that THA members remain active in 97 countries, still representing all seven continents. The map view on page 8 shows the truly staggering geographical breadth of this activity, as well as the parts of the world where there remain opportunities to deepen relationships.

The persistence of the UK heritage sector in maintaining and growing its ties with the rest of the world is all the more impressive considering the events that have defined these last years. Organisations and individuals in the UK and EU have needed to carefully navigate the

impact of the UK's exit from the EU. The Covid-19 pandemic shut down international travel and disrupted heritage organisations world-wide over a multi-year period. Armed conflicts have an unthinkable human toll while also threatening all forms of heritage. And as our 2024 report [On the Brink](#) highlighted, from recruitment and retention of staff, to the costs of heating, repairing and conserving historic assets, our sector is facing the risk of collapse without sustained and targeted investment.¹⁰

The UK heritage sector, however, has responded to these challenges by reaffirming its connections to the rest of the world and finding opportunities for collaboration and exchange. As evidenced by the case studies included in this report, our members have strengthened their connections to the EU and Europe more broadly. They adapted to new methods of working during the pandemic to maintain and develop relationships, and found opportunities for in-person visits once possible. THA members have developed partnerships with organisations around the world focused on heritage preservation, community building and economic regeneration. They have established networks focused on shared challenges like the impacts of climate change and the protection of coastal and maritime heritage.

Many of these activities would not have been possible without the support of funders who recognise the significance of maintaining international exchange in heritage. Facilitating knowledge exchange does carry a cost, but can have



Image credits: © DigVentures

tremendous impact. As our British Council-funded International Travel Grant Scheme [demonstrated](#) – which, in 2018, supported visits of heritage professionals to twelve different countries – even a modest amount of funding can increase professional skills, improve cultural relations and promote the heritage expertise of the UK internationally.¹¹ The case studies included in this report have benefited from a range of funding support, from large grants by the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund to small grants enabling international trips to establish partnerships.

Looking ahead, there are promising signs on the horizon for international exchange. The government is well aware of the broad contribution our cultural heritage makes to international

relations, and this is reflected in a range of policies from the 'GREAT' campaign to discussions around the Industrial Strategy, from the importance of effective trade agreements after the UK's exit from the EU to the growing body of heritage-based initiatives supported by UK overseas development assistance (ODA). Recent [agreements](#) to share cultural and heritage expertise with Saudi Arabia,¹² and enhance cultural exchange between the [UK and India](#),¹³ also serve to facilitate important links and commercial opportunities. As a recent British Council [report](#) highlights, cultural exchange builds trust and familiarity that supports future trade, investment and collaboration.¹⁴ Furthermore, to date several government initiatives have greatly helped to support UK-based

heritage organisations undertake valuable work internationally. In particular, the Cultural Protection Fund - which since 2016 has given grants of over £50m to 159 projects¹⁵ - has hugely aided our members in their global impact (and its recent extension until 2029 is greatly welcome). The UK also remains a global leader in the creative industries, which support the government's foreign policy goals.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the Soft Power Council established in January 2025 will act as an advisory board to the UK government to renew the UK's approach to soft power with a focus on economic growth and partnerships. The Council includes strong representation for heritage and culture, including Lord Mendoza for Historic England, Sir Tristram Hunt for the Victoria and Albert Museum, Sir Peter Bazalgette for the Royal College of Art, Francesca Hegyi for the Edinburgh International Festival and Richard Deverell for the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, as well as Scott McDonald for the British Council.

The UK heritage sector makes a significant contribution to the international scene through continued engagement, exchange and partnership working - as evidenced throughout this report by the work of our members. Nonetheless, it is clear that much more needs to be done to support the heritage sector at home and in turn help deliver the government's objectives abroad. Funding is the main barrier preventing heritage organisations doing more internationally and, as recent

financial turbulence at the British Council has shown, no area is immune. Maintaining or increasing current funding for heritage organisations in the UK so that the sector's international reputation is safeguarded and developed is therefore key (both our [Heritage Manifesto](#)¹⁷ and [On the Brink](#)¹⁸ report contain specific policy measures to safeguard the future of the heritage sector at home). Meanwhile, issues ranging from capacity to mobility continue to hamper the heritage sector's ambition to contribute more internationally. We therefore conclude the report with a series of **recommendations for government** that will help to remove these barriers, unlocking the true potential of the heritage sector to support government's objectives abroad by boosting support through additional funding, mobility and capacity, whilst championing its value through improved coordination, recognition and promotion. We also include recommendations for funders and the heritage sector, looking at areas we can progress collaboratively in the coming years and reflecting on what more heritage organisations can do themselves to make the most of existing opportunities.

We anticipate the publication of the government's Soft Power Strategy and hope this report will add richness to the role heritage has to play in public goods and international dialogue and collaboration.

Report Structure

The next section of the report presents findings from surveys of THA members on international activity in their organisations including the challenges they face and the opportunities they see to expand relationships.

The report is then organised into five thematic areas for different areas of international activity, though of course there are overlaps across them. These five areas are:



Each chapter begins with a brief contextual introduction to the theme, followed by a selection of case studies, gathered from across THA's membership. Our call for case studies was open to all Heritage Alliance members, representing the heritage sector in its full breadth.

Finally, the report concludes with a set of recommendations for government that build on those put forward in our 2018 report.

Image credits: © Canva

What do Heritage Alliance members think?

Heritage Alliance members provided their thoughts on international activity via a survey and group meetings. Along with the case studies provided later in this report, the responses highlight a range of engagement across countries and types of relationships, as well as suggestions for how international activity can be better supported.

Where are members active?

Heritage Alliance members are active across all seven continents. Below is a snapshot of some of the key headlines (NB. this is based on the responses to our survey, so it is likely that the true geographical reach of our members is even greater):

Europe

There is strong collaboration with the European Union and other European countries. There are partnerships with the Republic of Ireland and organisations have a presence in Eastern Europe. Some members noted an ambition to expand their activities in Europe, including Eastern European countries and Ireland.

Asia & Middle East

Activities span East, Central, South and Southeast Asia, whilst there is work going on in the Middle East including Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen. Some of our members aspire to build stronger relationships with organisations in India and China.

North America

Relationships exist with the USA, Canada and Mexico, however some members wish to carry out more international activity in the USA.

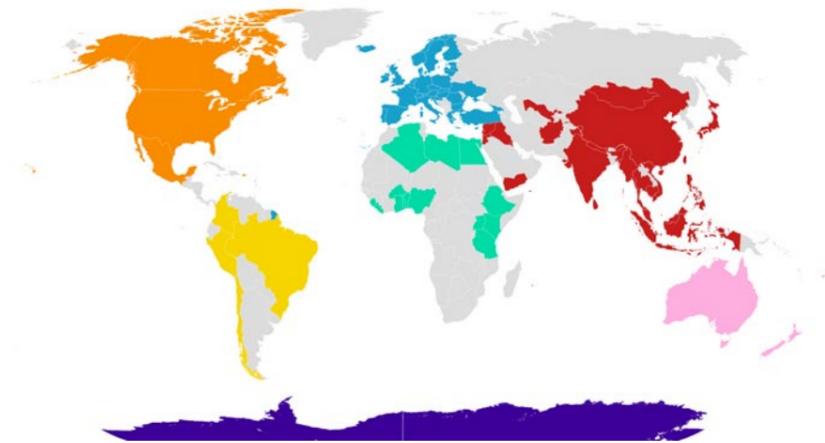


Image credits: © Alex Kent

South America:

There is work being undertaken in Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru, although members feel international work is more limited in South America and see opportunities to expand relationships there.

Africa

Activity is present in a range of countries across the African continent, whilst there remains ambition to carry out more international activity on the continent.

Oceania

Members have relationships with organisations in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji.

Antarctica

The UK Antarctic Heritage Trust ensures that Heritage Alliance membership reaches even the farthest corners of the world.

What types of international activity do members carry out?

Our members carry out a wide range of work internationally. In gathering evidence for this report, the most commonly cited form of activity related to information and knowledge sharing - often this was complemented by visits between countries (e.g. to exchange knowledge in a reciprocal manner), but also includes the provision of training for individuals or organisations in another country. However members are also engaged internationally in myriad other ways, such as through more formal partnerships or arrangements (e.g. by having an office or branch in other countries, or acting as a network across multiple countries), by raising funding for organisations abroad, delivering consultancy projects and running cultural exchange programmes.

What are the greatest opportunities for international activity?

THA members ranked the following activities from the highest to the lowest importance for heritage:

- Exchanging knowledge
- Making strong international relations
- Building a strong heritage sector
- Sharing resources
- Supporting our cause as an organisation through international projects
- Our purpose is international in nature
- Growing the UK's soft power
- Finding funding opportunities
- Building consultancy offer

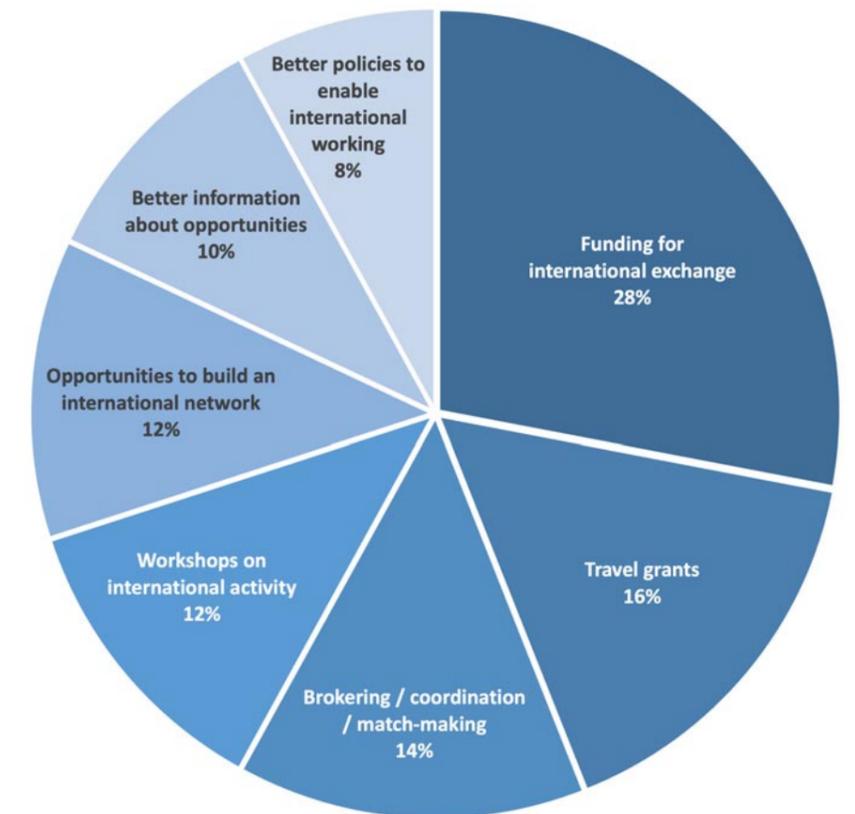
What are the greatest challenges for international activity?

THA members ranked the following challenges from highest to lowest:

- Not enough funding
- Too little capacity
- Expertise resides with certain stretched individuals
- Limited support from our audiences and/or stakeholders
- Limited international connections
- Lack of expertise
- Lack of information about what is possible
- Lack of evidence of need / impact
- It's not in our core purpose / strategy

What forms of support are the most valuable to develop international activity?

Most members agreed that funding is the priority to build more international exchange, as well as travel grants. Organisations would also benefit from other forms of support, such as brokering, coordination and matchmaking, workshops and opportunities for networking.





Focused Partnerships

Heritage Alliance members have forged close relationships with heritage organisations, national and local governments and individuals throughout the world. These partnerships have enabled saving heritage at risk and exchanging knowledge and skills while also contributing to local communities and economies and strengthening connections with other countries.

The outcomes of these partnerships are diverse, ranging from exhibitions, student exchange programmes, international professional visits, field schools, on-site heritage restoration programmes and other activities. All of them, however, highlight the importance of cross-border partnerships to share expertise, resources, and cultural understanding, especially where the focus is on a mutual rather than a one-way exchange.

These partnerships also demonstrate that long-term success requires empowering people – from experts and students to displaced communities and residents – to feel ownership of their heritage and take a hands-on approach. Finally, they demonstrate the flexible and proactive approach that is required to push these projects forward and establish meaningful connections with other countries, even when that means overcoming political, environmental, and public health crises.

The case studies included in this section are:

- Opening a major exhibition on prehistoric cultures in the UK and Japan at Stonehenge, deepening cultural connections and strengthening national relationships (English Heritage)
- Working with the Lebanese government to protect coastal and underwater archaeological sites while building local expertise and establishing educational programmes (Honor Frost Foundation)
- Restoring a war-damaged tower in Georgia with local volunteers, revitalising the community and tourism and demonstrating the power of heritage restoration (International National Trusts Organisation)
- Launching a crowdfunded archaeological field school in the Boyne Valley, Ireland, building skills while contributing to internationally significant research (DigVentures)
- A longstanding partnership with the Palace Museum Beijing leading to a major exhibition that opened earlier this year (Durham University)
- Undertaking an organised visit to Chinese heritage sites and beyond, with important learnings to share (Friends of the Stockton & Darlington Railway)
- Exchanging students with the Indian Institute of Heritage to help train future global heritage leaders (University of Birmingham)
- Celebrating American connections through historic sites (Sulgrave Manor Trust)
- Building relationships and strategic partnerships with organisations and individuals in the U.S., rooted in shared cultural value (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust)

Image credits: © English Heritage

Circles of Stone: Stonehenge and Prehistoric Japan



Image credits: © English Heritage

As a major international tourist destination, Stonehenge plays a vital role in supporting inbound UK tourism and the economy, welcoming visitors from across the globe each year to see this remarkable prehistoric monument that sits within an important World Heritage Site.

The site, where people have come together for thousands of years, **has inspired new connections with different parts of the world.**

Between September 2022 and August 2023, a special exhibition at Stonehenge highlighted the **remarkable parallels between prehistoric cultures in the UK and Japan.** The 'Circles of Stone: Stonehenge and Prehistoric Japan' display was the **UK's first ever exhibition about Japanese stone circles and was a partnership project** between English Heritage and the Sainsbury Institute for the Study of Japanese Arts and Cultures at the University of East Anglia.

English Heritage experts worked closely with curators and archaeologists in Japan in exchanging ideas and identifying objects for display in the exhibition, which displayed over 80 historic items, helping to highlight the remarkable stories and similarities between prehistoric cultures in Japan and the UK that were six thousand miles apart. This included items borrowed from museums in Japan, as well as from the British Museum, the Society of Antiquaries and Salisbury Museum. The project was generously supported by the Ishibashi Foundation, a Japanese charitable institution that supports arts and culture projects.

The exhibition also explored more recent connections between Stonehenge and Japan, noting how British archaeologist William Gowland used the techniques he learnt working on archaeological sites in Japan at the end of the nineteenth century and how they helped him to develop the first scientific study of Stonehenge. In addition, the exhibition highlighted how Japanese woodblock printer Yoshijiro Urushibara, who worked in Britain in the 1920s, had been inspired by Stonehenge and created beautiful woodblock prints of the monument using a Japanese technique known as *betsuzuri*.

The project resulted in **meaningful knowledge exchange between the UK and Japan about our respective heritage.** English Heritage hosted a conference about Japanese stone circles in 2023, drawing archaeologists and curators from the UK, Japan and other countries, and curators from the charity were invited to speak at a Japanese conference attended by over 300 delegates, to share insights about Stonehenge. During their time in Japan, English Heritage curators met Japanese counterparts in other parts of the country and specialists from a wide selection of museums and other institutions. The project allowed English Heritage to strengthen links with the museums who lent items for the exhibition, as well as with UNESCO World Heritage initiatives in northern Japan and Niigata. Following the exchange of knowledge with Japan, volunteers from Stonehenge were also able to create a Japanese-inspired thatching for one of the reconstructed Neolithic huts at Stonehenge, as part of English Heritage's ongoing experimental archaeology.

A reception hosted alongside the Japanese Embassy, which was attended by over 100 people, provided an opportunity to celebrate the exhibition and to build new connections between Japan and the UK, as a result of our two nations sharing our respective heritage with one another. Japan's former Foreign Secretary and then Japanese Digital Minister Taro Kono also visited Stonehenge in January 2023 to view the exhibition.

At Grimes Graves, a prehistoric flint mine in Norfolk, English Heritage also has a partnership with the Nagawa-machi Obsidian Mines Museum in Japan. There have been regular knowledge exchanges between the two institutions, focussed on bringing together young people from Japan and Norfolk, as well as sharing archaeological research.

Further information:
<https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/about/search-news/circles-of-stone-stonehenge-and-prehistoric-japan/>

Honor Frost Foundation Lebanon



Image credits: © Honor Frost Foundation

The recent growth of coastal urbanisation in Lebanon has posed a significant threat to the country's coastal and underwater archaeological resources. The Honor Frost Foundation (HFF) has therefore combined efforts with the Directorate of Antiquities, Ministry of Culture, Lebanon in order to contribute to the study, inventory, protection, conservation, and management of the country's maritime heritage. **The HFF has established a team whose main objective is to efficiently respond to the needs of rescue archaeology sites.** While combining both terrestrial and underwater archaeological interventions, the team adopts a seamless approach between land and sea to study the maritime environment and its material and immaterial culture.

The HFF team in Lebanon also endeavours to develop local capacity by raising the profile of the different stakeholders and creating awareness of Lebanon's maritime heritage. This is achieved through collaboration with specialists in other countries to deliver training and build capacity in the region, particularly through close working relationships with Egypt and Cyprus, HFF's other core countries. HFF also provides scholarships for Lebanese students to undertake postgraduate studies in maritime archaeology in other countries and currently has students in France and the UK, alongside bursaries to attend international conferences.

Since 2019, the foundation has been supporting a Minor in Marine Sciences and Culture at the American University of Beirut which is currently coordinated by Dr Naseem Raad. The programme, taught by HFF Lebanon and visiting experts, prepares students for careers or further study in marine archaeology, geology, and ocean sciences with a hands-on summer field school covering archaeological diving, geophysics, and photogrammetry.

Further information:

- Team page: <https://honorfrostfoundation.org/grants-awarded/research-grants/lebanon/hff-lebanon-team/>
- Projects page : <https://honorfrostfoundation.org/grants-awarded/research-grants/lebanon/hff-lebanon-team/projects/>
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/@HonorFrostFoundationLebanon>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HFFLebanon>
- Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/hff_lebanon/
- MSCU-AUB page: <http://honorfrostfoundation.org/grants-awarded/research-grants/lebanon/hff-lebanon-team/aub-minor/>



Image credits: © Honor Frost Foundation

Community Rehabilitation of a Missile-Struck Tower in Georgia

The restoration of Tsiskarauli Tower in Georgia stands as a **powerful example of heritage-led recovery and international cooperation**. Severely damaged by a missile during the Russian-Chechen war, this medieval tower was at risk of collapse.

From February 2021 to September 2024, the International National Trusts Organisation (INTO), in partnership with the National Trust of Georgia, REMPART (France), and the National Trust (England, Wales and Northern Ireland), led a collaborative effort to restore the tower and revitalise the surrounding community.

Over three years, 46 volunteers from Georgia, France, Poland and the UK worked alongside technical experts to stabilise the structure. Their efforts transformed the tower into a symbol of resilience and peace-building.

The project was supported by a grant from ALIPH (International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas), and INTO's Technical Assistance Programme later funded a sabbatical for a National Trust colleague to support strategic planning and outreach in Tbilisi.

The restoration was not only architectural - it was deeply social. **Local residents were actively involved, fostering a sense of ownership and pride. The initiative promoted eco-tourism, created a new walking route for visitors, and sparked new tourism enterprises. Knowledge exchange was central:** Georgian staff undertook secondments in France and the UK, learning from established heritage models and sharing traditional skills.

Despite facing major challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and a climate-induced landslide that destroyed the only access road - the project adapted and endured. These setbacks underscored the **importance of flexibility and resilience in heritage work.**

The Tsiskarauli Tower project also demonstrated the economic and cultural potential of heritage restoration. It catalysed community revitalisation and positioned the National Trust of Georgia as a key player in regional heritage conservation. In 2024, the project was submitted to the European Heritage Awards, where it won a Grand Prix and €10,000 in core funding - an important milestone for the Trust's future sustainability.

The initiative received widespread media coverage, including features on Georgian national television and ARTE TV. A 16-minute documentary and a photography exhibition further amplified its impact. The project's success has inspired similar efforts and serves as a model for heritage preservation in post-conflict and climate-affected regions.

The project showcases how cross-border partnerships and volunteer engagement can drive successful heritage restoration and peace-building, and it highlights the role of local involvement in fostering pride, ownership and sustainable tourism development. It demonstrates how heritage projects can adapt to crises - from conflict to climate change - while delivering long-term cultural and economic benefits.

Further information:

- INTO project page: <https://www.into.org/community-rehabilitation-in-georgia/>
- National Trust of Georgia project page: https://www.nationaltrustofgeorgia.org/en/tsiskarauli_tower_in_akhieli
- Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uFUPEZ4x6Xs>

Image credits: © INTO



Ancient Ireland and the Boyne Valley



Image credits: © DigVentures

The Boyne Valley, County Meath, Ireland, is home to some of the best-preserved Neolithic sites in the world. Among the most famous is the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Brú na Bóinne; a spectacular funerary landscape of standing stones, henges, and passage tombs dominated by the monuments of Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth. **At over 5,000 years old, these incredible structures contain the largest collection of megalithic art in Western Europe and were clearly built with a sophisticated knowledge of science and astronomy.**

So far, most archaeological investigations into the Boyne Valley's prehistory have been tightly focussed around these most iconic monuments located at the heart of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. In the last 10 years, however, large-scale geophysical research by University College Dublin (UCD) School of Archaeology and the Romano-Germanic Commission (RGK), Frankfurt, along with INSTAR-funded lidar, satellite, and palaeoenvironmental surveys of Brú na Bóinne, has revealed a hidden landscape of henges, timber enclosures, ritual structures, palisades, and the remains of vast wooden monuments. The scale of these discoveries is immense and, until now, none of them have been excavated.



DigVentures is a social enterprise organising crowdfunded archaeological excavations, enabling public participation in archaeology, heritage, and nature recovery. In 2023, DigVentures teamed up with University College Dublin School of Archaeology to do archaeological research in the Boyne Valley and explore these recently discovered sites. **Combining the strengths of community and academic archaeology, DigVentures leads an archaeology field school, providing both university students and members of the public the unique opportunity to build skills while contributing to internationally significant research.**

DigVentures is continuing its investigation into two of these recently discovered areas, including an early Neolithic monument and a timber avenue, aligned with Dowth Henge.

Summer 2025 was the third season of investigation, which have all been made possible by crowdfunding. The results to date have been even more astonishing than anticipated and are already set to change our understanding of ancient monuments in the Boyne Valley – and beyond.

Further information:
<https://digventures.com/projects/boyne-valley/>

Partnership with the Palace Museum, Beijing



Image credits: © Durham University

Durham University's Oriental Museum, which is home to an outstanding ACE Designated collection of Chinese art and archaeology, sits at the heart of a Memorandum of Understanding between the University and the Palace Museum Beijing.

In December 2016, Durham University and China's Palace Museum signed an agreement, bringing together these two world-renowned centres for research and cultural excellence. The agreement, which was the first between the Palace Museum and an English university, built upon Durham University's already strong links with China.

The partnership developed from complementary museum collections and from joint research being undertaken between the University's Department of Archaeology and experts from the Palace Museum in Beijing into early examples of Chinese pottery and porcelain found in Europe, Africa and West Asia. This work, which is ongoing, aims to **reveal more about the trading history of China as far back as the 10th century AD.**

One focus of this research has been the study and analysis of high-quality glazed pottery, called celadon. The research has shown that this greenware was produced at Longquan in China's Zhejiang Province from the 12th to the 15th century on a scale that was unparalleled anywhere in the world at that time. The study indicates that this highly valued ceramic was used across China as a tableware and exported across the Indian Ocean as far as East Africa, Arabia, Egypt and Iran.

As part of this project, in 2019 and 2020, the Oriental Museum was an important lender to a major international exhibition, *Longquan of the World: Longquan Celadon and Globalisation*, which was held at the Palace Museum and then at the Zhejiang Provincial Museum (Hangzhou). Museum staff also contributed to the associated international academic conference, published conference proceedings and multi-volume exhibition catalogue.

A further outcome, hosted by the Longquan Celadon Museum in Zhejiang in 2023, was the exhibition *Pearl of the Sea*, which showcased the collaborative work undertaken by archaeologists and ceramicists from Durham and Beijing in the UAE, where they have worked together at the Julfar site in Ras al-Khaimah.

In July 2023 the Memorandum of Understanding was renewed for a further five years. This special occasion was hosted by the Oriental Museum, bringing together delegates from the Palace Museum with senior managers from

Durham University and curators and academics from the Oriental Museum and the Department of Archaeology.

The renewal of the agreement has enabled the development of further in-depth partnership projects. In 2023-24, specialists from the Palace Museum supported the Oriental Museum's curator of Chinese Collections, Dr Qin Cao, in the development of the first phase of the Museum's ambitious redisplay of its Chinese collections (supported by the DCMS/Wolfson Museums and Galleries Improvement Fund). Colleagues

from both institutions also worked together to deliver a knowledge exchange workshop hosted by the Palace Museum in October 2024.

In September 2025 the Oriental Museum opened a co-curated exhibition celebrating the centenary of the Palace Museum, Beijing. *Journey of a Century: From the Forbidden City to the Palace Museum*, will be on display at Oriental Museum until May 2026 and is the only collaborative exhibition marking this important anniversary to be shown in Europe.



Railways, Walls and Fine Dining: Heritage relationships and work with China



Image credits: © Juan Zhang/Friends of the S&DR

The 200th anniversary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway in 2025 alongside national programmes of celebration of the birth of passenger rail are major events in the ongoing work of the charity, the Friends of the S&DR (FSDR), and its partners in promoting the 'railway that got the world on track'. **Over several years the FSDR has sought to build heritage and railway connections around the world to encourage accurate telling of its story and explore cultural and socio-economic links to stimulate tourism.**

In early 2025 the FSDR was contacted by the Chinese NGO, 'Hebei Provincial Association for UNESCO (HPAU)' who wanted to explore links with China's oldest railway at TangXu, near the city of Tangshan in Hebei Province, Northern China. HPAU is funded by Hebei Provincial Dept of Education, Hebei Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the schools that are members of the associated Hebei International School Partnership (<https://www.hbisp.org/>), who have had a UK exchange programme for several years. HPAU offered to fund flights and accommodation for a 10 day visit to Hebei, provide a sponsor letter to allow the FSDR to obtain visas, and agreed an itinerary focusing on railway heritage, but also possible wider heritage links such as between Hadrian's Wall and the Great Wall of China. Niall Hammond and Caroline Hardie, both heritage professionals as well as trustees of the FSDR made travel arrangements and procured visas by submitting long forms and visiting in person a Chinese consulate. Costs were reimbursed promptly by HPAU.

Allowing for long queues at arrivals in Beijing, reception and travel were well organised, but visitors to the capital at least should be prepared for airport style security/scanners at all underground and over ground rail stations. Train tickets were linked directly to passports for travel, and the FSDR visitors rapidly became familiar with free but clearly monitored movement. While the itinerary agreed prior to travel was

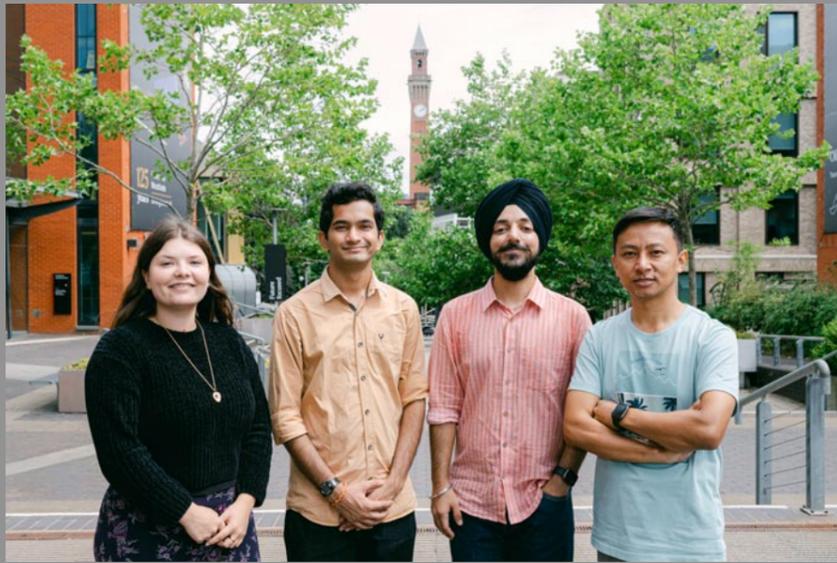


largely adhered to with rail heritage sites and the newly built Great Wall of China Museum, a significant amount of additional visits and meetings were added in, often at very short notice. This is apparently not unusual, and in particular the Chinese desire to show and demonstrate economic opportunities became increasingly obvious, first with modern train factories, then AI/robotics plants and finally the vast new economic development zone around Daxing airport. These were all accompanied by interpreters, a photographer/videographer and regular hospitality in private dining rooms.

At all times the FSDR visitors were treated with absolute courtesy, and there were opportunities to go 'off piste' and visit the WHS site at Chengdu, and central Beijing on a Saturday night. Contact has continued since their return to the UK, with a visit by Chinese school children to Hopetown railway museum in Darlington. A planned return civic visit by the Chinese to the UK for October 2025, however, has been cancelled following an announcement by the Chinese government in August that travel and hospitality budgets for Chinese civil servants have been for the time being drastically cut.

The visit was extremely positive and the FSDR looks forward to building on links made and using shared heritage to build bridges culturally and economically. If visiting China, our advice would be to be prepared for a rapidly changing itinerary, and be equipped with a small selection of gifts to thank your hosts, as well as space in your luggage to bring home the many gifts you are likely to be offered.

Heritage Training Partnership with the Indian Institute of Heritage



The University of Birmingham's partnership with the Indian Institute of Heritage (IIH) has developed an exchange programme to help train future global heritage leaders. Running in August 2024 and August 2025, in each year three master level students from each institution exchange places, to take part in a month-long suite of practice based programmes designed to support these students develop the global knowledge and skills to safeguard the world's physical and living heritage.

In August 2025, the Indian students explored the art, architecture, literature, music, design and popular culture that form the basis of Britain's culture and heritage. Based in Birmingham, the exchange took them to heritage sites in Ironbridge Gorge, Liverpool, Stratford-upon-Avon,

and Oxford. University of Birmingham students traveled to Delhi as guests of the IIH where they visited a range of key Indian heritage sites including The Red Fort, Taj Mahal, and Jantar Mantar, Nahargarh Fort, Hawa Mahal.

The exchange programme provides a unique opportunity for students from the global north and global south to explore the rich cultural heritage of India and Britain and to learn on site about the evolving academic and practice based approaches to cultural heritage preservation and museology. This partnership has supported students and experts from both institutions to participate in various research projects, building on their strengths across heritage and creating career opportunities for students and staff in India and the UK.

This partnership has taken a long time to plan, to build relationships, explore possibilities and test out programme structures that provide a comprehensive, intense but brief programme. **The strategic partnership between IIH and University of Birmingham aims to create impactful collaborations in the field of education and research.** The University of Birmingham is renowned for its proficiency in heritage research, and its International Centre for Heritage stands as a global pioneer in adopting sustainable and innovative methods for heritage management practices and future strategies. IIH is a prominent cultural institution in India that conducts research on India's diverse heritage and provides outstanding educational opportunities that make significant contributions to the cultural, scientific and economic aspects of India.

Further information:
<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/news/2025/indian-summer-exchange-sees-heritage-students-trading-places>

Image credits: © University of Birmingham

Sulgrave Manor: Connecting Continents and Generations Through Our Washington Family Story

The Grade 1 listed Sulgrave Manor in Northamptonshire was built over a 20 year period from 1539 by Lawrence Washington, a direct ancestor of George Washington, the first President of the United States of America. Over time it was added to and then reduced again in size. By the beginning of the 20th century it was being used as a farmhouse and in a very poor state of repair.

In 1914 it was bought by public subscription to mark the centenary of the Treaty of Ghent (which established peace between Britain and the United States after the War of 1812) with a view to opening it to the public as the home of the Special Relationship.

The First World War interrupted those plans and the Manor did not actually open until 1921, the same year that George Washington's statue was unveiled in Trafalgar Square. The opening itself was a major event attended by British and American dignitaries.

The Sulgrave Manor Trust, an entirely independent charity with no public funding, cares for the site. As well as private philanthropy, the charity has in the past benefitted from major grants from British Trusts and Foundations which have helped keep the Manor and gardens in good heart and enabled the construction of purpose built meeting, exhibition and archive spaces.

Two American Trustees represent the Friends of Sulgrave Manor (USA), an American group which raises funds for the Manor and distributes the surplus from an endowment set up in 1924 by The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America for just that purpose. There are currently also two further American Trustees on the Board of 9.

In autumn/winter 2025/26 the Trust will carry out a project to improve the environmental and financial sustainability of its meeting and exhibition spaces which has received significant funds from American supporters, including a grant to develop plans to contract stage and a substantial legacy, as well as targeted fundraising by the Friends.

In 2026 the Trust will be working with other sites which have an American connection and marking the 250th anniversary of American Independence with an on-site academic seminar, on-line seminars and a special exhibition drawing on its exceptional collection of Washington material. A dedicated website will be updated throughout the period to signpost people to relevant places and events: America250UK: Celebrating 250 Years of Independence.

The Trust also worked closely with The Friends of the Washington Statue to contribute soil from the Manor site to a time capsule which will be placed under the Washington Monument during the year.



Image credits: © Sulgrave Manor Trust

Shakespeare Birthplace Trust: Renewing U.S. Engagement



Image credits: © Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

The United States has long been Shakespeare Birthplace Trust's (SBT) most important international audience and philanthropic market. The relationship is historic as well as contemporary: Thomas Jefferson and John Adams visited Shakespeare's Birthplace, and the Trust itself was founded in response to an attempt by P. T. Barnum to buy the Birthplace and relocate it to the USA. Today, almost 30% of visitors to SBT properties come from the United States, underlining the depth and durability of this transatlantic connection.

Since early 2024, SBT has pursued a focused programme to renew and strengthen its U.S. engagement. The objective has been clear: to align governance, philanthropy, advocacy, and partnerships in ways that reconnect Stratford-upon-Avon with American cultural life while supporting long-term financial sustainability.

Central to this work has been the revitalisation of Shakespeare's Birthplace America Inc. (SBA). Its role has been sharpened as an advocacy and fundraising body operating in close alignment with the Stratford-based executive team. Governance has been refreshed, priorities clarified, and relationships reactivated to ensure U.S. activity directly advances SBT's charitable mission.

This renewed approach was tied up with the transformational \$1.26 million pledge from Ken Ludwig, one of America's most successful playwrights and the Trust's most generous individual supporter, in the first half of 2024. **The pledge provided momentum and confidence, underpinning longer-term planning and encouraging renewed engagement from other donors.**

Importantly, **SBT has encouraged major donors to act not only as funders but as advocates.** In November 2025, Ken Ludwig was appointed Campaign Ambassador for the Hall's Croft conservation appeal, lending profile, credibility, and personal endorsement to an urgent programme to conserve Shakespeare's family home.

Philanthropic momentum continues to build. In January 2026, SBT announced a new award established through a significant gift from Diane Meyer Lowman, who has also joined the SBA Board. The award reflects growing donor confidence in SBT's leadership, governance, and international ambition.

Alongside major gifts, SBT has broadened its U.S. advocacy base. In September 2025, acclaimed poet and educator Devon Glover (Sonnet Man) was appointed Brand Ambassador, connecting Shakespeare with younger and more diverse audiences.

Strategic partnerships and presence have been equally important. SBT partnered with the Royal Oak Foundation on a high-profile New York event in January 2025, while Stratford-based leaders make regular visits to the U.S., supported by professional advisors on the ground.

Key Learnings

- Invest locally: Use trusted professional advisors and partnerships on the ground to provide insight, networks, and continuity.
- Turn donors into advocates: Encourage major supporters to act as ambassadors, lending voice, credibility, and personal endorsement.
- Show up consistently: Regular, relevant visits from the "home team" build trust, alignment, and momentum.
- Align, don't duplicate: Ensure overseas affiliates operate in close strategic alignment with the parent organisation.
- Play the long game: Sustainable international engagement is built through relationships, not transactions.

SBT's renewed engagement in the United States demonstrates how UK heritage organisations can strengthen international impact through focused, relationship-led strategies. **The model offers transferable lessons for the sector: invest locally, show up consistently, and build long-term partnerships rooted in shared cultural value.**

European Collaboration

UK heritage organisations have reaffirmed their connections to the EU and Europe more broadly, both by strengthening relationships with their European counterparts and by contributing to European heritage projects and networks. This has happened at all levels – from the ratifying of agreements between national heritage agencies to connecting individual heritage sites via the European Heritage Days framework and aligning conservation accreditations between the UK and Republic of Ireland.

UK heritage sites have also participated in European-wide projects and initiatives focused on heritage at risk, from coastal settings to historic synagogues. This keeps UK institutions connected to the wider European heritage infrastructure, including the Europa Nostra Awards and the 7 Most Endangered Programme. The UK's participation in these programmes is a key focus for Europa Nostra UK, as the UK branch of Europa Nostra, the pan-European Federation for Cultural Heritage.

These examples of European collaboration emphasise shared values like youth engagement, public use, community connection and organisational sustainability. They provide a strong basis upon which to keep strong ties between the UK and EU.

The case studies included in this section are:

- Signing a Memorandum of Understanding with French Heritage Agency Centre des Monuments Nationaux focused on collaboration and exchange (INTO, National Trust, National Trust for Scotland, English Heritage)
- Connecting Heritage Open Days to the wider European Heritage Days initiative to share ideas and best practices, enriching European heritage as a whole (Heritage Open Days)
- Participating in a European project to establish nature-based solutions in coastal management and policy making while maintaining an archaeological and historical perspective (Maritime Archaeology Trust)
- Standardising professional accreditation standards between the UK and the Republic of Ireland to support conservators (Institute of Conservation)
- Mapping the Historic Synagogues of Europe to identify projects and leverage the 7 Most Endangered Programme run by Europa Nostra (Foundation for Jewish Heritage)
- Acting as the UK country representative to Europa Nostra in order to maintain links to European programmes and policies and put forward UK candidates for the Europa Nostra Awards and 7 Most Endangered Programme (Europa Nostra UK)

Overview of EU Funding for UK Organisations

The UK still participates in the current Horizon Europe programme, meaning that entities in the UK can participate in project consortia under similar conditions as EU Member States. The work programme for Horizon Europe 2026-2027 has recently been released. The most relevant funding calls for heritage organisations are under Cluster 2: Culture, Creativity and Inclusive Society and the New European Bauhaus (NEB) strand. Each year, the funding calls open in May and close in mid-September. **Horizon Europe will be continued under the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the EU.**

More information:

- Overview of international cooperation with UK: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/europe-world/international-cooperation/association-horizon-europe/united-kingdom_en
- Horizon Europe Work Programme 2026-27: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/funding-programmes-and-open-calls/horizon-europe/horizon-europe-work-programmes_en

The UK does not currently participate in the Creative Europe programme, which runs through 2027. For the 2028-2034 MFF, the European Commission has proposed creating a streamlined "AgoraEU" programme for culture, media and civil society.

More information:

- Current Creative Europe CULTURE strand: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/creative-europe/creative-europe-culture-strand>
- Overview of AgoraEU proposal: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/news/eu-budget-2028-2034-new-ageraeu-programme>

The UK does not currently participate in the Erasmus+ programme. It seems, however, that the UK may rejoin the mobility programme in 2027, which funds the exchange of students and young professionals but it is unclear whether the UK also intends to participate in consortia projects funded under Erasmus+.

- Current Erasmus+ Programme Guide: <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-programme-guide>
- Article on UK rejoining Erasmus+ mobility programme: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2025/dec/17/eu-erasmus-scheme-reopen-uk-students-first-time-since-brexit>

The development of the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the EU is informed by a recent key publication from the European Commission entitled the 'Culture Compass for Europe.' **Published in November 2025, the Culture Compass sets a strategic vision and flagship actions for culture and cultural heritage.** Its publication was accompanied by a draft Joint Declaration, which will be agreed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission. The Culture Compass will also serve as the strategic anchor for culture within the MFF. Critically, the Culture Compass links culture and cultural heritage directly to Europe's resilience, competitiveness, security and development.

Further reading: <https://culture.ec.europa.eu/policies/culture-compass>

Image credits: © Unsplash



MOU with French Heritage Agency Centre des Monuments Nationaux



Image credits: © English Heritage

On 9 July 2025, a landmark Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed at Kenwood House in London between International National Trusts Organisation (INTO) member organisations the Centre des Monuments Nationaux (CMN), the National Trust and the National Trust for Scotland, and English Heritage. **This agreement marks a bold step toward deeper Franco-British cooperation in cultural heritage.**

The journey toward this MOU began in November 2024, when Antoine-Marie Préaut, Inspecteur des Affaires Culturelles, visited the UK for a two-day programme co-ordinated by the Institut Français and INTO. This included visits to Osterley Park and Munstead Wood, where he explored how the National Trust balances conservation with commercial

activity, public engagement and volunteerism.

Préaut's visit was instrumental in shaping understanding of the UK heritage model. It provided a practical foundation for discussions around governance, sustainability and community involvement – key themes that would later be formalised in the MOU.

Building on this momentum, CMN President Marie Lavandier visited the UK in April 2025. Her three-day itinerary, also co-ordinated by INTO, included visits to National Trust properties Ham House, 2 Willow Road and Fenton House in London. These experiences offered a deeper look at how the National Trust's new vision and strategy are implemented on the ground.

Mme Lavandier met with senior leaders from the National Trust, English Heritage and the National Trust for Scotland, and engaged in rich discussions about the future of

heritage management. Her visit was not only a moment of learning, it was a moment of alignment. Solidifying a shared ambition to collaborate more closely and explore how the National Trust model might inspire a 'National Trust à la française'.

The MOU signed in July 2025 is a powerful statement of intent. It commits the four organisations to:

- Protect and celebrate cultural heritage
- Exchange expertise and best practices
- Enhance public engagement and sustainability
- Explore reciprocal member access and cultural exchange

It also opens the door to joint initiatives, artistic residencies, site twinning and forums on heritage policy and practice.

Culture Minister Rachida Dati has tasked CMN with exploring the creation of a 'French National Trust'. The MOU and the relationships behind it are helping to shape that vision.

For INTO, this partnership is a shining example of what international collaboration can achieve. **By connecting people and ideas across borders, INTO helps shape the future of heritage.** A future which is rooted in civic participation, local stewardship and sustainable management.

Further information:
<https://www.into.org/turning-heritage-into-action/>

Heritage Open Days: England's Contribution to European Heritage Days

Heritage Open Days is England's largest festival of history and culture. It connects more than 2,350 organisers through a national network, offering a unique promotional platform and a package of tailored support. It is one of the UK's contributions to European Heritage Days (alongside European Heritage Days in Northern Ireland, Scotland's Doors Open Days, and Wales' Open Doors Days).

European Heritage Days is a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission. It is one of the most widely celebrated participatory cultural events shared by the inhabitants and visitors of Europe. Heritage Open Days has been a part of this international movement since 1994.

Heritage Open Days illustrates that working with other European countries can help enrich our understanding of heritage and how we platform it nationally. For example, the festival team collaborates with other countries to develop and explore shared themes, such as Routes, Networks and Connections in 2024 and Architecture in 2025.

Image credits: © Heritage Open Days/National Trust

The Heritage Open Days team also contributes to annual meetings and international working groups to help generate new ideas and address challenges across the heritage sector such as youth engagement and sustaining audiences. This way of working opens up lots of opportunities for shared learning on best practices in areas such as evaluation, community engagement, marketing and communications. Additionally, they have become involved with cross-border projects in previous years, one exploring women's history and one exploring how minority groups can be more involved with national heritage festivals.

More funding is needed to support this type of work; there are so many opportunities for further collaboration and shared initiatives but very little funding to do so. The kind support of the Council of Europe has enabled the team to do a few collaborative projects and travel to annual meetings, but there is still untapped potential for further project work and knowledge exchange. It costs a lot of time and money to work in this way, and funding can really help to make space for taking it seriously.

Further information:
heritageopendays.org.uk
<http://europeanheritagedays.com/>



Sustainable and Resilient Coastal Cities



Image credits: © Maritime Archaeology Trust

Mean sea level rise (SLR) could increase by 1.5 to 2.5 meters by 2100, which would see damage caused by coastal flooding in Europe increase from €1.25 billion per annum currently to €961 billion (European Commission, 2018). Urban areas situated along the 2 Seas coastline are particularly vulnerable to extreme SLR. Coastal flood plans and policies focus predominantly on deploying traditional grey infrastructure and heavy engineering and ignore the use of nature-based solutions (NBS), despite the overwhelming evidence of their potential to reduce flood risk.

The Maritime Archaeology Trust participated in the Sustainable and Resilient Coastal Cities (SARCC) project, which was a European project under the Interreg 2 Seas programme. The aim was to mainstream NBS into coastal management and policy making as stand alone projects or NBS-hybrids, where they are integrated into existing grey infrastructure and flood defences. The project also aimed to build the capacity of urban leaders, decision-makers and officers involved in coastal flood defences to deploy NBS and understand the additional benefits that they offer.

Fourteen partners and nine observer partners were involved in the SARCC project, representing four European countries (England, France, Belgium and The Netherlands). **The Maritime Archaeology Trust was able to demonstrate to partners how archaeology, palaeoenvironmental**



material, historic sites and structure, art, photographs maps and charts can all be used to provide evidence of long term coastal processes and trends that need to be understood to develop coastal management approaches that work with nature.

Lectures and seminars which included historical and archaeological events were given by the partners in each of the partner countries and seven NBS pilots were put in place over the three years which aimed to demonstrate how NBS can be more beneficial for flood defence in coastal cities than hard static alternatives. The SARCC Visualisation Tool (in three languages) brings together the data from the project to provide a visual

and interactive way for stakeholders to engage with the project. The three-year project produced multiple outputs and results, including toolkits, seminars and guidance booklets created through research, knowledge and the expertise of the 14 European SARCC partners.

The SARCC project demonstrates the success that can be achieved working internationally when all partners have a common goal. Heritage is common to all countries, and it is also something most people are interested in, particularly if it is presented in a way that shows its importance to the subject in hand. On reflection, SARCC was a lesson demonstrating that when working together with a common aim, all parties were engaged, active and involved.

Lectures, seminars and public engagement in each of the countries was a crucial element, and education about past occurrences through historical and archaeological data for all the regions involved, helped stakeholders and decision makers look at solutions that are more likely to work in the long term.

More information:

- Maritime Archaeology Trust project page: <https://maritimearchaeologytrust.org/projects-research/sarcc-sustainable-and-resilient-coastal-cities/>
- SARCC website: <https://www.sarcc.eu/>
- Interactive Visualisation Tool: <https://naturalseadefence.eu/>

Collaborative Working across the Republic of Ireland and the UK



Image credits: © Icon

The Institute of Conservation (Icon) and the Institute of Conservator-Restorers in Ireland (ICRI) both offer systems of professional accreditation for conservator-restorers. These systems demonstrate to clients, employers, and peers that an individual possesses in-depth knowledge of conservation, a high level of competence, sound judgement, and a strong understanding of the principles underpinning their practice.

In 2023, the ICRI Accreditation Committee approached Icon to consider formally recognising ICRI's professional accreditation system, allowing ICRI's Accredited Members to become Accredited Members of Icon without the need for re-

assessment. This was recognised as particularly important given the significant movement of the labour force between the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Recognising the importance of this issue, Icon worked closely with ICRI to review respective professional standards and assessment processes. Through this collaboration, it was established that there was clear parity between both systems. In late 2024, the Boards of Icon and ICRI signed an agreement formalising the mutual recognition of both accreditation standards.

Formal accreditation systems for conservator-restorers are vital in a profession that is otherwise

largely unregulated. This principle has been central to Icon's mission since its establishment in 2005 – to unite the conservation-restoration profession and raise standards of practice to improve outcomes for collections and built heritage. These challenges are not limited to the UK, and are felt internationally, including in the Republic of Ireland.

Icon and ICRI both recognised the value of collaborating to expand the pool of fully accredited professional conservator-restorers. By doing so, they are raising standards across both countries – particularly in Northern Ireland, where many conservators work across both sides of the border.

Representative bodies such as Icon can sometimes be overly protective of what they perceive as their own 'territory.' However, **by identifying shared priorities and ambitions, organisations can work more effectively together to address common challenges.** This new, closer partnership between Icon and ICRI sets a positive precedent for greater collaboration, beyond accreditation, between both organisations. There are many other areas for future work together, such as in skills development, training, and recognition – issues that impact the profession across both countries.

More information:
<https://www.icon.org.uk/resource/mutual-recognition-of-professional-accreditation-of-conservator-restorers-between-icri-and-icon.html>

Mapping the Historic Synagogues of Europe

The Foundation for Jewish Heritage works in the UK and internationally to ensure that important Jewish architectural sites, monuments and places of cultural significance in danger are preserved and re-imagined for a sustainable future.

In its Mapping the Historic Synagogues of Europe project, the Foundation worked with the Center for Jewish Art at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem to create an inventory of all 3,347 historic synagogues of Europe currently extant. As part of this, each site was assessed according to its significance and condition. **This mapping was undertaken to provide a new resource for everyone involved or interested in the current state of synagogue preservation throughout Europe. Crucially, it also enabled the Foundation to be comprehensive and strategic in approaching its own preservation agenda by identifying the most important synagogue sites that are most in danger,** and the Foundation is now working to help save and bring back into meaningful use a prioritised number.

Based on the mapping work, the Foundation has engaged with a number of significant synagogue preservation and repurposing projects across Europe. Its current priority synagogue projects are in Hijaar Spain, Fagaras Romania, Izmir Turkey, Orla Poland, Hamburg Germany and Korneuburg Austria. The Foundation also has three ongoing projects in the UK.



Image credits: © Foundation for Jewish Heritage

Last year, the Foundation's Polish project - the 17th century baroque Great Synagogue in Orla, was listed as one of the 7 Most Endangered heritage sites in Europe by Europa Nostra. The Foundation worked together with the Synagogue's owners, the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland (FODZ), to make this application. The Jewish community that the Synagogue served for centuries was lost in the tragedy of the Holocaust during WW2. Several local civil society organisations have an interest in preserving the Synagogue with the full support of the local Mayor and Municipality. The Foundation, in partnership with the University of the Arts Poznan and FODZ, hosted a very successful

week-long Arts Festival based at the Synagogue in 2021. The Foundation is currently funding a Feasibility Study that is testing the idea of the Synagogue serving as a permanent arts and educational centre.

Further information:

- Foundation for Jewish Heritage: <https://www.foundationforjewishheritage.com/>
- Mapping Project: <https://historicsynagogueurope.org/synagogue-home>
- 7 Most Endangered: <https://7mostendangered.eu/sites/great-synagogue-in-orka-poland/>

Celebrating UK Conservation in Europe



Image credits: The Camellia House at Wentworth Woodhouse © Aaron O’Roarty (NE Drones): <https://www.flickr.com/photos/europanostra/54571418645/in/album-72177720326319184/>

Founded in 1963, Europa Nostra is the leading citizens’ movement to protect and celebrate Europe’s cultural and natural heritage. Europa Nostra UK is the Country Representation or ‘chapter’ for Europa Nostra in the UK. It aims to support the delivery of Europa Nostra’s strategy through engaging with our members and friends in the UK and encouraging collaboration with cultural heritage initiatives at European level. We know that now, more than ever, we need to exchange knowledge and good practice around our European cultural heritage, articulate the values and ideas that go with it and, in particular, foster links and co-operation with other European heritage bodies in civil society and beyond.

Among its key activities, Europa Nostra UK encourages and supports applications by UK heritage organisations to Europa Nostra’s flagship programmes, which are the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards and the 7 Most Endangered (7ME) Programme.

Over the past six years, the UK has seen a strong presence in the European Heritage Awards / Europa Nostra Awards, reflecting the depth and diversity of its conservation and heritage work. These awards, launched by the European Commission and run by Europa Nostra, celebrate outstanding heritage conservation, research, education, and community engagement across Europe. UK members and partners play a key

part in that process. In 2020, English Heritage successfully nominated the Iron Bridge conservation, the most comprehensive repair of a global industrial icon (Ferguson Mann Architects). In 2021, multiple UK projects such as ‘Moris Londinium’ from The Conservation Foundation and ‘Archaeology at Home’ were honoured in the Education, Training & Awareness-Raising category, demonstrating innovative public engagement with heritage. In 2024, four major UK projects were recognised including the ‘Gideon Tapestries’ conservation at Hardwick Hall, the adaptive reuse of Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings (Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios), and the restoration of Westminster Hall (Donald Insall Associates), Continuing that recognition, in 2025 the Camellia House at Wentworth

Woodhouse (Donald Insall Architects) received a Europa Nostra Award for Conservation & Adaptive Reuse following an extensive restoration, marking another high point for UK heritage achievement. In 2024, Marcus Binney was honoured with a Heritage Champions award for his lifetime contribution to conservation.

Parallel to award successes, UK sites have also been highlighted on Europa Nostra’s ‘7 Most Endangered’ list, a civil society initiative spotlighting threatened heritage as a catalyst for action. Notable UK entries over the last six years include Mavisbank House (Edinburgh), the Ice Factory (Glasgow), and Egyptian Halls (Glasgow), which were shortlisted

or selected in earlier editions. Most recently, Victoria Tower Gardens in London was named among Europe’s seven most endangered sites for 2025, drawing attention to pressures from proposed development within London’s World Heritage context.

For more information on Europa Nostra UK and to sign up for newsletters and webinars, please visit <https://europanostrauk.org/>. Recordings of past webinars, which feature UK winners of the Europa Nostra Awards, are available on the Europa Nostra UK YouTube channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@EuropaNostraUK>.

Image credits: © Europa Nostra UK



Network Building

Heritage Alliance members have helped establish international networks for gathering information and sharing knowledge across countries. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these efforts have focused on both climate change and maritime heritage as areas where many countries face similar challenges related to heritage.

Several case studies highlighted here demonstrate that international collaboration is at the heart of resilience. Challenges like climate change and coastal erosion cannot be solved nationally, and these international networks act as key mechanisms for transferring knowledge, building capacity and pooling data and expertise. They enhance regional expertise, investing in individuals and civil society organisations, to build sustainable, bottom-up heritage management at the local level. By acting at scale, these networks show that heritage is not a standalone field, but a crucial source of data and insight for modern challenges like climate modeling, policy-making, and ocean health.

Finally, the cross-art-form and project based organisation 1st Framework has established creative networks involving at-risk heritage sites to bring new perspectives to the complex challenges they face and strengthen connections between organisations.

The case studies in this section are:

- Establishing the Coastal Connections initiative to build a global network of coastal heritage sites and facilitate knowledge-sharing among site managers, local communities, and organisations to address the common challenges of climate change (WMF Britain, English Heritage)
- Enhancing regional capacity to protect and manage maritime cultural heritage in Cyprus and the eastern Mediterranean and fostering international partnerships in Europe and beyond (Honor Frost Foundation)
- Working with other UNESCO Accredited NGOs to establish a methodology to record, monitor and promote maritime and underwater cultural heritage, leveraging local and international networks for data-gathering (Maritime Archaeology Trust)
- Highlighting neglected or significant heritage sites through creative and collaborative arts-based projects, gathering a new team for each intervention (1st Framework)
- Highlighting the unique role of the UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) in connecting the UK's 60 UNESCO designations, World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Global Geoparks, Creative Cities and others, into a coherent national network that is globally engaged.



Image credits: © English Heritage

Coastal Connections



Image credits: © Helen Annan, UK Antarctic Heritage Trust

Many heritage sites around the world are located on coasts, which are amongst the most dynamic and unpredictable environments on Earth. Often isolated or remote, some coastal heritage sites are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, such as sea-level rise and more frequent and intense storm surges. Although each is unique, coastal heritage sites often face complex, but common, challenges. Consequently, there is a need to share knowledge to manage these sites more sustainably and effectively.

Established in 2023 following the inclusion of Hurst Castle (UK) on the World Monuments Watch, World Monuments Fund's signature cultural heritage advocacy programme, Coastal Connections is a joint initiative between World Monuments Fund (WMF) Britain and English Heritage to build a **global network of coastal heritage sites. The project brings together those who care for coastal heritage, including site managers, local communities and advocacy organisations, to share knowledge, expertise and practical solutions for addressing common challenges. From broadening perspectives to showcasing new technologies, the network aims to advance understanding, and ultimately enhance collective wisdom, for conserving coastal heritage.**

The Coastal Connections network includes over 60 coastal heritage sites around the world, from Antigua to Zanzibar. These include castles, forts, historic ports, lighthouses, and shipwrecks, that are represented in the network by managers, communities and organisations.

The project involved coordinating a programme of online workshops and creating a suite of digital resources. **A strong emphasis was placed upon case studies to showcase local solutions, told through local voices.** The workshops and case studies were

organised according to a series of themes, such as sustainable engineering solutions; mapping, modelling and monitoring; and heritage loss, that were developed in collaboration with site managers to ensure relevance and scope.

The series of 10 online workshops ran from January 2023 to January 2024. Each involved 4-5 speakers who explained the challenges and solutions associated with managing specific sites, followed by a roundtable discussion. The workshops engaged with over 700 individuals from 81 countries and were recorded. The timing of the workshops was designed to maximise participation, although this was not ideal for all areas of the globe, including small independent island states in the Pacific, who, arguably, stood more to gain from the lessons learned. Nevertheless, the workshop recordings enabled access via the project website and YouTube, if not direct participation.

A suite of openly accessible digital resources, including case-study fact sheets, a technical glossary and principles for the conservation of coastal heritage, were developed alongside the workshops and are being made available on the project website. Coastal Connections also featured at the London Design Biennale 2025 (held throughout June at Somerset House) where over 10,000 visitors saw a specially designed installation showcasing seven sites from the global network. Videos from its interactive display were showcased at the UK's official pavilion at COP30 in Brazil.

At its core, Coastal Connections is about learning and sharing practical solutions amongst those who care for coastal heritage. It takes the view that no single solution, perspective or approach to managing a coastal heritage site is universally suitable. Hence, the project has aimed to widen and enhance understanding of the options available for those who make decisions about the future of coastal heritage. Ultimately, it is hoped that this will lead to enhancing collective wisdom in achieving more sustainable management of coastal heritage sites.

The creation of any successful professional network requires its members to identify, share and address common issues. **Coastal Connections has so far demonstrated that being part of a global community means that its members no longer have to face their complex challenges alone.**

A successful bid to the Lloyd's Register Foundation has secured funding for the next phase of the project. This will involve establishing regional hubs and networks in the Global South to facilitate sharing skills and practical solutions to enhance the management of coastal heritage around the globe.

Further information:
<https://www.wmf.org/programs/coastal-connections>

Image credits: © World Monuments Fund Britain



Cyprus Regional Development Project



Image credits: © M Michael

Initiated by the Honor Frost Foundation (HFF), the Cyprus Regional Development Project (CRDP) aims to enhance regional capacity and to develop a more informed and integrated model for the protection, research, management, and dissemination of Maritime Cultural Heritage (MCH), to be ultimately deployed on the island of Cyprus and the wider eastern Mediterranean.

The overarching objective of the CRDP is to:

- Explore the maritime cultural resources of the island of Cyprus and develop an integrated and comprehensive area-based management methodology as a model to protect, manage, and disseminate maritime cultural heritage of the island and across the eastern Mediterranean region more broadly.
- Create a comprehensive Geographic Information System (GIS)-based database of the maritime archaeological resource.
- Deliver a series of workshops and training events to enhance regional capacity and

development, leading to a broader regional skills base.

- Forge regional networks and partnerships sharing skills, experience and expertise.

The project is designed to engage partners across the region in which the Honor Frost Foundation operates (Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt) in order to share skills, train and most importantly forge regional and international networks. Experts are also invited from the UK, the EU and beyond to share their expertise. Cyprus thus forms the hub of this activity and Cypriot partners the core, but this project truly has regional and international reach.

One of the most successful aspects of the project are the workshops. So far, the Honor Frost Foundation has run 15 in total. Each workshop is 2-3 days in duration and engages between 10-15 participants. These not only increase regional expertise in a range of aspects relating to maritime archaeological heritage but also forge lasting regional networks.

Further information:
<https://honorfrostfoundation.org/2022/11/22/cyprus-regional-development-project/>

Survey of Maritime and Underwater Cultural Heritage (SoMUCH) Below the Waves

Maritime and underwater cultural heritage (M&UCH) holds vast and unrealised potential for cross-disciplinary ocean science research and public engagement to contribute to the UN Decade of Ocean Science challenges. The SoMUCH Below the Waves project brings together UNESCO Accredited NGOs and associated organisations to maximise the potential for the recording, study and monitoring of M&UCH and the promotion of these results for their application to natural environment studies, monitoring ocean health, ocean literacy and education.

The Maritime Archaeology Trust received a grant from Lloyd's Register Foundation to support the development phase of the SoMUCH project, enhancing the network and building a detailed project delivery plan.

The project will develop a common methodology by bringing together the results of projects delivered and future projects by the NGOs within an open source and publicly accessible database, and through engaging with a network of local communities, diving groups, fishers, universities and statutory authorities from around the globe to collect data. The results will be promoted for the development of interdisciplinary studies related to Ocean Decade challenges, integrated into educational resources and for public dissemination.

By using a common internationally accepted methodology developed as part of the project and with open access, comparable data will be collected when recording M&UCH globally. Expected data will include results from research focused underwater and coastal surveys, sampling and excavations, data

derived from commercially focused development Environmental Impact Assessments and observations by divers and coastal users.

The project, working with UNESCO linked institutions, is developing and growing as a strong governance framework and is set up to maintain transparency, actively engaging with all partners to enable co-design and co-creation of initiatives.

Further information:

- Maritime Archaeology Trust project page:
<https://maritimearchaeologytrust.org/projects-research/somuch/>
- UNESCO NGOs:
<https://2001convention-uch.ngo/>

Image credits: © Maritime Archaeology Trust



1st Framework's International Collaborations



Image credits: © John Louis Chapelle

1st Framework is a cross-art-form and project based organisation. It was founded in 1982 with an 'Empty Studio' policy, like a film company, whereby it gathers diverse teams from organisations who share similar precepts for each collaborative project. It was founded by Maxine Webster & Peter Avery – both ex-students from the William Morris / William Lethaby Central School of Arts & Crafts, London. Central's culture and ecology ideology permeates the work of the charity. Its awards include the 1st Prize European Year of Lifelong Learning and the 1st Prize Londoners of the Year for Community Arts Development.

1st Framework's creative international collaborations are developed step-by-step, **helping to draw attention to neglected or significant heritage locations by breathing fresh air and new perspectives to complex sites and situations, strengthening networks and helping organisations gain traction for their individual initiatives.** It has presented work in New York (USA), Sydney (Australia), Girona (Spain), Dublin (Irish Republic), Berlin (Germany), Venice (Italy) and Prague, Brnenec, Teplice Nad Madjul (Czech Republic), and has been highlighted by the British Council and the Goethe Institute for examples of innovative best practice, in particular the use of new technology to access remote locations and enable those with age-related disabilities to participate in cultural heritage projects.

Highlighting the unharnessed potential of industrial heritage is a particular focus of 1st Framework's opus. For eleven years it participated in the campaign to save London's Smithfield Market from demolition resulting in its transformation to the Museum of London which opens in 2026. Similar profile raising projects have taken place in UFA Fabrik Film Studios, Berlin, Schindler Factory Czech Republic and Villa Hériot Museum to the Italian Resistance, Venice.

A current 1st Framework project is "On the Surface, Branches on the Same Tree" (2017- 2026). This project has forged connections via a series of pragmatic collaborations. It explores the influential links between philanthropic individuals concerned with the social and environmental damage caused by industry who were working together at the height of the industrial revolution.

By working in partnership with educationalists, communities and other organisations to co-ordinate working parties, highlight neglected industrial sites, deliver practical workshops, support to artisans, seminars, symposiums, exchanges and events the aim is to enable us all to lay claim to our heritage in diverse and creative ways.

1st Framework's international activism in 2026 will continue to include raising awareness of the fragility of the future of one of Venice's earliest boatyards, the Squero San Isepo, bequeathed to the carpenters & caulkers of the city when William Armstrong and his colleagues relocated their industrial activities to Trieste in 1869. Squero San Isepo continues the wooden boatbuilding tradition. Improved facilities are needed. Plans for its regeneration can be seen here: <https://sanisepo.com>. During 2026 the puppet theatre will return to tell the story of how for hundreds of years wood for the construction of Venice was brought on its perilous journey down from the mountains on snow melt every spring by the heroic Zattieri communities.

Further information:
<https://1stframework.org/>



Image credits: © Nelson Kishi

Strengthening a National-Global Network of UNESCO Sites in the United Kingdom



Image credits: © Matthew Rabagliati (photo taken in Namibia)

© UNESCO (photo taken in China)

The UK National Commission for UNESCO (UKNC) plays a unique role in connecting the UK's 60 UNESCO designations (covering around 15% of the UK's landmass and home to 9 million people), World Heritage Sites, Biosphere Reserves, Global Geoparks, Creative Cities and others, into a coherent national network that is both resilient and globally engaged. **Over the past five years, UKNC has led a series of programmes and partnerships that demonstrate how UNESCO sites can function as living laboratories for climate action, community development and international cooperation.**

A central strand of this work has been Local to Global, a Heritage Fund-supported programme designed to strengthen the UK's land-based UNESCO designations. **Through capacity-building, governance support and shared tools, the programme has helped sites articulate common challenges, mobilise evidence and co-develop solutions with their communities.** Its impact has been twofold: improving the resilience of the UK network while enabling sites to engage more confidently and equitably with global UNESCO partners.

Complementing this, the Scotland UNESCO Trail, developed by UKNC in collaboration with the Scottish Government and VisitScotland, is the world's first national UNESCO trail. **It demonstrates how a coordinated, values-led approach can bring together heritage, sustainable tourism and place-based economic development.** The Trail has become a model for how UNESCO designations can drive more inclusive and sustainable visitor economies while reinforcing a shared identity across diverse places.

The Climate Change and UNESCO Heritage (CCUH) Programme, funded through HM Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund, has further established UNESCO sites as real-world testbeds for tackling complex climate and heritage risks. Working across three pilot sites, the

programme produced open-source data tools, new governance models and collaborative adaptation strategies, confirming that UNESCO designations can offer globally relevant insights when supported by robust, community-led research.

Alongside programme delivery, UKNC has expanded the research infrastructure needed to sustain this work. A new partnership with the Creative Policy and Evidence Centre (Creative PEC) is developing methodologies for understanding the financial and non-financial value of UNESCO sites as multi-stakeholder partnerships both in the UK and internationally. This builds on UKNC's long-standing commitment to strengthening the evidence base for cultural and natural heritage policy.

Underlying all these initiatives is a commitment to international collaboration grounded in partnership. UKNC's soft power approach emphasises dialogue, reciprocity and shared learning, recognising that the UNESCO site network is a powerful platform for bringing communities together across borders. **Whether exchanging climate knowledge, cultural practices or new forms of community engagement, these sites demonstrate how heritage can enable societies to collaborate around common challenges in ways that are inclusive, participatory and locally led.**

Through these combined efforts, UKNC is helping shape a future in which UNESCO designations across the UK, and worldwide, contribute to stronger, more resilient, and more connected societies.





Sharing UK Expertise

Heritage Alliance members have leveraged UK expertise in a variety of heritage settings focused on heritage management, community engagement, organisational models and conservation best practice.

At the international level, UK heritage institutions play an important role in safeguarding and transmitting traditional heritage skills, particularly by establishing formal, transferable training and accreditation systems that are recognised globally. Similarly, UK institutions have shared specialist conservation knowledge via publications and other activities.

With its existing expertise, the UK is able to export proven models and best practice in heritage management, helping other countries to set up similar structures and programmes and also helping to protect specific heritage sites in complex international contexts.

These initiatives demonstrate the UK's leadership in heritage and contribution to soft power, showing the importance of heritage on the global stage.

The case studies in this section are:

- Establishing the Wren International Centre of Excellence for safeguarding historic fabric and heritage skills, with a focus on international partnerships (St Paul's Cathedral)
- Developing skills in dry stone walling via a progressive and internationally-recognised Craft Certification Scheme (Dry Stone Walling Association)
- Leading the development of the European Network of World Heritage Associations (ENWHA) and sharing best practice for heritage management (World Heritage UK)
- Leveraging the National Trust model in an Incubator Programme designed to strengthen emerging heritage trusts and organisations (INTO)
- Sharing case studies and examples of UK approaches to community engagement, participation and heritage conservation in South East Asia (English Heritage)
- Making an important publication for advice and guidance on ship conservation available globally outside of the UK (National Historic Ships UK)
- Protecting the wreck of the Endurance and establishing a Conservation Management Plan in an international context (UK Antarctic Heritage Trust)

Image credits: © Graham Lacdao/St Paul's Cathedral

The Wren International Centre of Excellence



Image credits: © ScottWhitbystudio

St Paul's Cathedral stands as one of the world's most iconic architectural achievements. A masterpiece of Sir Christopher Wren and a symbol of resilience, craft, and faith. Yet the skills that built and maintain this national treasure are under threat. Across the UK and internationally, heritage craft skills are in decline, with too few trained craftspeople to care for historic buildings and monuments.

The Wren International Centre of Excellence at St Paul's Cathedral aims to address this challenge by becoming a beacon for training, collaboration, and innovation in heritage conservation. The Centre's vision is twofold: to safeguard the fabric of St Paul's through expert maintenance and restoration, and to nurture a new generation of craftspeople through high-quality apprenticeships. In its first phase, the Centre will focus on succession planning and the skills

required to care for the Cathedral itself, before expanding to meet the growing needs of local, national, and international heritage projects.

At the heart of the initiative lies a belief that craft is both a viable and fulfilling career. Creativity is embedded in crafts, art and the built environment, and learning these skills enhances the legacy of our cultural and built heritage. Apprentices will gain hands-on experience alongside master craftspeople, from stonemasons and carpenters to gilders, mosaicists and metalworkers. Apprentices learn the traditional techniques that have sustained the current Cathedral and previous cathedrals on the same site for over 1400 years, while also engaging with modern conservation science and digital technologies. **These apprenticeships will not only ensure the survival of rare skills**



but also offer meaningful, lifelong careers rooted in creativity, precision, and purpose.

The Centre will also embody international partnerships. **Through collaborations with global institutions, heritage bodies, and universities, it will share expertise, host exchanges, and contribute to the global dialogue on sustainable preservation. By fostering these networks, St Paul's will strengthen the UK's reputation for excellence in**

heritage conservation and quality in the built environment demonstrating that traditional skills are central to cultural diplomacy and international cooperation.

The team at St Paul's already have a strong network nationally through the Cathedral Workshop Fellowship and internationally with cathedrals supporting the same values in people development and supporting craft skills.

However, this vision can only be realised with support. Funding is urgently needed to create the facilities, workshops, and resources that will make the Wren International Centre of Excellence a reality. Investment in this project is not just an investment in a building, but in the people and skills that will protect our shared heritage for generations to come.

The DSWA Craft Certification Scheme



Image credits: © The Stone Trust, Vermont, USA

© Barney Murray (the DSWA's youngest Master Craftsman at 25)

The Dry Stone Walling Association (DSWA) Craft Certification Scheme is a progressive suite of qualifications designed to recognise and develop skills in dry stone walling. The scheme begins at Level 1 and progresses through Levels 2 and 3, culminating in the DSWA Master Craftsman Certificate - the highest qualification available. Upon achieving Master Craftsman status, individuals are eligible to undertake the training required to become a DSWA assessor.

The Certification Scheme has been running for over forty years and has been accredited by LANTRA for the past twenty-five. Over this time, the scheme has been refined to meet all the requirements of an accredited certification body under the oversight of OFQUAL. In recent years, the DSWA has worked alongside LANTRA to implement an Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) system and to review the assessor

standardisation process. This ensures consistent application of the marking criteria, regardless of where assessments are carried out. To support this, assessors from all countries using the scheme travel to the UK biannually to participate in a standardisation event.

In the UK, the DSWA delivers numerous five day training courses throughout the year for Levels 1 and 2, with assessments taking place on the final day. Level 3 and the Master Craftsman tests involve a two-part assessment for the more advanced Wallers. Encouragingly, many candidates pursuing these higher levels are young, professional Wallers.

Thanks to its proven success in the UK, the scheme is now regarded as a global industry standard in the craft of dry stone walling.

The Stone Trust in the United States has adopted the full scheme, offering both training opportunities and assessments aligned with UK standards. The scheme is also widely used across Canada, with a total of six Master Craftsman Assessors operating in North America.

Further afield, two Master Craftsmen currently lead training and assessment in Australia, where interest is growing exponentially. A dedicated training and assessment site has been established in New South Wales, featuring all dry stone features required at each level.



For several years, groups of Japanese Wallers have travelled to the UK to attend training and test days at the DSWA National Training Site in Cumbria. One Japanese candidate is now working towards the Master Craftsman qualification.

As the DSWA certification has become more widely recognised, European Wallers are increasingly using the scheme for proven professional accreditation. Notably, a Master Craftsman certificate was recently awarded to a candidate from Bulgaria.

The day-to-day operation of the Certification Scheme is managed by the DSWA Training and Education Co-ordinator, with support from the Chief Assessor and the Chairman of the Craft Skills Group. Together, they report to the DSWA Trustee Board.

Looking ahead, the DSWA aims to engage with commissioning and funding bodies to encourage the use of certified craftsmen. The goal is to ensure that dry stone walling continues to thrive as a traditional craft, remaining both relevant and valued wherever it is practiced around the world.

Further information:
<https://www.dswa.org.uk/training-education/craft-certification-scheme/>
Email training@dswa.org.uk

The Commonality of the World Heritage Concept



Image credits: © World Heritage UK

World Heritage UK (WHUK) is a UK based independent NGO representing the 35 UK World Heritage Sites (WHS). It has been extending its influence and activities internationally over five years by providing good practice advice on the management of WHSs at a country and local level. WHUK has played a lead role in the creation and development of the European Network of World Heritage Associations (ENWHA) – an independent umbrella organisation which now provides a platform for linking World Heritage Sites and their national associations across Europe, raising awareness, and sharing good practice.

The world heritage concept underpinning WHUK's and the wider UK WH sectors' work is enshrined in the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention, ratified by 196 countries worldwide including the UK. It is founded on the common goal of ensuring that the Outstanding Universal Value of the globally most important Sites are protected and managed for future generations. Through a two year process of collaboration and partnership with 14 other European countries (ENWHA) WHUK has been central and supportive of the First European Site Managers Forum held in Granada in April 2025 organised by ENWHA.

In support of its ENWHA activities WHUK has undertaken a review of the complex and diverse governance and organisational frameworks that underlie the governmental and non-governmental world heritage sectors across Europe. This reveals that the UK is amongst the few countries that have most successfully implemented the UNESCO World Heritage Convention over the last 35 years. **The respect that this brings provides opportunities, now more than ever, for the UK to use its World Heritage Site Collection and related experience as significant assets to assist in the development of its soft power strategies for Europe and elsewhere.**

Further information:
www.worldheritageuk.org

The INTO Incubator Programme

Launched in 2020 by the International National Trusts Organisation (INTO) and supported by the Helen Hamlyn Trust, the Incubator Programme is a global initiative designed to strengthen heritage organisations through strategic support, collaboration and capacity building.

Drawing on the National Trust model, the programme helps emerging trusts develop sustainable structures, engage communities, and preserve cultural and natural heritage. Participants benefit from immersive workshops, strategic planning sessions and peer-to-peer learning. **The programme fosters international collaboration, bringing together heritage professionals from diverse backgrounds to share best practices and adapt successful models to local contexts.** From Hungary to Barbados, Gibraltar to Taiwan, and Fiji to Nigeria, the Incubator has supported the growth of new trusts and inspired innovative approaches to conservation.

A key lesson from the programme is the importance of adaptability. While the National Trust model offers a strong foundation, each country's cultural, social, and environmental context requires tailored solutions. **The programme emphasises community engagement, volunteer mobilisation and inclusive heritage management.** Strategic planning and clear communication are central to its success, helping participants navigate challenges and build resilient organisations.

The Incubator's flexibility was tested in 2020 when the programme moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite travel restrictions, INTO developed virtual resources, webinars, and virtual site visits that maintained the programme's collaborative spirit. These tools later supported INTO Online 2021 and the INTO Heritage Leaders programme launched in 2024.

In-person learning remains a cornerstone of the programme. The 2024 Islands Incubator, held from 13–18 May, welcomed delegates from 10 trusts. Building on the Caribbean Incubator in 2023, the focus shifted to nature conservation and the challenges faced by small islands. Starting at the National Trust HQ in Swindon, participants engaged in workshops and discussions with National Trust staff. The group then travelled to Holnicote Estate, exploring income-generating models and conservation strategies. Over four days, delegates participated in deep dives with National Trust teams in Somerset and Devon, covering topics such as sand dune

restoration, coastal grazing, tourism, and inclusivity. The programme concluded at Dunster Castle, focusing on visitor experience and property operations. The energy and goodwill generated exceeded expectations, creating passionate advocates for INTO's work.

The Inclusive European Heritage Residency 2025, organised with Europa Nostra and the National Trust, took place at Hardwick Hall. This residency explored how heritage places enrich lives and restore natural environments, continuing the Incubator's mission of global collaboration and learning.

Further information:

- Project page:
<https://www.into.org/programmes-resources/incubator/>
- Video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_3SeP97n1o&t=1s

Image credits: © INTO



Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth in South East Asia



Image credits: © Turquoise Mountain

From January 2022 to February 2023, English Heritage was invited by the British Council and ICCROM (International Centre for Conservation, Rome) to share case studies and examples of UK approaches to community engagement, participation and heritage conservation to support a study into Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth in South East Asia. The project was commissioned by the British Council to build on their research to date on how best to galvanise cultural heritage in all its forms to support social inclusion and economic growth. Working with ICCROM, Turquoise Mountain and Seameo-Spafa (the South East Asia Regional Centre for Archaeology and Fine Arts), the project brought together practitioners and community groups from across

Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Myanmar, Indonesia and the Philippines to share their experiences, creating a resource of 36 case studies ranging across 10 countries. English Heritage formed part of the steering committee and provided case studies on UK approaches to community engagement, reflecting on lessons learnt from the National Lottery Heritage Fund supported projects at Belsay Hall and Marble Hill alongside proposals to rejuvenate Temple Church in the heart of Bristol.

The project illustrates the role of a UK heritage organisation in supporting Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth, which is a global initiative led by the British Council. It also demonstrated the importance of partnership working with colleagues in ICCROM and Seameo-Spafa.

This programme required commitment – the willingness to show up and keep supporting the team throughout. After many hours online (often out of the working day due to time differences) there was an opportunity to attend a final seminar in Bangkok working with a great team of multinational colleagues who share similar views and values on sustainable heritage.

Further information: <https://ch4igrowth.iccrom.org/>

Specialist Knowledge Sharing for Historic Vessels

In partnership with the International Congress of Maritime Museums (ICMM), National Historic Ships UK (NHS-UK) undertook to share the guidance publication 'Conserving Historic Vessels' to its members worldwide, since there is no similar book available outside of the UK. Richly illustrated and 200 pages long, the book is an invaluable resource for historic vessel custodians, designed to explain the key principles around ship conservation, helping specialists and non-specialists alike to develop an understanding of the most appropriate route to adopt. As a limited offer, ICMM provided a

copy free of charge to any full member. They also created a 30% discount to all members which is available on copies purchased from the NHS-UK website. As a result of this collaboration, 23 museums in 16 countries have now been supplied with a copy of 'Conserving Historic Vessels,' gaining expertise and understanding of how to manage the maritime assets in their care.

This case study shows the value of sharing knowledge and expertise outside of our own country. The UK is unique in having a government funded organisation

set up to provide advice and guidance on ship conservation with outputs that have value to a wide range of stakeholders. Through this initiative, other countries have benefited from this information, with the same principles set down in the publication being relevant to any historic ship project. The ICMM Network and its Ships Committee offers a mechanism for worldwide representatives to discuss and explore the guidance in more detail, deepening understanding and leading to the documentation of other ship projects on which everyone can draw.

This project would not have been possible without the partnership between ICMM and National Historic Ships UK. The established network created by ICMM membership made it easy to circulate the publication as widely as possible, without NHS-UK having to start from scratch establishing its own contacts. It was also helpful to clearly understand the market, in terms of the value that the publication had for other countries since they have no similar guidance of their own in place.

Further information:

- ICMM: <https://icmm-maritime.org/>
- Conserving Historic Vessels: <https://www.nationalhistoricships.org.uk/paypal>



Image credits: © International Congress of Maritime Museums (ICMM)

Protecting Endurance in an International Framework

The UK Antarctic Heritage Trust (UKAHT) is dedicated to preserving British heritage in Antarctica, primarily through the care of six historic scientific stations on the Antarctic Peninsula. In recent years this responsibility has expanded in an extraordinary way.

In 2022 the world learned that the wreck of *Endurance* – Sir Ernest Shackleton’s legendary vessel – had been discovered at a depth of 3,000 metres in the Weddell Sea. **The ship was found in remarkable condition by the Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust which led a pioneering interdisciplinary and international expedition to locate, survey and document the site.**

The discovery sparked global interest and raised complex questions about the future of the

wreck: Should it be raised? Should artefacts be recovered? Could it become a destination for tourism? Under the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) *Endurance* is recognised as a historic site meaning any Treaty Party could authorise activities at the site – potentially placing its integrity at risk.

In response the UK Government asked UKAHT to assume responsibility for the long-term stewardship of *Endurance*. Working closely with the discovery team and international partners UKAHT developed and published a Conservation Management Plan (CMP). This plan sets out how the UK will lead efforts to:

- Protect the wreck within the ATS framework ensuring its preservation for future generations

- Promote responsible scientific access enabling research while safeguarding the site
- Inspire global audiences using the story of *Endurance* to deepen understanding of Antarctic heritage

UKAHT is now advocating for enhanced protective measures under the ATS to guarantee that *Endurance* remains undisturbed and intact – so its extraordinary story can continue to resonate worldwide.

Image credits: © Falklands Maritime Heritage Trust



Image credits: © Peter Hinton

Targeted Funding



Many of the projects described in previous pages have been possible due to the generous support of a variety of funders, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Wolfson Foundation, ALIPH (International Alliance for the Protection of Heritage in Conflict Areas), the Lloyd's Register Foundation, the Helen Hamlyn Trust and funding made available from Europa Nostra for its Awards and 7 Most Endangered Programmes.

The British Council's Cultural Protection Fund has supported large-scale international heritage projects, including several of the case studies included in this report, attesting to the ongoing strategic importance of the Fund:

- Flood Management from the Skell Valley to the Rwenzori World Heritage Site in Uganda
- Turath (Heritage) Benghazi, Libya
- Withstanding Change: Heritage Amongst Climate Uncertainty

The Fund has also helped to establish stonemasonry training for displaced Syrians and local communities in Jordan and Lebanon, teaching new skills while also improving livelihoods (see the World Monuments Fund case study, on page 70).

Two further cases studies, however, show the significant impact that even small grants can have, especially to support individuals and small organisations to establish and develop international activities and partnerships:

- The TAP INTO programme, launched by the International National Trusts Organisation (INTO) and funded by the Helen Hamlyn Trust, provides small grants and expert support to heritage organisations worldwide

- In 2019, THA (in partnership with the British Council) launched an International Travel Grant Scheme to enable heritage professionals to develop mutually beneficial international projects and partnerships for their organisations

Furthermore, THA's newly-relaunched Heritage Funding Directory includes funders focused on international activity: <https://www.heritagefundingdirectory.org/>.

Image credits: © World Monuments Fund

Flood Management from the Skell Valley to the Rwenzori World Heritage Site in Uganda



Image credits: © INTO

The Skell Valley Landscape Project (May 2021 - May 2025) was a £2.5m scheme led by the National Trust and Nidderdale National Landscape to look at ways of addressing the flood risk at Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal. The project focused on the River Skell which flows through the World Heritage Site. Working with 16 partners including farmers, landowners and local communities, the scheme delivered a series of projects over four years to help create a sustainable future for the Skell Valley.

The project has also had transnational implications as the World Heritage Site Management Team has exchanged knowledge with the global network of UNESCO designated sites. **The Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal World Heritage Site co-operated with Rwenzori World Heritage Site in Uganda as part of the *Melting Snow and Rivers in Flood* project** funded by the UK's Cultural Protection Fund and Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the International National Trusts Organisation (INTO), and the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda.

Looming over 5000 metres, the Rwenzori mountain range in western Uganda is home to once vast equatorial glaciers of ice and snow. Water from these ice caps descends the slopes of the Rwenzori and into the river streams of the Nile. These glaciers trap snowfall, acting as a buffer to increasingly extreme rains that hammer the region. With the glacier expected to entirely vanish within the next ten years, and flooding expected to return, urgent action is needed to bolster climate change preparedness in the region.

In the *Melting Snow and Rivers in Flood* project, **the World Heritage team was able to share its natural flood management experiences with Rwenzori, while the Rwenzori team shared its experience in community engagement and understanding and mapping the importance of intangible heritage to local people.** As well as highlighting the interweaving of natural, cultural and intangible heritage, the project emphasised the importance of being guided by the experience and needs of local communities.

Further information:

- National Trust project page: <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/yorkshire/fountains-abbey-and-studley-royal-water-garden/skell-valley-project-at-fountains-abbey-and-studley-royal>
- INTO project page: <https://www.into.org/uganda-climate-change/>
- Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6U92YX37TY>



Turath (Heritage) Benghazi, Libya



Image credits: © World Monuments Fund

Benghazi, Libya's second city, is at a turning point. After the end of the civil war in 2020, which caused much destruction across the country, there has been a slow, at times fragile, return to peace and normality. Over the past few years, reconstruction has taken place, with national and international investors returning to the city. Redevelopment and renewed infrastructure are essential, but today's relentless pace of change also threatens the historic character of this great port city, which mixes Arab and Ottoman influences with the Italianate Modernism of the early 20th century. The danger is that the drive for renewal will clear-fell the old, creating a new plate-glass, steel and concrete 'anywhere' city which ignores the distinctive fabric, traditions and stories that make this place so special.

Consequently, the World Monuments Fund (WMF) placed Benghazi on the 2022 World Monuments Watch. Since then, thanks to the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund, WMF has been collaborating with the Historic City Authority, the Municipality and Barah Arts to offer an alternative vision, where old buildings can be conserved or repurposed alongside much needed investment in the new.

The initiative has focussed on training: working alongside partners to give them the skills to push back proposals that ignore Benghazi's past and offer solutions where heritage-led regeneration not only makes good financial sense but also contributes to local society. This capacity building is not restricted

to town planners and structural engineers but includes young career architects whom the city will need to implement the work. Together, over the past year they have developed plans for the restoration of two iconic buildings in the heart of Benghazi – the Osman Mosque, one of the oldest mosques in Libya, and the Municipality, a fine Ottoman structure in the heart of the old town. There is also interest in the historic open-spaces between the buildings – like many cities, Benghazi's squares and parks are an essential part of daily life and require attention to sensitively restore them. **With partners from the Create Streets Foundation, the team in Libya have developed proposals to conserve and revitalise a historic square in the heart of the city. The plans, which are now being implemented, respect the warp and weft of the area's heritage, and are rooted in the needs of the local community.** All these projects, once complete, will serve as models for how the old city can contribute to the future city.

The initiative works internationally on a variety of different levels - firstly, the focus is on training the teams in Benghazi, Libya, learning from other post-conflict cities across the MENA region. Secondly, the principal trainer is a conservation architect who is based in Beirut, who brings his particular experience of city-wide regeneration to the mix. Thirdly, because of the original difficulties of obtaining visas to enter Libya, the team held a 5-day workshop in

Cairo, based at the French Archaeological Institute, for all participants. Visiting examples of good practice within the Old City offered trainees and trainers a useful opportunity to understand the art of the possible and to take that back to Benghazi. Another UK Partner - the Create Streets Foundation - was involved in training participants in how to conserve and animate historic open spaces to complement the work done on historic buildings. The final stage of the project has involved

further training in structural heritage conservation and an exemplar project bringing back to life an important historic green space in the heart of the old city.

British historian and television presenter Dan Snow has made a short documentary about the project which will be available later in the year.

Further information: <https://www.wmf.org/monuments/benghazi-historic-city-center>



Withstanding Change: Heritage Amongst Climate Uncertainty



Image credits: © Heritage Watch Ethiopia

Initially funded by a £1.7 million grant from the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund, in partnership with the UK Department of Media, Culture and Sport, the International National Trusts Organisation (INTO), Withstanding Change: Heritage amongst climate uncertainty project has supported the guardians of culturally significant sites across the Middle East and East Africa in responding to the impacts of climate change.

The project has restored and adapted heritage sites in six countries, focusing on climate resilience and improving accessibility for the communities whose histories these places represent. A parallel twinning programme with National Trust properties in England and Wales has underscored the vital role of international collaboration in addressing climate challenges.

The first phase of the project concluded in March 2025, but with further funding from the Cultural Protection Fund to January 2026, **Withstanding Change is demonstrating how physical heritage interventions can serve as anchors for community engagement, advocacy, and research.** The project has also contributed to new adaptation guidance, enabling wider dissemination of its learnings.

As a membership body comprising over one hundred heritage organisations across five continents, international collaboration is central to INTO. Withstanding Change continues this tradition, bringing together organisations in Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Zanzibar to safeguard culturally significant places from climate impacts—impacts that neither recognise nor respect borders.

This has included:

- Coastal properties in north Wales and Stone Town sharing strategies to mitigate accelerating sea erosion.
- Sixteenth-century palaces in Norfolk and Cairo addressing increasingly erratic and severe rainfall patterns.
- Formal gardens in Addis Ababa and Hampshire collaborating to adapt historic rose varieties to changing climatic conditions.

In each case, the strong bonds formed between organisations in disparate contexts have catalysed adaptive responses, demonstrating the power of international connection.

The project has also highlighted the capacity of non-governmental organisations in East Africa and the Middle East to restore and manage important heritage sites. This work has taken place in challenging contexts, where government entities often dominate heritage management and may struggle to compete with well-financed, conservation-hostile modernisation agendas that can lead to the wholesale destruction of heritage sites.

INTO partners have successfully highlighted innovative methodologies to protect heritage from climate impacts, drawing on traditional techniques and skills while integrating contemporary safeguarding approaches.

The close involvement of local communities has been key to achieving the project's objectives and ensuring the sustainability of conservation efforts. It has also generated both temporary and permanent employment for those involved, demonstrating the potential of heritage conservation as an economic catalyst.

Building Conservation Capacity in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon



Image credits: © World Monuments Fund

Cultural heritage is a source of pride and identity for those displaced by war, and it can also be a powerful tool for healing after conflict.

The project's first training programme was developed in Mafraq, Jordan - deliberately sited, because it is close to the Syrian border, and possesses large numbers of displaced Syrians. With generous support from the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund, World Monuments Fund (WMF) and WMF Britain worked with Petra National Trust to create a training facility and recruit a group of 45 qualified candidates who, after completing training, would become mentors for subsequent trainees in the 12-month program. The training focused on: stone cutting; manufacture of molds, templates, and models; repair of damaged masonry; stabilisation of arches, vaults, and domes; underpinning and reinforcement of foundations; hoisting and lifting of stone block; methodologies for grouting and pinning masonry surfaces; lime technologies; surveying; stone selection and quarrying; cleaning historic stone; mortar analysis; and other related masonry conservation skills. Those taking part were a mixture of local Jordanians and Syrians, of women and men, and of older and younger generations. The things uniting them were that they were all impacted by the war, and none had ever picked up a stonemasonry chisel.

Thanks to additional support from the British Council and in partnership with Petra National Trust, a second phase of the training program with 20 of the original trainees was held between May and December 2019. Building on student's achievements, this next phase taught trainees more advanced stonemasonry skills as well as letter carving, mortar work and business planning.

Building on the success of the project, WMF secured additional support from the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund to expand the Building Conservation Capacity project beyond Syria and Jordan.

Launched in the summer of 2020, WMF's third conservation stonemasonry training program took place in Tripoli, Lebanon. The program, with a cohort of 40 trainees, focused on Syrian refugees and local Lebanese. The group of trainees included 8 women – an important step toward addressing gender imbalance in the masonry craft. A youth engagement program invited university students and local youth to the training center for educational activities, workshops, and a guided tour of the Lion Tower.



After both projects in Jordan and Lebanon, some participants went on to work in the stonemasonry business, developing projects with artists such as Dana Awartani as well as creating items for sale with Turquoise Mountain in Amman, Ishkar in London and for World Monuments Fund. For others the benefit of training lay in the skillsets the course taught through the course, with students setting up businesses in woodcarving and creating props for events and TV shows. Several students went on to further educational opportunities, including one Syrian who is now studying for a stonecarving degree at the City & Guilds of London Art School. Finally, even where the course may not have led to direct employment for all the students, nearly all cited other benefits, from improving their English or simply building confidence.

Mahmoud, a Syrian from the Tripoli course summed it up beautifully when he described how his life before joining was '...deflated, without identity, without anything to do... until I came here, where it took a 180 degree turn. I was nothing. I became something.'

Further information:
<https://www.wmf.org/projects/building-capacity-syria-jordan>

6 years of the TAP INTO Technical Assistance Programme



The TAP INTO programme, launched by the International National Trusts Organisation (INTO) and funded by the Helen Hamlyn Trust, **provides small grants and expert support to heritage organisations worldwide. Over six years, it has empowered trusts to preserve cultural and natural heritage through collaboration, capacity building, and knowledge exchange.**

Examples of impact include the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society's sustainable site management in St Kitts and Nevis, and the Hungarian Garden Heritage Foundation's development of its first strategy. TAP INTO also facilitated exchanges between the National Trust of Zimbabwe and the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, and supported collaborations in Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and New Zealand.

In 2024, members from Fiji, The Netherlands and Malta engaged in exchanges with UK colleagues. The Montserrat National Trust, Christopher National Trust and the National Trust collaborated on shared histories and collections. Most recently, the National Trust for Jersey and the National Trust for Scotland advised the Barbados National Trust on a potential acquisition.

These partnerships illustrate how targeted support fosters global connections, enabling organisations to share best practices and address common challenges. TAP INTO has awarded £125,000 across 75 grants involving 48 organisations, demonstrating the value of small-scale funding in driving innovation and resilience.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, INTO adapted the programme to provide urgent support, helping members maintain operations and community engagement. This flexibility highlights the importance of responsive funding mechanisms.

TAP INTO also contributes to long-term sustainability by investing in training and development. Many awardees have progressed to other INTO initiatives, such as Heritage Leaders and the Incubator, or partnered on larger projects like the 'Withstanding Change' heritage and climate adaptation project.

The success of TAP INTO reflects the power of international collaboration and the generosity of the Helen Hamlyn Trust. It continues to strengthen the global heritage community by enabling organisations to grow, adapt and thrive. **The programme shows that targeted micro-grants, paired with expert support and international networking, can deliver outsized benefits.**

More information:
<https://www.into.org/programmes-resources/tap-into-small-grants/>

Image credits: © INTO

The Heritage Alliance Travel Grants Scheme



Image credits: The International Travel Grant Scheme funded visits to twelve different countries to build partnership projects, including five that were on the Overseas Development Aid List © Dr Francesca Benetti

In 2019, THA (in partnership with the British Council) ran a pilot International Travel Grant Scheme: providing dedicated funding to enable heritage professionals to develop mutually beneficial international projects and partnerships for their organisations. The scheme was the British Council's response to one of the recommendations in THA's 2018 International Report.¹⁹ We hope there will be a successor scheme in the future, building the evidence of impact in the 2024 evaluation report.²⁰

The total amount of funding available for the scheme was £15,500. Each grant was intended to enable recipients to undertake an international visit to meet with colleagues and share skills, expertise, and experience. Applications were considered for grants of up to £700 for visits within Europe, and up to £1,500 for visits beyond Europe. Priority was given to small and medium UK heritage organisations (with a turnover of less than £1m), particularly those who were new to international working – and also to proposals for mutually beneficial visits to countries on the British Council's Overseas Development Aid (ODA) List.

Grants were awarded to thirteen organisations, which funded visits to twelve different countries to build partnership projects, including five that were on the ODA List. The twelve countries visited, with the respective grant winners, were:

- Ethiopia (Ethiopian Heritage Trust) – on ODA list
- France (Dyfed Archaeological Trust, Lewes Priory Trust)
- India (Milton's Cottage Trust) – on ODA list
- Italy (Lewes Priory Trust)
- Jamaica (Serendipity Institute for Black Arts and Heritage) – on ODA list
- Kenya (Museum of British Colonialism) – on ODA list
- Nigeria (Friends of Sierra Leone Railway Museum) – on ODA list
- Norway (Archaeology Scotland)
- Spain (Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature)
- Switzerland (Chartered Institute for Archaeologists)
- Tatarstan (Council on Training in Architectural Conservation)
- USA (Council for British Archaeology, Friends of Stockton & Darlington Railway)

The visits took place in 2019, and a further reflection survey was undertaken by the participants in early 2021. This informed the publication of an Evaluation Report, which looked at shorter and slightly longer term impacts, and is available here: <https://www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/our-work/sector-support-and-projects/travel-grants-scheme-2019/>

Key learnings from the Travel Grant Scheme included:

- **The scheme was particularly appealing to small heritage organisations** (turnover under £100,000), which often do not have enough funds to support international travel.
- Recipients represented organisations working with a wide range of types of heritage, including archaeology, built heritage, industrial heritage, intangible heritage and archaeology.
- **The most popular reason to travel to another country was to build or strengthen partnerships.** The two next most common reasons were to gain new knowledge and skills, and/or to exchange knowledge with others.
- While many recipients recognised the value of digital tools, which increased after the Covid-19 pandemic, they also underlined that **initial face-to-face meetings are key moments to reinforce personal connection, and on-site visits are important learning opportunities.**

- **The impact of the travel grants included increasing the professional skills of the beneficiaries themselves,** fostering skills development and employability of partner organisations overseas and supporting applications to Erasmus+ bids.
- The International Travel Grant Scheme enabled the creation of at least 17 new partnerships overseas, and the strengthening of 11 existing partnerships. Most of these partnerships continued over the difficult period of the Covid-19 pandemic, despite many planned trips being cancelled or postponed due to the long-lasting travel restrictions.

This initial Travel Grants Scheme proved the success and long-lasting impact of the model and supports its continuation and expansion.

Recommendations

Our 2018 International Report put forward a set of recommendations for the government, funders and the sector, against different thematic areas to maintain and grow international activity in UK heritage. Below, we reevaluate these original recommendations against today's context, and then offer an updated set of recommendations. The broad themes of our original asks remain similar in many cases given their continued relevance, whilst others relate to new or emerging policy areas.

The following recommendations include a set for UK Government and decision-makers and seek to reduce the barriers preventing the heritage sector from doing more internationally; recognising its distinct value and contribution to their international objectives, and unlocking our collective potential to go further. There are also recommendations for the heritage sector itself and reflections on what more heritage organisations can do themselves to make the most of existing opportunities.

Funding

Since our last report, more of our members have benefited from the Cultural Protection Fund, which has proven invaluable to develop large-scale, high-impact international projects, whilst the Heritage Alliance Funding Directory now includes a section dedicated to international work. However, funding is the primary barrier preventing heritage organisations from doing more internationally, and the reluctance of UK charities to fund overseas work is especially problematic. For the UK Government, we therefore recommend:

- 1. Encouraging greater and deeper international exchange by extending the British Council-supported - or an alternatively funded - International Travel Grant Pilot Scheme to help heritage organisations (especially those who cannot self-fund) with the costs of travel expenses, conferences, supporting delegations and developing overseas partnerships.**
- 2. Ensuring that the Cultural Protection Fund is protected and continued beyond 2029 as a key means of facilitating UK/international engagement, amidst reduced funding for international development.**

For the heritage sector at home, we further recommend that:

- 3. Heritage organisations identify and develop relationships with their local chambers of commerce, to unlock funding opportunities for overseas projects and further the potential for trade and commercial growth.**

Coordination and recognition

Neither the quantity nor quality of international work by heritage NGOs is captured adequately, whilst aggregate data on the UK's heritage soft power is not captured. Without an adequate evidence base, it will be difficult for the government to make an accurate assessment of the role played by heritage in supporting its various international objectives. More also needs to be done to map and better understand the key networks and individuals involved in different countries and administrations to help promote engagement. The brokering role played by the government and the likes of the British Council is particularly important given the small scale and capacity of many of our heritage organisations. We recommend that:

- 4. The government leverages its forthcoming Soft Power Strategy to unlock the**

contribution of the heritage sector - building on previous commitments and supporting heritage organisations to increase their international capacity - including by co-creating a calendar of key international and commemorative events which the sector can purposefully engage with.

- 5. Support and funding for the independent heritage sector to establish and maintain a brokering role that can facilitate and coordinate delegations and partner visits to and from the UK - potentially hosted or funded by the British Council - and nurture collaboration between international bodies, the heritage sector and government.**

- 6. Government to promote and champion the heritage sector's activities and involvement on trade missions and further engagement with relevant stakeholders, such as Ambassadors and High Commissioners, and unlock commercial opportunities for heritage organisations through Chambers of Commerce.**

For the heritage sector at home, we further recommend that:

- 7. Heritage organisations identify networks of interest with international partners and seek out low-cost engagement opportunities (e.g. such as attending relevant online seminars, programmes and networking events)**

Mobility

Although we live in an increasingly digital age, mobility remains essential to international collaboration. However, mobility issues hamper heritage organisations' ability to build meaningful and lasting international partnerships. For instance, in our 2025 international survey one of our members noted the impact that the UK's exit from the EU has had on staff exchange programmes, school visits and the lack of a youth mobility scheme, limiting European-wide partnerships. Furthermore, immigration visa systems must consider the unique position of heritage sector jobs being highly skilled but often low paid. Our recommendations for government are to:

- 8. Consider what kind of support can be provided by global organisations in hosting and providing administrative and office space and support for those without a base in the country to operate for the duration of projects or delegations.**

Capacity

Our 2018 report noted how organisations are fully committed, but under-resourced. Capacity remains a primary challenge to developing international activity, especially for smaller organisations where staff are already divided across roles. Our recommendation is for:

- 9. Targeted financial support from government and relevant bodies to enable smaller heritage organisations to temporarily or permanently backfill senior positions, where expertise has been diverted for secondments, to explore new ways of working, collaboration or initiatives with international partners.**

Notes

¹ *International report* (The Heritage Alliance, 2018)

² *International report: case studies* (The Heritage Alliance, 2019)

³ 'Soft power: a strategy for UK success?' (Foreign Affairs Committee inquiry, 2025)

⁴ Heritage Funding Directory

⁵ Inventories of Living Heritage in the UK

⁶ 'Culture and Heritage', *Global Soft Power 2025*, Brandirectory (2025)

⁷ 'The Contribution of the Heritage Sector to the Visitor Economy' (*Heritage Counts*, Historic England, updated November 2024)

⁸ *UK World Heritage: Asset for the Future* (World Heritage UK, 2019)

⁹ Cited in *Keeping the UK's creative industries globally competitive* (UAL: Erskine Analysis, 2024)

¹⁰ *On The Brink: Heritage in the Cost of Living Crisis* (The Heritage Alliance, 2024)

¹¹ *International Travel Grant Scheme: evaluation report* (The Heritage Alliance, 2024)

¹² 'British expertise enlisted to promote cultural heritage and creativity in Saudi Arabia' (DCMS/DBT, 9 Dec 2024)

¹³ 'Programme of cultural cooperation between the Government of the Republic of India and His Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the years 2025 to 2030' (DCMS, 5 June 2025)

¹⁴ *Global Perceptions 2025: how 18-34 year olds see the UK and the world* (British Council, 2025)

¹⁵ Annual Reports, British Council

¹⁶ *Keeping the UK's creative industries globally competitive* (UAL: Erskine Analysis, 2024)

¹⁷ *The Heritage Manifesto 2024* (The Heritage Alliance, 2024)

¹⁸ *On The Brink: Heritage in the Cost of Living Crisis* (The Heritage Alliance, 2024)

¹⁹ *International report 2018* (The Heritage Alliance, 2018).

²⁰ *International Travel Grant Scheme: evaluation report* (The Heritage Alliance, 2024)

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Case Study Participants

1st Framework
DigVentures
Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain
Durham University
English Heritage
Europa Nostra UK
Friends of Stockton & Darlington Railway
Foundation for Jewish Heritage (Michael Mail MBE)
Heritage Open Days
Honor Frost Foundation
Institute of Conservation (Icon)
International National Trusts Organisation (INTO)
Maritime Archaeology Trust
National Historic Ships UK
National Trust
Shakespeare Birthplace Trust
St Paul's Cathedral
Sulgrave Manor Trust
The Heritage Alliance
UK Antarctic Heritage Trust
UK National Commission for UNESCO
University of Birmingham International Centre for Heritage
World Heritage UK
World Monuments Fund Britain (WMF Britain)

Thanks to Our Sponsors

The report was made possible through the in-kind support of Europa Nostra UK via the time volunteered by its trustees; and its publication made possible thanks to generous sponsorship from WMF Britain and Cabbells. The report was also supported by Heriot-Watt University, who kindly sponsor THA's international quarterly network.

Cabbells

As a design and content marketing agency specialising in the arts and heritage sector, Cabbells is proud to have collaborated on this report and is delighted to support Heritage Day 2026.

Cabbells creates arresting content across a variety of platforms for some of the nation's most beloved brands—from the niche to the world-renowned. Our partners include Kew, the British Film Institute, the Institute of Conservation, and The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. <https://www.cabbells.co.uk/>

Europa Nostra UK

Europa Nostra UK (ENUK) is the Country Representation for Europa Nostra in the UK. Europa Nostra is the leading citizens' movement to protect and celebrate Europe's cultural and natural heritage. Europa Nostra UK supports the delivery of Europa Nostra's strategy through engaging with our members and friends in the UK. <https://europanostrauk.org/>

World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund is an independent global heritage organisation founded in 1965, working with local communities to safeguard cultural heritage at risk from conflict, climate change, neglect and urban development. Through on-site conservation, training and advocacy, WMF works in partnerships to support the conservation of significant sites while strengthening local capacity. The organisation is headquartered in New York with offices and affiliates in Cambodia, China, France, India, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. World Monuments Fund Britain was established in 1995 and has since developed and delivered projects at 50+ sites in the UK and internationally, mobilising funding and connecting British heritage expertise globally.



Heriot-Watt University

Edinburgh Business School and the Scottish Confucius Institute for Business & Communication have developed a range of activities and projects to support collaboration between the UK and China in the fields of culture, heritage and historic environment management and as an internationally focused institution supports professionals with cross-cultural understanding and practice. <https://www.hw.ac.uk/>



Acknowledgements

The Heritage Alliance is grateful to those members, partner organisations and individuals working within the heritage sector who have contributed to this refreshed report, and to Heriot-Watt for its continued support of our international quarterly group.

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Europeana Foundation in The Hague and a Council member of Europa Nostra. She can be contacted via email (emma@collinsheritage.com) or on LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/collinsemma/>).

This report findings are based on a 2025 survey of its members conducted by THA, as well as insight gathered through its quarterly international group meetings, and alongside Emma the report has been worked on by various members of the THA team, including Neil Andrews, Policy & Advocacy Manager, and Lydia Gibson, Head of Policy & Communications.

About The Heritage Alliance

Established in 2002, the Heritage Alliance is England's largest coalition of heritage interests. We are a membership body that brings together over 200 independent organisations, who represent the full breadth of the sector. We work to champion the needs, aspirations, and achievements of our members and the wider heritage sector – influencing policy and legislation, bringing diverse groups together, and helping heritage practitioners to innovate and grow. Our vision is for a society in which England's historic environment and wider cultural



The
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