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# Heritage Building Skills Programme

Final evaluation report for  
Historic England

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# 1. Executive summary

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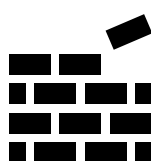
## About the Heritage Building Skills Programme

Launched by Historic England in 2021, the Heritage Building Skills Programme (HBS Programme) was a major five-year in-work training and apprenticeship programme in the North of England. The programme aimed to address long-standing, documented skills shortages in the heritage construction industry by bringing together public, private, and philanthropic sectors to provide training to learners and craftspeople at three critical points in their careers. Programme participants undertook placements hosted by a range of heritage specialist contractors and organisations (host firms), ranging from nine weeks to three-year apprenticeships. They had the opportunity to work at sites identified by Historic England's Heritage at Risk (HAR) programme through residential summer schools, gaining solid practical experience while helping to restore some of the country's most valued historic buildings and places.

## About the evaluation

Historic England commissioned Harlow Consulting to undertake a five-year mixed methods process and impact evaluation of the Heritage Building Skills Programme. The evaluation has provided on-going and valuable insights to Historic England about the programme's impacts (short and longer-term) and effectiveness in achieving its goals, as well as understanding of any unintended benefits or effects and evidence. The evaluation will now play a key part in helping Historic England to share the learning from the programme internally and with the wider sector.

## Overview of key achievements



- 44 trainees supported<sup>1</sup>
- 84% retention rate
- Collaborated with 30 host firms across 12 different trades
- Partnered with 9 further and higher education providers
- Networking opportunities created for trainees and host firms
- Historic England can share key learning with the wider sector



- 91% gained at least one qualification
- 83% employed in the heritage sector post-programme



- 3 Summer Schools working on Heritage at Risk, inspiring career choices
- 295 trainee instances of work on pre-1919 buildings

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<sup>1</sup> The programme recruited 42 trainees across 44 placements. Two trainees completed their initial placement before continuing to a second placement – for the purposes of evaluation these trainees are counted for each of their placements.

## Key success factors

- Dedicated, multi-skilled, and hard-working team clearly motivated to make the programme a success and extensively support host firms, trainees and partners.
- This agile team responded well to challenges and embraced opportunities for on-going improvement of the programme.
- Summer Schools gave trainees valuable networking opportunities, opening avenues for future jobs, and underpinning pathways for retention in the heritage sector. It is worth noting that the Summer Schools required a significant time investment from Historic England.
- A bespoke recruitment process attracted a range of strong applicants; as recruitment was led by Historic England, this reduced the burden for host firms.
- Funded placements at a living wage made the offer accessible to trainees.

## Key learnings

### For future training programmes

- Opportunities to meet and network as part of training programmes are valuable both during the programme and beyond, in terms of employment opportunities and retention of trainees in the heritage sector.
- The collaborative nature of the programme meant that organisations involved learnt best practice in employment and training, which they could use in their own future/ongoing work.
- Funded placements and dedicated support for the recruitment process increase accessibility to training for both host firms and trainees.
- The lack of assessors and the uncertainty of their availability for assessments makes the time needed to obtain an apprenticeship or qualification unpredictable, affecting budget planning.
- Providing training to address skills shortages requires significant investment of both budget and staff time.

### For the heritage sector

- This programme presents a model that has been impactful in bringing new people into the heritage sector and reducing skills shortages. The initial philanthropic funding for the programme meant that Historic England was able to design and deliver an intensive programme, covering costs for traineeships, summer schools and coordinate grant funding for Heritage at Risk sites where the Summer Schools took place, with the cost of repair works covered. The various aspects of this programme could be undertaken by different organisations if values are aligned and roles/responsibilities are clearly identified. For instance, a shared apprenticeship model could be led by an informed organisation at the regional level, working alongside other organisations in their area to ensure apprentices have relevant placements.

- Programmes like HBS could be used to target specific mainstream skills shortages and endangered crafts (for example, skills listed on the Heritage Crafts Red List of Endangered Crafts).<sup>2</sup>
- Although the programme has made a huge difference to those who have taken part, it has benefited a relatively small number of trainees. The sector needs sustained, long-term investment in skills development programmes. Some host firms expressed frustration over a perceived lack of long-term solutions.

## 2. Lessons learnt from five years of the Heritage Building Skills Programme

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**Figure 1: Programme participants take part in a decorative woodcarving workshop at the 2023 Summer School, ©Historic England**

The experiences of the HBS programme team over five years have generated key insights that can be useful to heritage sector organisations considering similar training programmes. The model has been successful in equipping participants with qualifications and employment (or pathways to both); it appears there would be benefits to the heritage sector to move forward with a sector-led, collaborative approach, building on the foundation of the HBS programme, as summarised in the following list of lessons learnt.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Red List - Heritage Crafts](#)



| Theme                                 | Lessons learnt for future programmes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Programme planning and design         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure sufficient time is allocated for planning the programme upfront; time should be 'front-loaded' to fully consider and address staff capacity, roles and responsibilities and crucially, contingency team members. Planning for contingency staff ensures the programme is not at risk during busy periods or due to absence. A collaboration between heritage sector organisations could unlock access to more people and resources.</li> <li>▪ Consider the programme's target participants and ensure that programme design and staffing are reflective of this audience. For example, if planning to engage with young people, what additional resources may be needed?</li> <li>▪ Consider how the training programme could be used to target specific skills shortages. Pathways to sustained employment post-intervention are less certain; consider if/how this risk can be mitigated.</li> </ul> |
| Team/ staff planning                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To ensure success, programmes require a dedicated and multi-skilled team that can respond in an agile way to challenges. This may be across multiple organisations, in which case a collaborative approach underpinned by robust processes, communications and ways of working is critical.</li> <li>▪ Consider the breadth of skills and experience needed within the team. Skills and experience related to teaching, people management and practical construction and site experience may be useful, depending on the nature of your programme.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Communications                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ When creating a communications strategy, ensure advertisement of the recruitment opportunities to reach the target audience, as well as ongoing marketing opportunities throughout the programme to promote heritage careers and highlight achievements.</li> <li>▪ Develop the communications strategy early on to ensure that appropriate resources and budget are allocated, and this must be reviewed periodically.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Evaluation planning                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Embed evaluation resource in the programme design to ensure that evaluation requirements and permissions are considered from the beginning of the programme. Planning clear outputs, outcomes and impacts which are achievable and measurable is a key part of this.</li> <li>▪ To ensure a successful evaluation and high levels of participant engagement, consider participant needs in the design of the evaluation, and, where possible, contractually stipulate their involvement to ensure engagement.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Working with and reporting to funders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure that funder stipulations and requirements are reasonable and appropriate to the intervention.</li> <li>▪ Plan early for a measured approach to funder management.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| Theme                                                                 | Lessons learnt for future programmes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recruitment                                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If possible, ensure the recruitment process is led by a well-resourced organisation as this brings benefits in terms of attracting applicants, increasing the number of applications, and reducing the administrative burden on organisations hosting trainees.</li> <li>▪ Shape application processes with host firms to ensure application questions are relevant. This has the added benefit of strengthening relationships.</li> <li>▪ Consider incorporating a hands-on exercise during the interview; this is valued by applicants as well as host organisations and is useful in demonstrating potential aptitude, manual dexterity and approach to a task.</li> </ul>                                                   |
| Placement length                                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider the purpose of the placement when determining placement duration; the nine-week preparation placement showed success in introducing the selected applicants to heritage construction careers. The sustain level placement showed success at both six- and 12-month lengths.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Accessibility                                                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider how the recruitment process can be as inclusive as possible and most appropriate to the role advertised. An application process that involves extensive writing can disadvantage some applicants.</li> <li>▪ Undertake in-person recruitment activities, such as presentations regarding heritage construction at colleges. This is valuable in both encouraging applications and introducing a wider group to heritage construction careers.</li> <li>▪ Fund placements as this increases accessibility to training programmes for both host organisations and trainees. To broaden participation, provide a living wage for trainees, allow for appropriate travel costs and consider a budget for tools.</li> </ul> |
| Supporting organisations hosting trainees to employ trainees directly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Offering host firms, a grant to employ trainees directly has benefits, in terms of the trainee feeling more connected to their host organisation and team.</li> <li>▪ Consider how the programme and its team can support host organisations; for example, offering training plan templates. Webinars and/or guidance materials could be a way to provide more support to host firms without this becoming too cost or time-intensive for programme teams.</li> <li>▪ Being part of a larger programme with support can lead to opportunities for host firms to build capacity and capability; this can be used as a 'selling point' to encourage participation from employers.</li> </ul>                                      |
| Provision of Summer Schools                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Summer Schools or similar activities require a high investment of resources but have proven to be incredibly valuable for trainees and host organisations. It provides a curated, non-trade specific, heritage focused training programme, broadening the knowledge of those taking part.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |



| Theme                                            | Lessons learnt for future programmes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consider delivering shorter interventions; these can provide similar value through the provision of opportunities for trainees to meet others, build networks, learn from experts and have the chance to work on a site with other disciplines. This would likely need co-operation from a range of organisations; a sector-led 'Summer Schools' initiative could be funded, resourced and organised via a consortium, making it more likely to be sustained over the long-term (in direct response to host firm appetite for longer-term solutions).</li> <li>▪ Assign a training coordinator role on-site at Summer Schools to take the pressure off the site manager. However, funding would need to be allocated for this, and it may be more feasible to find funding for such a role if the concept of 'Summer Schools' or similar was an on-going, sector led initiative (not solely reliant on one organisation/team).</li> </ul> |
| Importance of providing networking opportunities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure there are opportunities for trainees and host organisations to meet and network as part of the training programme. These opportunities are valued by participants both during and after the programme and should be considered a vital part of any programme.</li> <li>▪ Bring a range of organisations together when providing a training programme. This allows for good practice in employment and training to be developed and discussed.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## 3. About the Heritage Building Skills Programme

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### 3.1 Aims of and continuing rationale for the programme



**Figure 2: Woodcarving practice at the 2023 Heritage Building Skills Summer School, ©Historic England**

The HBS Programme pioneered a new training model and aimed to:

1. Reduce shortages in heritage construction skills,
2. Create viable career opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds, and
3. To improve the condition of Heritage at Risk (HAR) sites.

Research and evidence from the sector were used to underline the rationale for these aims from the beginning of the programme and beyond. The viability and appetite for the proposed Heritage Building Skills programme were tested by a short piece of market research conducted by Harlow Consulting in 2020. This research tested the viability of the three-tiered model amongst employers and sought views on typical barriers that prevented them from offering work-based training and apprenticeships routinely. Findings from the research confirmed a strong appetite from the sector to support the proposal, particularly considering respondent feedback about difficulties in recruiting new staff, desire to support new entrants to the heritage sector and concerns about the relevance of existing training provision.

#### **Rationale: skills**

The HBS programme's 2020 initiation document referenced the [2013 Skills Needs Analysis](#). The 2013 research noted that 89% of surveyed contractors were 'general mainstream construction companies' and that a similar percentage of surveyed contractors did not hold formal



qualifications relating to work on traditional buildings. It also noted that ‘an increasing number of non-specialist contractors are operating within the built heritage market’ and ‘employing more generic skills and using less appropriate methods and materials. This is also evidence that the construction sector lacked the capacity to provide work-based training opportunities.

At the time of programme initiation, a significant recent development had been the development of new apprenticeship and T-level standards in construction (requiring awareness and some understanding of the differences between traditional pre-1919 and modern buildings). The programme sought to utilise and build upon these standards to deliver work-based training and provide experience at critical career points. The North of England became the focus area for the programme, as anecdotal evidence at the time suggested heritage skills are in shorter supply in the north, and many of the region’s largest building conservation specialists had gone into administration in recent years.

The rationale for the programme remains relevant to the sector in 2026 and the lessons from it will be indispensable for future skills interventions. The [2024 Skills Needs Analysis](#) found skills gaps leading to contractors facing recruitment difficulties and reporting turning down work due to skills shortages. There was low confidence in the long-term sustainability and future capacity to meet demand for work on traditional buildings, as well as evidence of the current backlog of this work. The research found little evidence that training provision is adequate to sustain existing skills, or work to meet skills gaps and shortages, therefore intervention is needed to ensure the supply of skilled workers and so protect heritage. The North-East and North-West had the highest proportions of organisations reporting skills gaps (26% and 24%).

The 2024 Skills Needs Analysis indicated that work on traditional buildings is an economic growth area: demand for repair and maintenance work on pre-1919 buildings was estimated to be £28 billion in 2024 (39% of the total construction industry output for repair and maintenance) and is expected to rise to £30.5 billion by 2027. The workforce was estimated to be 180,000 in 2024, with 100,000 needing specific heritage skills (around 109,000 by 2027).

The [Heritage & Carbon: Addressing the Skills Gap](#) report, published in 2023, indicated that retrofitting historic buildings would lead to an additional £35 billion of output annually and support around 290,000 jobs. While many of these roles are not traditional craft skills, understanding how traditional buildings and materials perform is important to ensuring retrofit work is designed and carried out in a manner appropriate to the building in question.

### **Rationale: Diversity**

The Skills Needs Analysis, published by Historic England in 2024, reviewed a range of surveys that focus on those in manual roles. These surveys estimate that the on-site construction workforce is 99% male.<sup>3</sup> The nature of the workforce for traditional buildings – with many working as general contractors across buildings of different ages – makes understanding the diversity of the sector difficult. Research indicates that women are more likely to work in heritage construction than general construction, with figures indicating they make up between

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<sup>3</sup> [Skills Needs Analysis For the Repair, Maintenance and Retrofit of Traditional \(pre-1919\) Buildings in England](#)

6% and 13% of the workforce.<sup>4</sup> The Skills Needs Analysis also indicated ‘low levels of ethnic diversity, with 92% of respondents saying their employees are white.’

As with the wider construction sector, research has consistently shown that the heritage sector workforce is reliant on older workers, with 43% of respondents to a 2024 survey employing staff aged 45+, and only 14% of respondents employing staff under 25.<sup>5</sup>

### **Rationale: Heritage at Risk**

Heritage At Risk sites are those that have been in a continued state of decline, as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. They change from having provided positive cultural and heritage services, and benefiting communities as a source of pride, attachment and cultural history, to becoming synonymous with a failing local economy, a lack of services and, when not in productive use, a lack of safety. This decline in heritage assets is evidenced to have impacts on other parts of the economy too, leading to loss of visitor revenues, community disengagement, and a lack of private-sector interest.

Historic England publishes the Heritage at Risk (HAR) Register, which keeps an account of designated assets at risk and most in need of safeguarding for the future. Between 2011 and 2023, an average of 52 sites have been added each year to the Register. There were 4,891 sites on the Register in 2025. It is important to note that much of the loved heritage that makes places special, such as Grade II listed buildings, are not assessed for the HAR Register except for those in London. Historic England provides grants to carry out repair and maintenance works to HAR sites, in an effort to support the improvement of their condition and removal from the HAR Register.

## **3.2 Delivery model**

The funding provided by the HBS Programme was directed at two principal activities:

- 1. A tiered programme of work-based training** based in the North of England, which provided **training opportunities** in heritage construction skills with local construction firms, including apprenticeships.
- 2. Repair and training projects at Heritage at Risk sites in the North of England.** Including the high-profile Historic England grant funded residential training Summer Schools at Wentworth Woodhouse in South Yorkshire, Hopwood Hall in Greater Manchester, and the Church of St John the Evangelist in Lancaster. An overview of the sites is given in [appendix three](#).

### **Tiered programme of work-based training**

The HBS Programme was structured around a Three-Tier model of vocational training that sought to support individuals at critical points in their careers. The Three Tiers were:

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<sup>4</sup> [Strategic Skills Partnership Progress Report 2018](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Skills Needs Analysis For the Repair, Maintenance and Retrofit of Traditional \(pre-1919\) Buildings in England](#)

### **Tier 1: Prepare for working in the heritage sector**

- 9-week placements for full-time construction students
- Individual achievement of a construction qualification, such as a T Level<sup>6</sup> or diploma

### **Tier 2: Enter the heritage sector workforce**

- Apprenticeships in heritage construction firms in: Bricklaying, Carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating, plastering, roofing, and stonemasonry

### **Tier 3: Sustain the heritage sector workforce**

- Placement for experienced construction workers
- Potential to complete NVQ3 Heritage Skills leading to a Gold Skilled Worker ‘Heritage’ CSCS card and other training courses

The Three-Tier structure was designed to offer new pathways into heritage construction; from young people considering their future career choice (who may be unaware of careers in heritage), to experienced construction professionals already working in mainstream construction who may consider moving into the heritage sector. As such, the Three-Tiered model offers a valuable structured basis for developing sustainable vocational training initiatives for the whole heritage sector. It is vital for creating and illuminating progression routes into the sector, raising its profile, and making it more accessible to a wider range of people.

## **3.3 What was achieved?**

### **Who participated?**

Across the 5 years of the programme, 42 trainees participated in 44 placements. They worked across 12 trades hosted by 30 host firms and nine training providers.<sup>7</sup> Two Tier 3 trainees had previously progressed from a Tier 1 or Tier 2 placement (i.e. there have been 42 participants but 44 placements) – for the purpose of evaluation, and to ensure their experience in each placement is accounted for, these trainees are counted twice, i.e. the total number of trainees is given as 44 and, in the tables and analysis below, these two trainees appear as both a Tier 1/ Tier 2 trainee, and as Tier 3 trainees.

Thirty-seven trainees completed the programme. **Table 1** and **Table 2** below provide further details about these numbers.

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<sup>6</sup> Tier 1 placements were designed to fit with the newly introduced Onsite Construction T-level. However, this T-level was not delivered by any of the colleges used for the

programme – it was closed to new enrolments in 2024 due to a lack of demand.  
<sup>7</sup> Cheshire College South and West, Hopwood Hall College, Kirklees College, Lancaster and

Morecambe College, Leeds College of Building, New College Durham, Sheffield College of Building, University of York and York College

**Table 1: Number of participants on the programme by Tier**

| Completion status of the participant        | Tier 1 | Tier 2         | Tier 3 | Total |
|---------------------------------------------|--------|----------------|--------|-------|
| Started on Programme                        | 11     | 19             | 14     | 44    |
|                                             |        |                |        |       |
| Resigned                                    | 0      | 6              | 1      | 7     |
| Completed                                   | 11     | 11             | 13     | 35    |
| T2 Completed without apprenticeship         | -      | 1              | -      | 1     |
| Completed, apprenticeship still in progress | -      | 1 <sup>8</sup> |        | 1     |

**Table 2: Types of trades and numbers of participants**

| Trade                 | Completion status of the participant |                                            |          |       |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|----------|-------|
|                       | Completed                            | Tier 2 completed without an apprenticeship | Resigned | Total |
| Blacksmithing         | 1                                    |                                            |          | 1     |
| Bricklaying           | 4                                    |                                            |          | 4     |
| Carpentry & Joinery   | 1                                    | 1                                          | 2        | 4     |
| Conservation Studies  |                                      |                                            | 1        | 1     |
| Joinery               | 5                                    |                                            |          | 5     |
| Millwrighting         | 1                                    |                                            |          | 1     |
| Mosaics               | 1                                    |                                            |          | 1     |
| Painting & Decorating | 2                                    |                                            | 1        | 3     |
| Plastering            | 5                                    |                                            | 3        | 8     |
| Roofing               | 4                                    |                                            |          | 4     |
| Stained glass         | 3                                    |                                            |          | 3     |
| Stonemasonry          | 9                                    |                                            |          | 9     |

<sup>8</sup> This participant joined when another apprentice resigned, having already begun their apprenticeship at the same host firm and was able to take the remaining funding; their apprenticeship was thus expected to continue post-programme.



The HBS programme has a retention rate of 84%; of the 44 placements started, seven participants resigned (**Table 3**). Resignations from the programme were due to varied factors and not necessarily because of dissatisfaction. For example, the Tier 3 participant who resigned completed their programme-funded MA qualification (Conservation Studies) and obtained a job opportunity in the sector. The start date of this employment opportunity consequently required them to resign from the programme before the end of their placement.

**Table 3: Programme retention rate by tier**

| Tier         | Number started | Number retained | Retention rate % |
|--------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Tier 1       | 11             | 11              | 100%             |
| Tier 2       | 19             | 13              | 68%              |
| Tier 3       | 14             | 13              | 93%              |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>44</b>      | <b>37</b>       | <b>84%</b>       |

## Achieving qualifications

Thirty-five of the 44 trainees who **started** the programme achieved at least one qualification, and 33 (89%) of the 37 trainees who **completed** the programme achieved at least one qualification. Twenty-four trainees achieved at least two qualifications. Six out of the ten apprentices who gained their apprenticeship passed with distinction. It should be noted that it was not a requirement of the programme for every trainee to achieve a qualification.

These achievements are of particular importance as the lack of qualifications and access to qualifications continues to impact skills gaps and shortages within the sector. For example, just over a third of respondents to the [2024 Skills Needs Analysis](#) Survey said that at least one person in their organisation holds the NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills at Level 3.<sup>9</sup>

Tier 2 participants undertook apprenticeships. Their End Point Assessments were intended to be scheduled towards the end of their time on the programme; however, the limited availability of assessors led to delays for some candidates. This impacted the duration of their traineeship (their time on programme had to be extended) and therefore increased the required salary funding for their placement. The availability of assessors for qualifications is a wider concern across the construction sector.

All eligible trainees had the opportunity to take up to two qualifications during the Summer Schools (Level 3 Award in Repair and Maintenance of Traditional Buildings and Level 3 Award in Energy Efficiency for Traditional Buildings). **Table 4** shows a breakdown of qualifications achieved by trainees throughout the programme.

<sup>9</sup> [Skills Needs Analysis for the Repair, Maintenance and Retrofit of Traditional \(pre-1919\) Buildings in England](#)

**Table 4: Qualifications achieved by trainees**

| Type of qualification achieved                                                                 | Programme tier |           |           |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
|                                                                                                | Tier 1         | Tier 2    | Tier 3    | All tiers |
| Apprenticeship                                                                                 | N/A            | 11        | N/A       | 11        |
| Level 3 Award in Repair and Maintenance of Traditional (pre-1919) Buildings                    | 7              | 13        | 12        | 32        |
| Level 3 Award in Energy Efficiency Measures for Older and Traditional Buildings                | 0              | 10        | 10        | 20        |
| CSCS card (equivalent to the Level 1 Award in Health and Safety in a construction environment) | 0              | 5         | 6         | 11        |
| Other (majority at the NVQ level 2 or 3)                                                       | 1              | 1         | 6         | 8         |
| <b>Total qualifications</b>                                                                    | <b>8</b>       | <b>40</b> | <b>34</b> | <b>82</b> |
| <i>No. participants with at least one qualification</i>                                        | 8              | 14        | 13        | 35        |

In addition to this range of qualifications, 22 trainees have benefited from at least one additional continuing professional development (CPD) opportunity. In total, 37 CPD opportunities were reported. Examples of CPD include a one-day foundation in Roman Mosaics at the London School of Mosaic, Site Management Responsibilities and Site Safety course, and an additional placement at Chester Cathedral.

### 3.4 Programme funding changes

In October 2023, Historic England terminated the funding relationship with the original funder of the HBS programme and returned the £50,000 that they had received towards research and development for a national expansion of the programme. The programme was taken forward as an unfunded pressure by Historic England and as such, limited future growth of the programme.

In November 2023, Historic England committed to supporting all current trainees and apprentices through to the completion of their placements, funding the Summer School through a Repair grant and offering a reduced number of new opportunities for the programme (four Tier 1s and four Tier 3s with Tier 3s having a six-month rather than a 12-month placement). Historic England was necessarily limited in any ambitions for immediate further growth of the programme, had to rethink the previously planned expansion, and had to consider how to take forward the programme learning in a different way. In 2024, additional funding was also awarded to the programme from the Leverhulme Trust and the Swire Charitable Trust.

### 3.5 Programme cost

The costs per participant of the HBS Programme varied depending on their Tier and the length of their placement. Assessment costs and travel and subsistence requirements also varied. It is notable that the Tier 3 placements were valued by the participants and host firms in both the 6-month and 12-month versions. The Communications budget covered recruitment advertising,

organisation of and attendance to networking and public engagement events, as well as videography and photography. The total cost of the Spring and Summer Schools includes Historic England's contribution to the cost of the repair works at host sites. For further information on on-site and off-site training costs, see section 5.4 Organisation of Summer and Spring Schools.

The table below provides a high-level breakdown of the programme costs.

#### Cost Summary

|                                |                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Trainees/apprentices</b>    | <b>£1,343,919</b> |
| Pay, inc grants                | £1,212,616        |
| Skills and training            | £22,658           |
| Travel and subsistence         | £41,782           |
| Equipment                      | £11,185           |
| Other (non-pay)                | £55,679           |
| <b>Summer Schools</b>          | <b>£1,508,456</b> |
| Site-based grants              | £1,336,388        |
| Travel and subsistence         | £93,959           |
| Training                       | £78,109           |
| <b>Staff costs</b>             | <b>£875,665</b>   |
| <b>Comms</b>                   | <b>£44,496</b>    |
| <b>Evaluation and research</b> | <b>£57,735</b>    |
| <b>Totals</b>                  | <b>£3,830,270</b> |

## 4. Programme impacts

Programme impacts are presented thematically. Relevant outcomes and impacts from the logic model (below, **Figure 3**) have been highlighted at the start of each section where possible.

**Figure 3: Programme logic model**



10

<sup>10</sup> Provide a range of mentoring opportunities to support participants in their career goals' is a KPI that was retired during the programme and is therefore not included in the report.

## 4.1 Providing access to and awareness of the sector



**Figure 4: Trainees participate in a hot lime workshop at the 2024 HBS Summer School, ©Historic England**

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### Relevant outcomes/impacts from the logic model

A wider range of people interested in heritage construction careers (AM08)

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### Access to the sector for trainees

Within the case studies, three trainees described how their placements have enabled them to progress much faster than if they had pursued gaining skills and experience themselves. See **case study 1**, **case study 2**, and **case study 5**. They described how, without the programme, gaining skills in their chosen trade/craft would have had to take place alongside other employment and would have needed to be organised and paid for personally. The placement allowed them access to the time, support and funding to move forward in their skill level and ultimately employability.



## Awareness of the wider sector for trainees

Qualitative feedback from trainees shows that the programme either made them aware of the possibility of a heritage construction career or broadened their understanding of what was possible. This broadening of understanding of heritage careers was also made possible by the Summer School, where trainees were introduced to and could undertake a range of traditional construction trades/ heritage crafts.



*“This course has opened my eyes to the world of heritage work and has provided me with a job that I enjoy doing”.*

Tier 1 trainee

## Building wider awareness of the sector

The HBS programme and team also provided or engaged in a series of events that aimed to raise awareness of heritage construction careers. The programme utilised Tier 1 recruitment as an opportunity to speak in mainstream construction colleges to raise awareness. Anecdotally, the HBS team report that those in attendance at these talks had very low to non-existent prior awareness of heritage construction careers. In addition to this, the Institute of Carpenters were delivering a programme of engagement around carpentry careers at construction colleges across the country. Historic England was able to attend a number of these sessions around the country to deliver awareness-raising talks about heritage. As a result, several students contacted speakers directly to discuss how they could enter the heritage construction profession. The potential ripple effect of raising awareness and how this will impact the heritage construction industry workforce in the future has not yet been investigated.

The HBS team and two host firms (Claydon Plain and Decorative Plasterwork and Quadriga Contracts Ltd) also attended the 2023 Tyldesley Heritage Skills Market, where members of the public could take part in making small plaster sculptures and carving wooden tealight holders, as well as learning about careers involving heritage building skills.

In March 2024 and October 2025, the HBS Skills and Training Manager attended Heritage Careers Fairs run by The West Midlands Heritage Buildings Trust and hosted by the Black Country Living Museum and National Brownfield Institute, University of Wolverhampton respectively. This event brought a wealth of Sixth-form, College, and University Students together from across the West Midlands and beyond for talks, heritage craft skills demonstrations, and stalls of employers to provide advice to students with potential interest to help inform career choices.



## Building awareness of the programme

Historic England media engagement data shows that the programme has achieved fifty-four media items, of which thirty were national. Between June 2021 and January 2026, the HBS webpage received 46,816 web page views.

Social media has been used to raise awareness of the programme, including Facebook, Twitter/X, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Between June 2021 and January 2026, there have been a total of 1,043,758 social media engagements and impressions. Long-form videos have also been produced and shared via YouTube, with combined engagement and impressions numbering 886,980 in the same period. This includes a video about the 2023 Summer School site, Hopwood Hall, which, at the time it was posted, had the highest number of views recorded for a Historic England YouTube video.

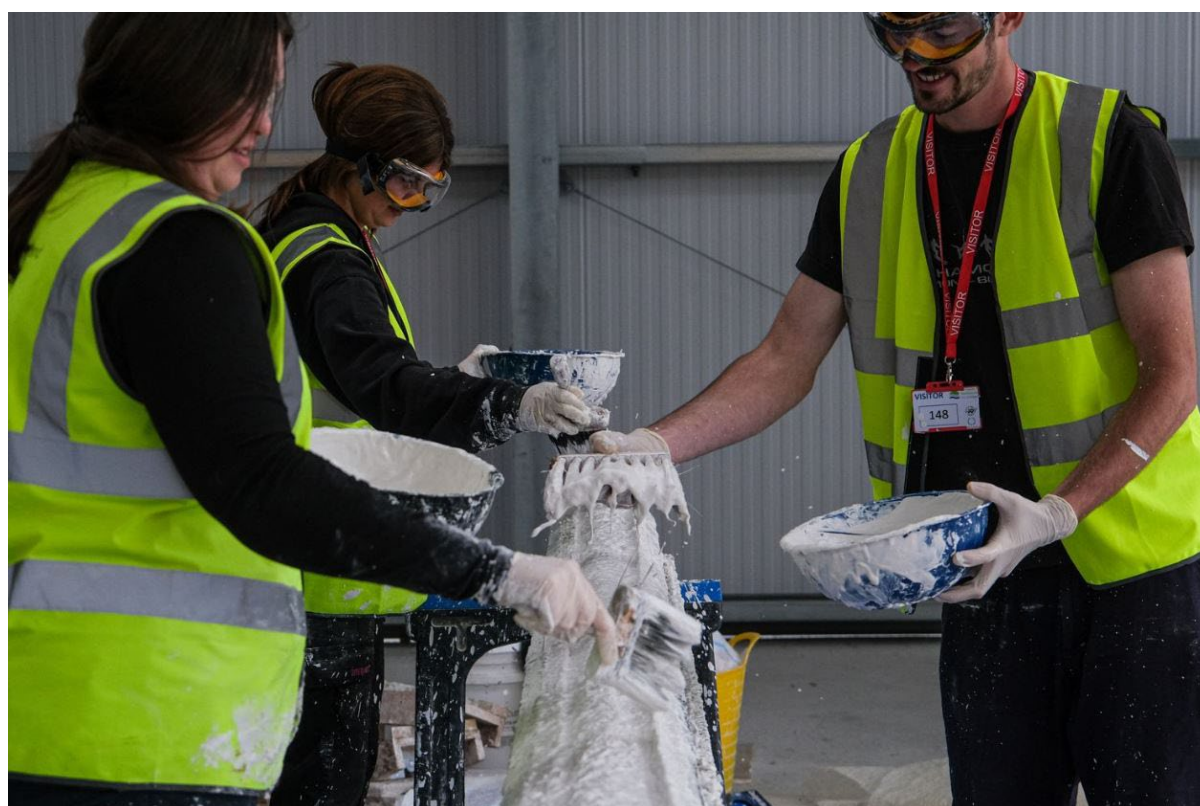
Throughout the programme, media coverage and social media posts helped prompt expressions of interest, with the programme team receiving 134 emails from prospective applicants and those seeking advice on how to enter the heritage sector. Fifty-five emails were also received from individuals and organisations involved in the sector, offering support to the programme in various capacities, including as host firms.

## 4.2 Developing trainee skills, capability and confidence in heritage construction and beyond

### Relevant outcomes/impacts from the logic model

Individuals trained in heritage construction and other skills relevant to their level of experience (KPI04, KPI05, KPI06)

Engage participants in conservation approaches and practice at Heritage at Risk Summer Schools (AM011)



**Figure 5: Trainees participating in a plastering workshop at the 2024 HBS Summer School, ©Historic England.**

All trainees who responded to the survey (16) selected that their traineeship/apprenticeship had helped develop their understanding of heritage construction/conservation; 94% selected that the programme was relevant, and 94% selected that they had been taught new skills (**Figure 3**).

Within the survey and interviews, trainees were asked to give details of the new skills that they had developed through their time on the programme. The skills developed varied due to the types of trades/crafts that the trainees were involved in, from glass cutting to working with lime mortars. Alongside the trade specific skills, trainees also described more transferable skills, including communication skills, articulation of ideas, and site safety management,

demonstrating that the programme worked to equip trainees with skills and confidence to undertake employment, whether in the heritage sector or beyond.

Trainees described how their progress through the programme had resulted in them being able to use their skills independently in the workplace. Several trainees explained that the programme had been an effective bridge between education and/or their creative interest and employment.

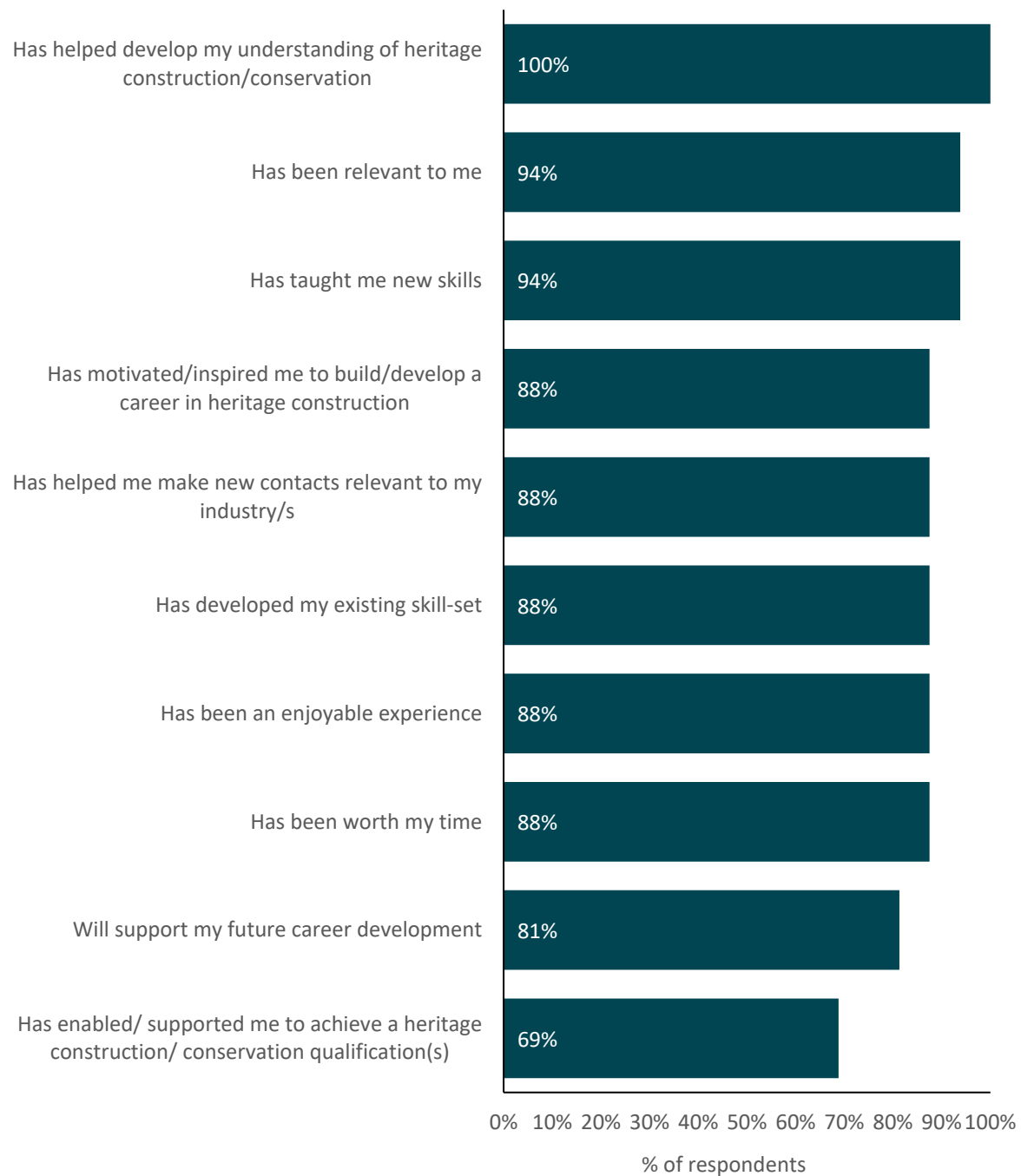


*The placement has obviously granted me the opportunity to gain practical Stonemasonry skills however working at the Cathedral has also enabled me to build confidence in the knowledge I do have and how that applies to each thing I'm working on and how I can then put that into practice by analysing the project and what solutions I need and then how to articulate these ideas in a manner that is helpful for myself and those within my team.*

*I have developed my understanding of the philosophies around building conservation and historic significance of buildings and their elements, which means I have a much better grasp of how to balance the maintenance and repair of a building while still considering the need to retain historic fabric. I've also gained a lot of practical knowledge about how buildings work with regard to moisture management, etc., and how that can be managed using the correct materials and behaviour.*

**Tier 3 trainees**

**Figure 6: Which of the following applies to you? My traineeship/apprenticeship... (multi-choice)**



Base=16

## Developing skills through the Summer Schools

Throughout the programme, there have been three Heritage at Risk Summer Schools (**Table 9**). At each Summer School, a range of opportunities were given for participants to engage in conservation approaches and practices. In addition to taking part in ongoing works on-site under the leadership of the appointed contractor, Historic England also organised workshops in other heritage construction/craft skills, visits to sites and courses. For example:

- Workshops in various trades were delivered across the various Summer Schools including plastering, woodcarving, lead-windows, slate roofing, lead work, hot lime mixing, repointing, stonemasonry, mud masonry and joinery.
- Talks were delivered by professionals on a variety of subjects such as building surveying, ecology and archaeology and site visits were organised to sites like the London Road Fire Station in Greater Manchester and to a slate quarry.
- Courses were delivered on assessing significance and surveying, as well as Level 3 Award courses on repair and maintenance of traditional buildings and energy efficiency measures.

Survey data shows that participants saw an increase in self-rated confidence over a range of factors after the Summer School. Their self-rated scores increased by around 32% on average across the cohorts and years. In 2024 and 2023, most survey respondents agreed that the Summer School supported them in refining or developing existing skills.

The Summer School experience was rated highly by trainees, and the majority of trainee interviewees talked about this as one of the highlights of the programme. As part of the end-of-placement survey, trainees were asked what they valued most about the programme. Five (out of 16) respondents mentioned the Summer School in their answer.

The Summer School also remained impactful for the participants following the programme. In the follow-up survey, all eight who were asked whether they had used the content of the Summer School after the programme said yes. Experiences and skills at the Summer School were used within their job roles, as well as inspiring future career choices.



*The Summer School training days with instructors who are masters of their craft were invaluable.*

**Tier 3 trainee**

*“At Summer School, we used hot-mixed lime mortars and learnt how to mix these with the pros/cons of using them. In my current role, we have been considering the use of hot lime, and I have been able to put forward my opinions and experiences with it.”*

**Tier 2 trainee**

*The content I learned at the Summer School inspired me to become a heritage building surveyor. I loved it.*

**Tier 3 trainee**

## Impact on wellbeing

While it was not within the scope of the evaluation to estimate impact on wellbeing as a result of the programme, drawing upon published evidence, we can make reasonable assumptions that the programme model is set up in a way that does have a positive impact on wellbeing. Participation in heritage activities has been found to boost mental health and productivity, is associated with enhanced life satisfaction and has measurable wellbeing value at both individual and national levels.<sup>11</sup> Historic England published its [Evidence Enquiry for Wellbeing and Heritage](#) in 2025, which, via a review of evidence between 2019 and 2024 and interviews, found heritage has a “significant yet often under-recognised role in promoting wellbeing, with distinct benefits that differentiate it from other cultural interventions.”

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<sup>11</sup> [Improving Mental Health Through Heritage | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)



## 4.3 Reducing skills shortages through employment, education and career progression

### Relevant outcomes/impacts from the logic model

Create viable career opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds, inc.  
lower socio-economic backgrounds (KPI019)  
Reduce shortages in heritage/construction craft skills (KPI04)

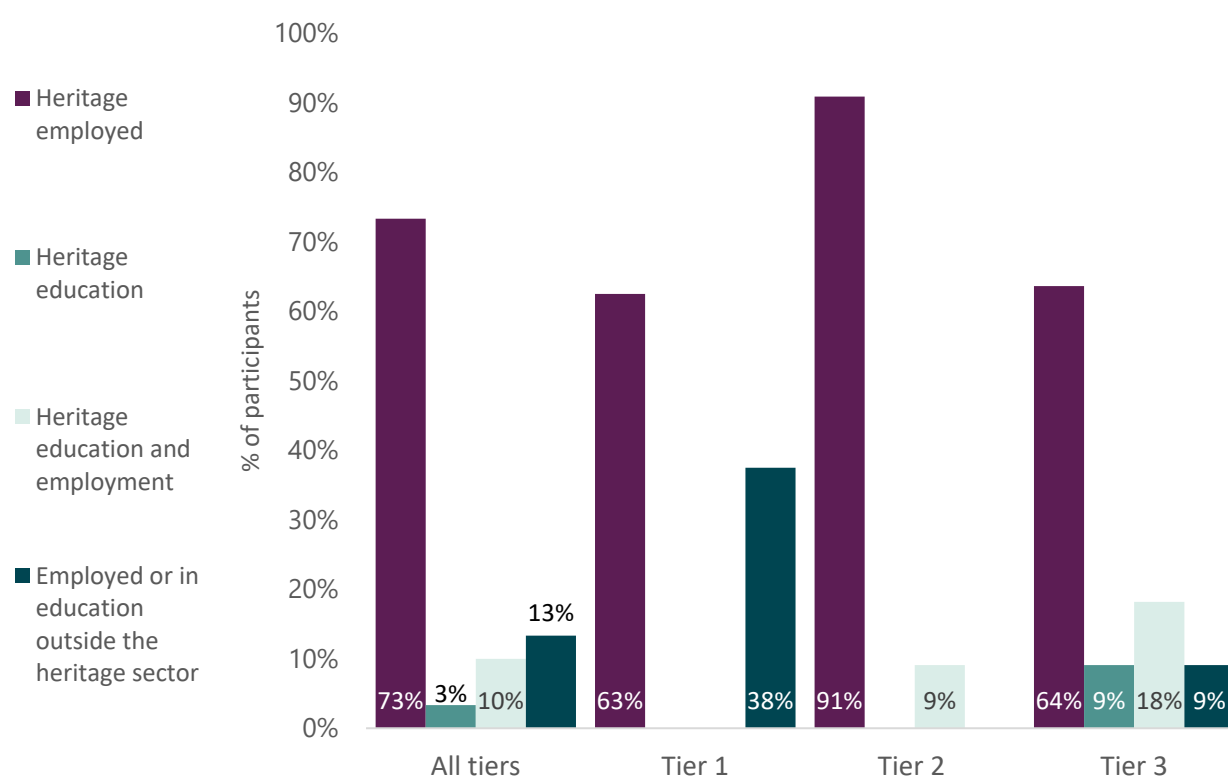
### Employment and further education in the heritage sector

Figure 7: High-level overview of destinations upon graduating from the programme



Providing viable career opportunities and therefore contributing to reducing skills shortages in the heritage sector is a key impact of the programme (**Figure 4**). On graduating from the programme, 83% reported being employed in the heritage sector (25 of 30 trainees for whom data is available, three of whom were also in education), and one reported being in heritage-related education. Six months later, nine trainees (of the 13 for whom data is available) reported being in education and/or employed in the heritage sector, and four reported being in education or employment outside the heritage sector.

**Figure 8: Employment of trainees on leaving the programme by Tier**



|           | Heritage Employed |     | Heritage Education |    | Heritage Education and Employment |     | Employed or in education outside the heritage sector |     |
|-----------|-------------------|-----|--------------------|----|-----------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------------------------|-----|
|           | No.               | %   | No.                | %  | No.                               | %   | No.                                                  | %   |
| All Tiers | 22                | 73% | 1                  | 3% | 3                                 | 10% | 4                                                    | 13% |
| T1        | 5                 | 63% | 0                  | 0% | 0                                 | 0%  | 3                                                    | 38% |
| T2        | 10                | 91% | 0                  | 0% | 1                                 | 9%  | 0                                                    | 0%  |
| T3        | 7                 | 64% | 1                  | 9% | 2                                 | 18% | 1                                                    | 9%  |

## Creating viable career opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds, including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds

An original aim of the programme was to create viable career opportunities for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds. It was not possible to collect the necessary data to evidence this, and so the aim was amended to create viable career opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds, *including* low socio-economic backgrounds. This broader descriptor allowed for a wider range of data to be considered, but the lack of specificity means it remained difficult to evidence and draw conclusions on. However, data collected by Historic England on participant postcode, gender and age upon application have been used in this section. Applicant's provision of this data was on a voluntary basis at the application stage. Therefore, there is no complete data set for postcode, gender, age and participant outcomes, and numbers are low. This should be considered when reviewing the figures in this section.

Historic England collects postcode data from participants, which can be used to calculate the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) decile. The Indices rank each area in England from most deprived to least deprived (one being most deprived and 10 being least deprived)<sup>12</sup>. The IMD measure provides a limited picture as it is not suitable for understanding levels of deprivation at an individual level. It is suggested as a proxy measure for socio-economic background for this evaluation.

**Table 5** shows that a relatively similar % of trainees remained in the heritage sector across the IMD ranges, with the 8-10 percentile being higher at 86% compared to 1-3 at 73% and 4-7 at 75%. In terms of age range, those trainees who were 35+ and those who were 16-19 at the start of the programme see a lower % remain in the heritage sector post-programme (67% and 83% respectively); all other age ranges have 100%. (**Table 6**).

**Table 5: Number of trainees in the heritage sector on leaving the programme by IMD decile**

| IMD decile range | Number of trainees with data | Number of trainees in the heritage sector (employment and/or education) | % in the heritage sector (employment and/or education) |
|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| IMD 1-3          | 11                           | 8                                                                       | 73%                                                    |
| IMD 4-7          | 8                            | 6                                                                       | 75%                                                    |
| IMD 8-10         | 7                            | 6                                                                       | 86%                                                    |

<sup>12</sup> [The English Indices of Deprivation infographic 2019](#)

**Table 6: Number of trainees in the heritage sector on leaving the programme by age**

| Age Range (at start) | Retained and completed (with known outcome) | In the heritage sector (employment and/or education) | % in the heritage sector (employment and/or education) |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| 16 to 19             | 6                                           | 5                                                    | 83%                                                    |
| 20 to 24             | 6                                           | 6                                                    | 100%                                                   |
| 25 to 29             | 1                                           | 1                                                    | 100%                                                   |
| 30 to 34             | 5                                           | 5                                                    | 100%                                                   |
| 35+                  | 3                                           | 2                                                    | 67%                                                    |

Twenty-four per cent (8 of 34 trainees) of those who started the programme were female, 73% (25) were male, and 3% (1) were non-binary. Looking at outcomes after the programme (**Table 7**), three of the four female participants who completed the programme are still in the heritage sector, 16 of the 18 male participants are still in the heritage sector, and the one non-binary participant is no longer in the heritage sector.

The Historic England 2018 Strategic Skills Partnership Progress Report<sup>13</sup> estimated that 9% of those working on traditional buildings in England are women. In the 2024 Historic England Skills Need Analysis for the Repair, Maintenance and Retrofit of Traditional (pre-1919) Buildings in England Report, 94% respondents (base 281) reported that the workforce is male<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, the HBS programme shows higher levels of female participation than the wider heritage construction sector.

**Table 7: Number of trainees in the heritage sector on leaving the programme by gender**

| Gender     | Retained and completed (with known outcome) | In the heritage sector (employment and/or education) | % in the heritage sector (employment and/or education) |
|------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| Female     | 4                                           | 3                                                    | 75%                                                    |
| Male       | 18                                          | 16                                                   | 89%                                                    |
| Non-binary | 1                                           | 0                                                    | 0%                                                     |

<sup>13</sup> [Strategic Skills Partnership Progress Report 2018](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Skills Needs Analysis For the Repair, Maintenance and Retrofit of Traditional \(pre-1919\) Buildings in England](#)

## Reduce shortages in heritage construction/craft skills: Employment in endangered crafts

The programme has contributed to training and employment related to skills listed on the Heritage Crafts Red List of Endangered Crafts, a list ranking traditional crafts by the likelihood they will survive to the next generation.<sup>15</sup> Critically endangered crafts are those “at serious risk of no longer being practised in the UK”. Following the HBS programme, five trainees have been employed in roles relating to endangered crafts. Specific case studies of those now employed within endangered crafts can be found in the appendix.

**Table 8** shows the number of those employed in endangered crafts following the programme, as well as the current number of professionals within the UK. Here we see that in the case of Millwrighting, there are 11 professionals in the UK (main income); therefore, the addition of one person to the profession can be meaningful to the preservation of skills.

**Table 8: Number of participants employed within an endangered craft**

| Level of endangerment | Craft                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | No. professionals in the UK employed in this craft | No. employed due to HBS |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Critically endangered | Millwrighting                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 11 <sup>16</sup>                                   | 1                       |
| Endangered            | Historic Stained Window-Making<br><a href="#">Case study 6: Reduction in the shortage of heritage skills in Endangered crafts: stained glass</a><br><a href="#">Case study 5: Fast-tracked to a career in stained glass</a> | 21-50 <sup>17</sup>                                | 3                       |
| Endangered            | Slate working<br><a href="#">Case study 7: Building a passion for slate roofing</a>                                                                                                                                         | 28-65 <sup>18</sup>                                | 1                       |

<sup>15</sup> [The Red List - Heritage Crafts](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Millwrighting - Heritage Crafts |](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Historic stained glass window making - Heritage Crafts |](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Slate working - Heritage Crafts |](#)

## Reduce shortages in heritage construction/craft skills: Employment and training of in-demand skills

The programme also contributed to training and employment in broader construction skills required for working on traditional buildings considered most in demand. Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England (HESCAPE) (2024), published by the Historic Environment Skills Forum, identified plastering, carpentry/joinery, and skills to retrofit traditional buildings as key skills needed by the sector.<sup>19</sup>

Following the programme, four plasterers, three joiners, and one carpenter-joiner were employed in heritage construction. Thirty-two participants achieved the Level 3 Award in Repair and Maintenance of Traditional Buildings, a skill HESCAPE notes as a necessary precursor to retrofit. Of these, twenty participants also achieved a retrofit qualification – the Level 3 Award in Energy Efficiency for Traditional Buildings.

## Additional opportunities offered due to the programme

During the programme, three applicants, who were unsuccessful in being selected for the HBS programme placement, were offered positions by host firms. Although ultimately these people were not supported by HBS, it is a direct result of the HBS recruitment process that they were offered positions and trained in heritage construction. One of these applicants, recruited in 2024, was also supported by the programme to attend several days of the HBS Summer School, participating in workshops in hot lime mixing and slate roofing, and completing the Level 3 qualification in Repair and Maintenance of Traditional (pre-1919) Buildings.

## Historic England's reputation elevates the programme

The association with Historic England is seen as a positive for the careers of the trainees. Some feel that this helped bring confidence in their experience and gives a level of recognition when networking. This is demonstrated in the quote below from a trainee who describes clients feeling confident in their work due to their association with Historic England.

*I have found that clients are more confident in my work and advice after finding out that I had completed the Heritage Building Skills programme.*

**Tier 3 trainee**

Host firms also discussed a range of positive impacts related to being part of a programme run by Historic England. One host firm believes that their involvement and association with the programme led to an invitation to tender for the opportunity to develop a local government training course. Another host firm explained that being part of a programme led by Historic England felt like recognition of their work and good practice.

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<sup>19</sup> [Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England](#)



## 4.4 Contributing to improving conservation of HAR and NHLE sites

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### Relevant outcomes/impacts from the logic model

Improve the condition of Heritage at Risk (HAR) sites and NHLE-listed buildings in the North of England (KPI020)  
Engage participants in conservation approaches and practice at Heritage at Risk Summer Schools (AM011)

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**Figure 9: A trainee working on the Ionic Temple at Wentworth Woodhouse, during the 2022 HBS Summer School, ©Historic England**

The Heritage at Risk (HAR) register records the historic sites which are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development in England. One way that the HBS programme has ensured that it supported the restoration of Heritage at Risk (HAR) sites was by giving a grant for repairs, which included a condition that the site could be used for the programme's Summer School while the repairs were in progress, as an additional training opportunity for the trainees.

Through their placements with host firms, many trainees worked on other HAR sites, in addition to the sites allocated a repair grant, as well as working on a wide range of pre-1919 and National Heritage List for England (NLHE) buildings.'

The Spring School and Summer Schools have been delivered at three different (HAR) sites, two of which benefitted directly from a repair grant to host the schools in order to support the trainees' learning and provide additional hands-on experience. This allowed for the support of conservation work for the HAR sites and exposure to a range of specialist heritage construction/craft training opportunities for trainees. Wentworth Woodhouse hosted the 2022 Spring and Summer Schools. Hopwood Hall hosted the 2023 Summer School, and the Church of St John the Evangelist hosted the 2024 Summer School. **Table 9** below shows the number of participants for each year as well as the focus of the work. An overview of the sites is given in [appendix three](#).

**Table 9: Participants taking part in Summer Schools and the focus of works**

| Site                                                 | Location                      | Number of participants            | Focus of work                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wentworth Woodhouse, 2022 Spring School              | Rotherham, South Yorkshire    | 8                                 | The South Pavilion                                              |
| Wentworth Woodhouse, 2022 Summer School              | Rotherham, South Yorkshire    | 20 (x19 programme, x1 additional) | Ionic Temple<br>Camellia House                                  |
| Hopwood Hall, 2023 Summer School                     | Middleton, Greater Manchester | 11 (x9 programme, x2 additional)  | Across the building, focus on plastering and lead frame windows |
| Church of St John the Evangelist, 2024 Summer School | Lancaster, Lancashire         | 21 (x17 programme, x3 additional) | Roof and high-level masonry                                     |

Reports submitted by trainees to Historic England include details about the buildings that participants have worked on during their placement. Historic England has calculated the unique instances in which trainees have worked on traditional buildings. This means that if a trainee has worked at a building twice or more, they have only counted the first instance. However, if two trainees worked on the same building, this building is counted twice.

The average number of traditional buildings worked on by trainees during their placement varies by Tier. Tier 1 worked on the least per person (two), and Tier 2 worked on the most per person (12). Tier 3 worked on eight per person. This is understandable considering the difference in the length of Tier 1 and Tier 2 placements. It should also be noted that some trainees who worked only on one or two traditional buildings did so over a long period of time, giving them depth of experience. Other trainees carried out work in workshops that would have a later impact on traditional buildings, such as repairing a stained-glass window. As this work was not 'on site', it will not have been captured in this data.

Within the 295 instances of traditional buildings (pre-1919) worked on by programme participants, Historic England data shows 243 instances were at buildings on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE), and that 55 of them were at buildings on the Heritage at Risk Register (HAR) (**Table 8**). Please note that buildings on the HAR Register will also be on the NHLE.

**Table 10: Average number of Traditional Buildings worked on by Tier**

| Tier      | Average number of. buildings worked on by participants |                            |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
|           | All (includes those who resigned)                      | Participants who completed |
| Tier 1    | 2                                                      | 2                          |
| Tier 2    | 9                                                      | 12                         |
| Tier 3    | 7                                                      | 8                          |
| All Tiers | 7                                                      | 8                          |

**Table 11: Number of Traditional Buildings worked on by trainees by Tier and building type**

| Type of building                     | Total | Tier 1 | Tier 2 | Tier 3 |
|--------------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| All traditional buildings (pre-1919) | 295   | 21     | 171    | 103    |
| On the NHLE                          | 243   | 19     | 139    | 85     |
| Grade I                              | 76    | 13     | 35     | 28     |
| Grade II*                            | 60    | 5      | 27     | 28     |
| Grade II                             | 104   | 1      | 77     | 26     |
| Scheduled monument                   | 3     | 0      | 0      | 3      |
| Heritage at Risk                     | 55    | 12     | 24     | 19     |

## Economic and social benefits to Heritage at Risk sites and beyond

Providing a cost-benefit analysis and estimating the economic benefits of restoring historic buildings at risk is out of scope for this evaluation. However, there is evidence that demonstrates the broader social and economic benefits of maintaining and restoring heritage buildings. For example, it is estimated that domestic day trips to historic buildings contributed £11.5 billion to the economy in 2022, and three in five adults visited a heritage site in person between April 2022 and March 2023.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, bringing historic buildings back into good repair and use may result in increased economic and social activity. Historic England's 2020 Heritage and Society report found that investment in historic buildings in towns contributed to higher life satisfaction of residents and boosts social cohesion.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, there is evidence that increased skills generate multiplier effects, with skilled heritage workers stimulating supply chain activity and additional employment opportunities, such as in conservation, museums, archives and tourism. This means employment in heritage can increase the value in the wider economy.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> [The Contribution of the Heritage Sector to the Visitor Economy | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

<sup>21</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2020/heritage-and-society-2020/>

<sup>22</sup> [The Economic Value of the Heritage Sector | Heritage Counts | Historic England](#)

Economic and social impacts were experienced by the HAR sites supported through the Summer School, which are explored in **case study 8**.

### **Wentworth Woodhouse, the 2022 Spring School and the 2022 Summer School.**

During the 2022 Summer School, trainees worked on The Camellia House at Wentworth Woodhouse, which received a £614,000 grant through the HBS programme (as part of a wider £5 million restoration fund, primarily from the National Lottery Heritage Fund). It has been restored from a dilapidated Georgian glass house to winning a major European heritage award, removing it from the Heritage at Risk Register.<sup>23</sup>

The trainees' learning at The Camellia House was focused on the timber window repairs in addition to participating in survey work. The trainees also undertook extensive masonry repair work at the Ionic Temple, which is prominently visible from The Camellia House.

### **Hopwood Hall, 2023 Summer School**

As part of the 2023 Summer School, the community volunteers involved at Hopwood Hall and Hopwood DePree, trustee of the Hopwood Foundation, were able to take part in training activities alongside the HBS trainees. This had a range of impacts. Participants were able to undertake the Level 3 Award in Repair and Maintenance of Traditional (pre-1919) Buildings, enabling them to learn valuable skills in managing a heritage asset and inspiring passion for heritage skills amongst the group.

Although not the recipient of one of the programme's repair grants, being involved in the programme was seen to be transformative by Hopwood DePree. The Hopwood Foundation has aspirations to expand its involvement in heritage skills training and has recently launched a new programme at HMP Thorn Cross to teach inmates these skills.

### **St John the Evangelist, 2024 Summer School**

A critical consideration in offering a Historic England grant to the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT) for the Church of St John's was the training opportunity the site and location could offer for the Summer School. Before the site was selected to host the Summer School in 2024, the Church of St John's could no longer be used for events due to water damage. The Summer School hosted National Trust apprentices and three Historic Environment Advice Assistant apprentices, alongside the HBS participants. The project was picked up by the BBC News.<sup>24</sup>

In 2025, following the Summer School, CCT's volunteers are yet again conducting guided tours, and the Churches Conservation Trust is taking steps to secure the funding to undertake the remaining repair works so that community events can resume. CCT are interested in the development of skills, and they hope that they can undertake projects of a similar nature in the future.

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<sup>23</sup> [The Camellia House Wins Major European Heritage Award - Wentworth Woodhouse](#)

<sup>24</sup> [Students use summer school to repair 1750s Lancaster church roof - BBC News](#)



## 4.5 Sharing learning and developing practice for long-term sector impact

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### Relevant outcomes/impacts from the logic model

Increased awareness of Historic England's work in growing understanding and supporting the sector to recruit and train the next generation, including those from diverse audiences (KPI014-17)

Learning shared within the sector so similar programmes can build on the programme's legacy, and create confidence within heritage construction companies to take on trainees outside of a supported programme

Model for Historic England grants that have training outputs (KPI021)

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**Figure 10: Demonstration of carving letters into stone at a HBS Summer School stonemasonry workshop, ©Historic England**

## Programme team shares learning

Historic England reports that learning from the programme is used consistently. They benefit from being able to show their hands-on experience in delivering the programme when talking to the sector about skills development and needs. Members of the programme team regularly share learnings from the programme both internally and externally. To provide data for this evaluation, the Advice Log kept by the Sector Resilience and Skills team was reviewed for mentions of the HBS Programme. In this log, dating from June 2024 to November 2025, the SRS team recorded thirteen specific instances where they have drawn upon the learning from the HBS programme when offering advice to organisations outside Historic England.

Examples from the log include:

- Advising a Summer School site on steps to take before considering building a skills centre
- Advising on integrating skills training delivery within construction projects to colleagues, councils and third sector stakeholders
- Sharing of HBS case studies to inform and support stakeholders' training strategies
- Advising a National Park on their skills action plan
- Advising a university on how to work collaboratively with the council and FE colleges
- Sharing information on courses, reports, skills forum and case studies with a Local Authority
- Discussing benefits of undertaking evaluation, and their timescale, with a training delivery centre
- Promoting the 'prepare, enter, sustain' model and the development of a curated training plan that breaks silo-working and promotes a whole-building approach
- Contributing to the skills agenda of the Combined Authority's taskforces

It is worth noting that the Advice Log is not kept for evaluation purposes and therefore the data it provides is limited; the HBS Programme may have informed other advice that has not been mentioned in the record. The Advice Log records 65 instances of advice provided during this period, and so learnings from the HBS Programme informed at least 20% of these.

Learning from the programme was shared at the Historic Environment Skills Forum through a webinar, as well as at a range of sector conferences and webinars, and there are several case studies which reflect on the impact of the programme and Summer School learning on the Historic England website<sup>25</sup>. The Skills and Training Manager has also been sharing resources and opportunities with host firms and past participants.

Learning from the HBS programme has fed into the [HESCAPE](#) through the steering group, who have intimate knowledge of the programme (one being a host firm). HESCAPE was created by the Historic Environment Skills Forum and is a sector-wide skills strategy with the overarching goal of ensuring a resilient workforce, with the right skills to meet current and future demand for work. This document sets out priorities and an action plan for the sector to collaboratively achieve.

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<sup>25</sup> [Case Study: Wentworth Woodhouse, Rotherham, South Yorkshire | Historic England](#)



## Legacy for host firms

Only one host firm so far has reported taking on a trainee outside of a supported programme in direct response to the confidence and connections built through the programme. Being part of the HBS Programme helped them to understand their capabilities and what type of apprenticeship would be most suitable for them to host due to the work available. Since being part of the HBS Programme, they have employed an apprentice, using the relationship they built with York College during the HBS Programme to help find this apprentice.

Most host firms, when interviewed or surveyed, would like to offer traineeships again in the future, whether through a future funded programme or self-supported. It's worth keeping in mind that host firms would still face other barriers, such as funding and recruitment, to taking on trainees outside of a supported programme, despite building confidence through the programme.

Two previous host firms are currently collaborating to create a delivery offer for heritage training. The programme is being created with the designer of the HBS programme.

## Longer-term impact on Historic England

Through the HBS programme, Historic England reports gaining a deeper understanding of how to embed training into repair projects supported by grants. This can be used to inform repair grants with training outputs in the future.

The team that worked on the HBS programme can also provide early advice based on their experience to grant managers, which they report to be useful. One example of this is the change to the delivery of the Future Talent programme from a bursary to a grant. Bursaries are paid directly to the trainee, while a grant is claimed by the host organisation who then pays their trainee. The grant arrangement is seen as preferable as it creates a legal agreement between Historic England and the host firm, allowing expectations to be set for the trainee's placement. It also allows the administration of the placement to be shared – while the host firm has HR responsibilities, Historic England provides support for recruitment and throughout the placement.

The delivery of the HBS programme has also generated interest in supporting training delivery within Historic England. Although the overall budget for capacity building grants remains relatively low, they are now better recognised as a means to support skills training through Historic England's grant-giving<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/grants/what-we-fund/people-activities/>



The fundraising team within Historic England reports that the programme has had interest from funders who enquire whether they can be involved and offer support. This has led to the team developing a strategic funding point around young people and skills. The fundraising team report that they now have a network of people to reach out to fund any future skills programmes or opportunities. Learning from the HBS programme will contribute to shaping future skills initiatives at Historic England, for which they seek funding.

## Supporting practice improvements among host employers

Four stakeholders described how being part of the programme has led to them developing their approach to training. For a Tier 2 host firm that had not offered many apprenticeships in the past, being part of the HBS Programme helped them to understand their capabilities and what type of apprenticeship would be most suitable for them to host due to the work available. Since being part of the HBS Programme, they have employed an apprentice, using the relationship they built with York College during the HBS Programme to help find this apprentice.

Another host firm, involved since 2022 in both Tier 1 and Tier 3, described how the HBS Programme has helped them to support and develop their training operation. Between the Historic England programme and other schemes, they have increased their team from one to eight. The HBS Programme allowed them to work with trainees who had no experience. This has been an important experience as they are seeing fewer people coming through the college pipeline and want to build training where people can get into heritage construction and conservation roles through practical skills. This host firm also wants to create a centre for training in the future.

A Tier 2 and Tier 1 host firm explained that they have taken elements from the recruitment process and the HBS Programme and have embedded them into their HR practices. They have changed their recruitment so that the person interviewing does not review CVs to reduce bias. They have also introduced a mentoring scheme within the organisation (see **case study 4**). Several host firms also reported increasing their salaries, having found out more about the labour market generally for heritage skills via the programme.

The host that supported the day-to-day delivery of the Summer School in 2023 used their learning to consider ways to continue to build capacity for training.

Due to their backgrounds and education, some trainees brought new skills and knowledge to their host firms. One stained-glass Tier 3 trainee had a background in chemistry, which focused on the analysis of culturally significant objects, and they were able to bring this expertise into their host firm and will be able to contribute this knowledge to the sector in the future (see **case study 7**). Several trainees with conservation qualifications and backgrounds were able to contribute their skills and knowledge to their host firms whilst also gaining practical skills (see **case study 1**).

## 4.6 Facilitating new networks

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### Relevant outcomes/impacts from the logic model

Further education colleges engaged in a network of practice for teaching heritage within construction.

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**Figure 11: Stonemasonry workshop at the 2024 HBS Summer School, ©Historic England**

### Networks for trainees

Trainees highly valued the opportunity the Summer School gave them to meet with each other. This was mentioned across answers to the survey and within interviews. Meeting each other at the Summer School enabled a network of trainees to be created, which has had and continues to have positive impacts. During the placement, the trainees appreciated meeting a network of peers who were undertaking the same experience, as being one trainee in a host firm could feel isolating. After the programme, trainees benefit from this network in terms of potential job opportunities, seeking information and knowing peers within the sector (**case study 7** gives an example of this).

*“Through the programme, I have also been able to gain new contacts and friends at many levels within the industry, which will make building a career much more feasible”.*

**Tier 3 trainee**

This sentiment is also echoed across answers related to what the programme could improve, with most trainees in interviews describing how they would have liked more opportunities to meet with each other earlier and throughout the programme.

Building on this further, the majority of participants who responded to the survey expressed an interest in being part of an alumni network and would like to see opportunities for the following:

- Contacts/networking
- Social / updates from other trainees
- Signposting to funding/employment
- Relevant skills and training opportunities

## Networks for host firms

There was positive feedback from host firms about the ability to network and meet other host firms and contractors within the programme. These opportunities included inviting hosts to a welcome event for new trainees in Manchester in 2023, and to a Future Skills and Awards day at the end of the 2024 Summer School. Examples of the positive impacts of these relationships include:

- Recommending other host firms for work when they have received work requests from outside of their geographical area
- Offering work experience to another HBS Programme trainee from a different host firm
- Sharing ideas with the longer-term aim of figuring out how to share resources and opportunities for apprentices.

This is an area which they felt could be developed in any future programme - not only with more opportunities to meet with one another - but also with more opportunities for apprentices/trainees to work with other host firms to gain experience in different areas.



*Providing that support network with each other where they could say - oh, I'm struggling with this, have any of you got anything that you could offer? You know, they could take an apprentice or swap an apprentice for a few weeks to give them that experience.*

*Would be nice to have more ways to meet up with people. Enjoyed the day that we had together in Manchester. So perhaps one of those per year if they were to do it again. It's put us in contact with different people. If there is work outside our area, we can recommend someone in the group, and we have asked them to consider doing this as well for us.*

### Host firm interviews

## Networks for Historic England

The HBS team describe how they have created a useful and impactful network with the host firms, assessors, and trainers who have been part of the programme. This network allows for advice to be shared internally in Historic England, about organisations and expertise that can be utilised for certain projects and programmes. For example, Pinnacle Conservation, a host firm for the HBS programme, subsequently hosted a trainee on the Future Talent Programme (a programme which is designed to improve inclusion and diversity within the heritage sector, while also addressing areas with skill gaps).

This knowledge of assessors and trainers has also enabled advice to others in the sector to be shared through the Heritage Skills Forum. The HBS team have encouraged the network of host firms to join the Historic Environment Skills Forum, and several have applied to be members of the Forum's steering group.

## Networks for Further Education Colleges

The programme aimed to engage Further Education colleges in a network of practice for teaching heritage within construction. Early in the programme, opportunities were created for the colleges involved to meet and share best practice and exchange ideas as part of the training provider framework. This was well received and noted by a participant to be a rare and useful opportunity. However, it was not possible to sustain this network long-term due to low attendance, with participation affected by time pressures and conflicting priorities of college staff, meaning they did not have the capacity to attend meetings. High-staff turnover at colleges is also thought to have contributed to low engagement, creating an inconsistent landscape where more immediate priorities took precedence.



## 5. Process evaluation summary

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**Figure 12: An apprentice practises sculpting during a plastering workshop at the 2022 HBS Summer School, ©Historic England**

### 5.1 Programme governance

The governance of the programme was seen to work well and was proportionate. When the programme had to deal with the loss of its main funder, the team felt supported and felt that escalation to the executive team was handled well.

#### Staffing and resourcing

The programme was resourced by a strong and diverse delivery team of six, who brought together a wide range of skills, experience, and expertise, though the percentage of their time dedicated solely to the HBS programme varied depending on programme requirements.<sup>27</sup> The team had obvious passion for the programme and were committed to making it a success. The team often worked above and beyond, and in additional areas outside of their remit, such as communications.

The resourcing needs of the programme were scoped during the development phase of the programme, however, it was later identified that additional resource was required and a Business Administration apprentice was taken on. Resourcing could have been better split

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<sup>27</sup> Roles in the team were: Senior Responsible Officer, Skills and Training Manager, Heritage Projects Manager, Trainee Placement Coordinator, Programme Manager and Programme Officer





amongst team members, and there was a lack of contingency around the staff organising the first Summer School – steps were taken to address this in later Summer Schools however this issue was not fully resolved.

Throughout the programme, further expertise and advice were drawn from other areas of Historic England as needed, including but not limited to Heritage Skills, HR, Finance, Communications, Partnerships and Philanthropy, and Legal.

Through attending programme meetings, reviewing management information and feedback, it was evident that the programme team were incredibly motivated to improve the programme and respond quickly to recommendations. This can be demonstrated not only by the implementation of the recommendations from process evaluation reports but also by the considered response to ongoing feedback from exit interviews and exit surveys.

The team were agile and flexible, with the ability to respond quickly to challenges. Key challenges included translating in-person recruitment into online and the change to funding for the programme.

## **Relationship with and reporting to funders**

At the start of the programme, Historic England was typically accustomed to dealing with public sector funding. To utilise the funding from the original individual philanthropic funder, new processes were created. In particular, the Historic England team needed to be responsive to the funder's requirements and be flexible to consider and react to requests for change. The strength of the team was recognised by the original funder of the programme.

However, working with the original funder proved to be resource-intensive; the promise of future investment meant a lot of time was put into the relationship. Slow responses from the funder often held the team back in terms of making decisions, and data requests were onerous to respond to.

From November 2023, Historic England began funding the programme directly, including providing a Repair grant for a Summer School site and supporting host firms to continue providing opportunities through grant funding. Additional funding was also awarded to the programme from the Leverhulme Trust and the Swire Charitable Trust.

## **5.2 Programme delivery**

### **Programme planning and design**

At the beginning of the programme, the team went straight into delivery and would have benefited from additional planning time. This would have been especially beneficial to avoid pressure points around recruitment, sifting, induction and Summer School. Although some peaks and troughs in programme delivery are to be expected, they could have been planned more effectively.



The evaluation requirements for the programme were not as clearly set out from the beginning as they could have been, and appropriate data recording processes had to be developed while the programme was underway. This meant new permissions from participants had to be sought and this put some additional pressure on the team.

Requirements regarding diversity were added later, and because these were not considered within the planning of the programme, they were harder to achieve and measure. Although the team and host firms were able to engage with young people from diverse backgrounds, they reflected that this would have benefited from some additional resources. For example, providing more support to ensure trainees from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds were able to make the most of the opportunity.

## **Promotion of the programme and media coverage**

The team felt they could have benefited from earlier engagement and planning with the Historic England Communications team. This would have enabled a better understanding of capacity and protocols and allowed for more support early on in promoting the programme to a wider range of stakeholders and potential applicants. Due to the lack of this early engagement, the programme was broadly reliant on the programme team to lead on promotion activities at the beginning.

This caused some difficulties as the programme team was unfamiliar with communications protocols, which prevented them from being able to share more widely on social media and target candidates on an existing database. One example is that social media posts about the programme had to be scheduled in advance, but this made it difficult to share programme news as it happened (for example, a trainee success story). Later in the programme, proactive and early requests to the Communications Team, allowed for posts to be scheduled around key dates and activities, e.g. during Women in Construction week, National Apprenticeship Week, and around the programme Summer Schools.

Despite these challenges, there were some quality communications released about the programme and news related to the programme was picked up by the national media 30 times and the regional media 24 times (figures from between April 2021 -September 2025). For example, Country Life magazine, BBC and ITV News coverage. A video produced about the 2023 Summer School at Hopwood Hall had the highest number of views recorded for a Historic England YouTube video at the time it was posted. The fundraising team reports that communication pieces and videos have been instrumental in some of their funding applications.

## Recruitment to the programme

### Host firms and training provider applications

Most host firms described the process of filling in the application form for the programme as straightforward and not overly burdensome. Only one host firm suggested simplification of the process at the start by reducing the number of questions on the EOI documentation. Representatives of training providers did not have strong opinions on the competitive procurement process to become part of the programme.

### Pioneering approach to recruitment

The recruitment of trainees to the HBS programme was characterised by a pioneering, match-fit approach which involved Historic England working closely with host firms and, in the case of Tier 1s, Further Education colleges, to ensure an appropriate matching of candidates to host firms. This approach aimed to overcome some of the challenges identified by host firms in selecting and recruiting appropriate candidates for entry-level roles, especially apprenticeship positions. This worked well, with one host firm reporting that they received six times more applications than they would usually. Several trainees interviewed described how Historic England's management of the programme attracted them to apply.

Priority was given to candidate behaviours over knowledge and work experience – to ensure that candidates are an appropriate 'fit' for the organisation – and interviews were designed to give candidates a flavour of what to expect from the host firm. By working in tandem with host firms to find the right candidates, Historic England aimed to remove some of the burden of recruitment from the shoulders of host firms and champion a more sustainable recruitment model.

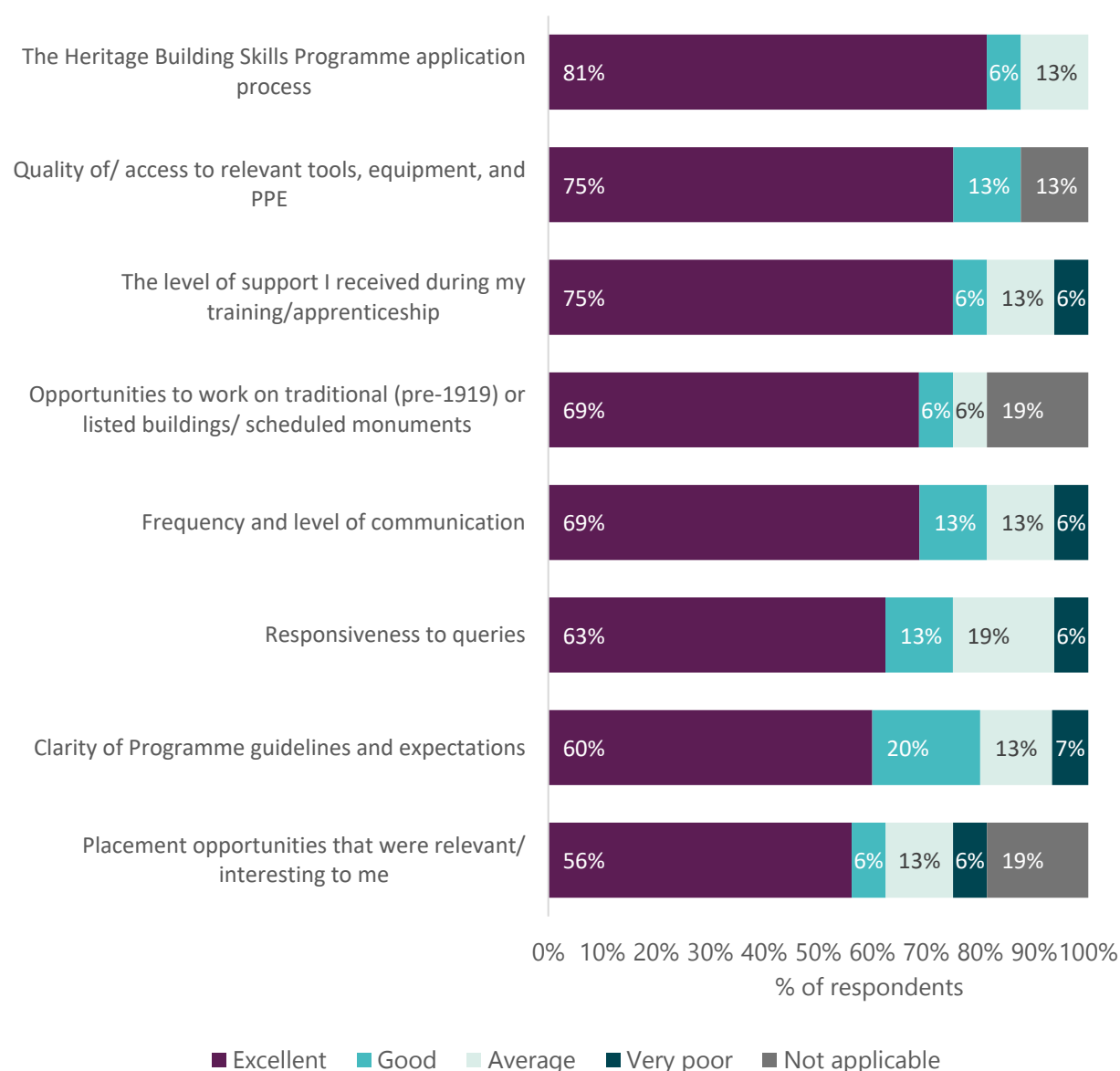
Overall, host firms were very positive about the recruitment process. They appreciated that the administration of applications and shortlisting was undertaken by Historic England. Some felt that Historic England's leadership of the recruitment processes helped to overcome barriers which they had faced in finding and attracting suitable candidates. Host firms were encouraged to help develop the application questions; however, some reported they would have liked to be more involved. Host firms that usually used an in-person trial before employing someone had to adjust to a more formal process.

Although every effort was made to make the process equitable by using the Applied Platform and the avoidance of CVs, some host firms felt that the application process for Tier 2 and 3 was more suitable for more academic candidates. For example, some were concerned that those who did not look 'good on paper' may not have been shortlisted, thus talent may be missed. It is challenging to answer this concern as, by its nature, the recruitment process of Historic England, as an executive non-departmental public body, will be different to recruitment processes undertaken by small organisations in the heritage construction sector. Wide promotion of the opportunity and support sessions for applicants may work to increase the diversity of applications.

For Tier 1 recruitment, Historic England's Trainee Placement Coordinator visited each of the partner FE Colleges and delivered in-person talks about the opportunities to groups of full-time construction learners. Open to all college students studying construction, part of the session included a talk about heritage construction careers and skills shortages more widely. In 2024, the interview day offered an opportunity for Tier 1 applicants to try out a skill that they would be learning during their placement - for example, lime plastering, which received positive feedback.

Overall, trainees who were interviewed found the application process straightforward, and 81% of survey respondents reported that the process was excellent (see **Figure 13**). They mentioned that the questions in both the application and the interview were suitable, and they preferred answering the set questions to providing a CV.

**Figure 13: Participants' rating of Historic England during placement**



Base: 16 (except "Clarity of Programme guidelines and expectations where the base is 15)

## Onboarding to the programme

Onboarding was described as straightforward by the host firms, with one interviewee saying, ‘I didn’t feel at any point I was being thrown in the deep end’. Overall, host firms were positive about how well their trainees fitted into their team, which is reflected by their subsequent offers of employment to trainees. Trainees were generally positive about starting on the programme; however, some would have liked clearer information about what they would be doing on their placement and clearer information about the roles of Historic England and their host firm in terms of employment.

Sixteen host firms that responded to the survey agreed with the following statement:

- The placement was worth my time,

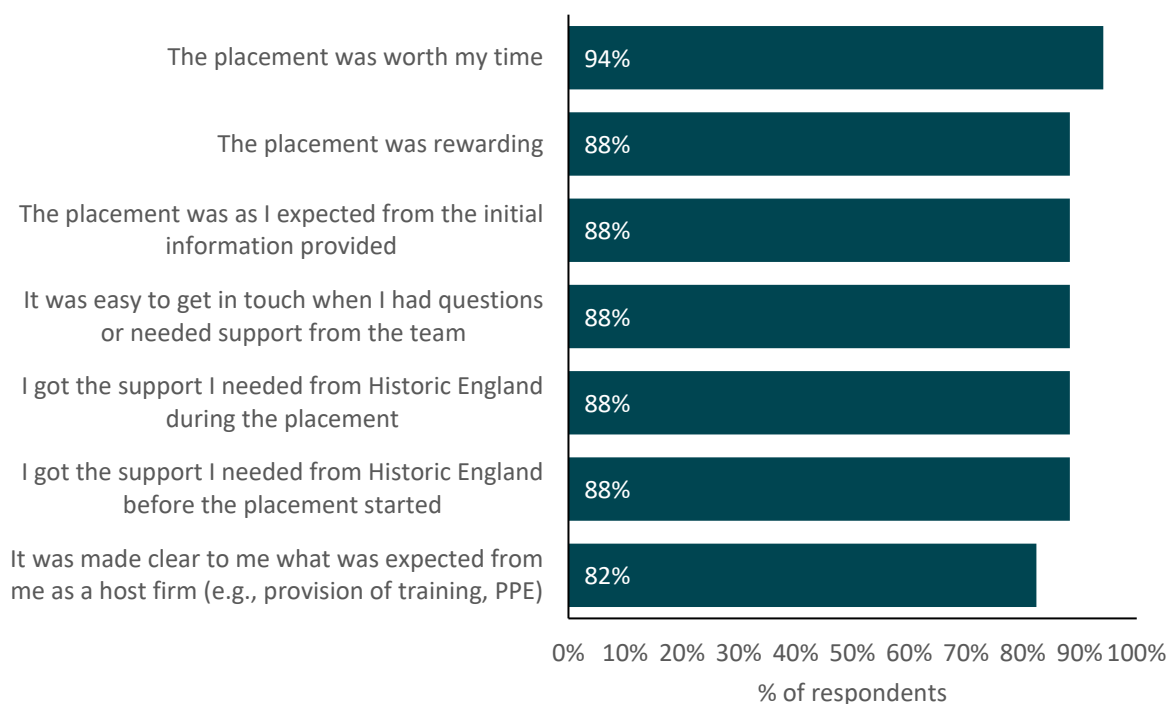
Fifteen agreed with the following statements:

- I got the support I needed from Historic England during the placement
- I got the support I needed from Historic England before the placement started
- It was easy to get in touch when I had questions or needed support from the team
- The placement was as I expected from the initial information provided
- The placement was rewarding

Fourteen agreed with the following statement:

- It was made clear to me what was expected from me as a host firm (e.g., provision of training, PPE).

**Figure 14: Host firm level of agreement with the following statements**



Base:17



## 5.3 Programme structure and participant experience

When asked if they were likely to recommend the programme, 75% (12) of trainees surveyed said they were very likely to recommend, 20% (3) likely to recommend and 6% (1) very unlikely to recommend. For host firms, 82% (14) said they were very likely to recommend, and 18% (3) are likely to recommend.

### The secondment model

Tier 2 of the HBS programme involved – in most cases – Historic England employing the apprentices and seconding them full time to a host firm. This was allowed under apprenticeship funding rules when the apprentices were employed on the programme. When asked about their views on the secondment model, host firms were generally positive. However, two firms questioned whether the trainees could feel less connected to the team as they were employed by Historic England. One host firm suggested that the process would be easier if the trainee were employed by them directly. This approach was taken by Historic England because, during the pre-programme research, it was suggested that removing the administrative burden on contractors would be beneficial, enabling them to take part.

Funding rules for apprenticeships have subsequently changed, meaning Historic England would have needed to become a Flexi Job Apprenticeship Agency to continue operating in this way. Flexi Job Apprenticeship Agencies can offer ‘shared apprenticeships’ with the trainee working across a range of employers throughout the duration of their studies – exploration of this model’s potential for the heritage sector is flagged as a priority action in HESCAPE<sup>28</sup>.

### Secondment vs direct employment with grant funding for Tier 2 and Tier 3 participants

Direct employment of trainees who were then seconded to host firms allowed Historic England to build relationships with participants and to move participants to another host firm when there were challenges. Host firms also benefited from a reduction in administrative burden due to this arrangement. However, there were some difficulties in terms of applying the Historic England HR system to the workplaces of host firms and some trainees and host firms felt that a different employment structure separated the participant from the host firm team.

Due to the changes in funding, Historic England moved to grant funding for Tier 2 and Tier 3 participants in 2024. This meant a change in the relationship between Historic England, participants, and host firms. Participants were employed directly by host firms, who were responsible for ensuring they met the terms of their grant and delivered the participants’ training plan that they had developed and agreed with Historic England.

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<sup>28</sup> [Historic Environment Skills and Careers Action Plan for England](#) (page 18)



There is not enough data from host firms who experienced the change in the funding/employment relationship to provide conclusions about the advantages or disadvantages. However, from looking across the feedback, a grant funding relationship may work more effectively for host firms that are larger with more resources, and a secondment-type relationship may work more effectively for smaller or micro-sized businesses. Depending on the size and capability of the host firm, providing a choice of funding relationships could be considered for future programmes.

## Apprenticeships

Apprentices and host firms have, via survey and informal feedback to Historic England, raised concerns that apprenticeship curricula do not meet the training needs for heritage construction, and it can be difficult for heritage construction firms to ensure their apprentices have the necessary experience for their college portfolio and assessments. This is due to the materials, techniques used, and buildings worked on not aligning with the modern curriculum.

Two examples of this are:

- One apprentice needed to demonstrate experience in building a staircase; the host firm managed to find a derelict building missing a staircase; however, due to the type of building it was not the straight staircase needed for the site joinery course. They felt that the site joinery course was more suited to new builds and was difficult to align with the placement. A course such as bench joinery or cabinetry may be more suitable.
- The host firm for a plastering apprentice explains that very little of the plastering curriculum fits the type of plastering work they do day to day. This makes it hard to get the photos and references needed for the trainee's portfolio.

## Support and communication with trainees and host firms

Overall, the 17 host firms that responded to the survey rated communication with Historic England during their placements as excellent or good. Similarly, trainees (16 respondents) also rated communication with Historic England as excellent (69%), good (13%) or average (13%), with 6% saying very poor. Trainees felt that the HBS programme team were supportive and easy to talk to and to get in contact with.



*“When our apprentices needed questions answering regarding the NVQ or financial concerns, the Historic England team were very responsive and helpful.”*

### Host firm feedback

*The program coordinators have been very supportive throughout with communication.*

### Tier 3 trainee

*The time, effort and support provided to each person is unmatched. I am incredibly grateful for the personal support I received and could not have asked for more.*

### Tier 2 trainee

Although communication was seen as effective overall within the survey and interviews, several trainees felt that communication between Historic England, Host Firms and themselves could have been improved. Several trainees would have liked more visits and check-ins from Historic England. They felt this would have helped them feel less isolated and would have potentially flagged up issues such as a lack of PPE.



*There needed to be more communication between the host organisation and Historic England, and more frequent check-ups and better follow-through from the supervisor to the trainee.*

### Tier 3 trainee

*I just wish I had been checked up on every once in a while. Just to say, how's it going? We're thinking of you.*

### Tier 3 trainee

## Retention rates

The HBS programme has a retention rate of 84%; of those 44 who started their placement, seven have resigned. The majority of those who resigned were Tier 2 apprentices; six of the 19 who started the programme resigned, and therefore, there is a 63% retention rate for the Tier 2 apprentices. It is worth noting that this is similar to the 2023/24 retention rate for apprentices in England overall (62%) and higher than the retention rate for Construction, Planning and Built Environment apprentices in England (56.7%)<sup>29</sup>.

Tier 1, in comparison, had a 100% retention and completion rate. This potentially reflects the shorter time commitment of the placement. Tier 3 had a 93% retention rate with 13 of 14 participants retained; notably, the participant who resigned did so to take up a job opportunity after completing their HBS programme-funded master's degree. The Tier 3 retention rate is potentially due to the later career level of the placement, when the desire to work in heritage is often more established.

## 5.4 Organisation of Summer and Spring Schools

The Spring and Summer Schools were highly valued by and impactful for participants, which is reflected throughout this report. Contributing to the cost of the repair works on the site that hosted the Summer Schools were, however, the costliest element of the programme. The organisation of the Summer Schools required a large amount of effort and programme staff presence. Historic England's contribution through its grant-giving to the sites that hosted the Spring and Summer Schools came to £1,336,388.

The Summer Schools included on-site and off-site training elements. At the 2024 Summer School, the on-site training element delivered by the contractor was approximately 2% of the total project cost. The contractors hosted 21 trainees on site, delivered 15 days of on-site training, and held five hard-hat tours welcoming over 70 visitors. The off-site training element cost £36,587 and was managed and delivered by Historic England. This included 20 days of workshops, classroom training, and site visits.

The differences between sites necessitate different training plans and budgets – for example, the classroom training and workshops at the 2022 Summer School were held in rooms on site at Hopwood Hall, whereas at the 2024 Summer School, separate venues had to be hired for these off-site activities. A budget was also included for travel, food, and accommodation – costs for this varied depending on the number of attendees, the location of the site, and the duration of the training.

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<sup>29</sup> Retention rate for 'Achievement Rates Learner Characteristics - Volumes and Rates by Level, Age, Sex, LLDD, Ethnicity' in England for 2023/24, [Apprenticeships, Academic year 2024/25 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK](#)



Delivering the three Summer Schools in partnership with the site owners, and including the Repair grants, accounted for 39% of the total programme cost.

Summer and Spring Schools were delivered at three different Heritage at Risk (HAR) sites (footnotes provide links to Historic England case studies).

- Wentworth Woodhouse hosted the 1-week 2022 Spring School and the 5-week 2022 Summer School<sup>30</sup>
- Hopwood Hall hosted the 2-week 2023 Summer School<sup>31</sup>
- Church of St John the Evangelist hosted the 5-week 2024 Summer School.<sup>32</sup>

There were many elements to organising the Summer School, from finding a suitable site and arranging workshops, to organising travel, accommodation and meals. Successfully organising each Summer School is a testament to the programme team.

Organising the Summer Schools presented a range of challenges, including:

- Finding suitable sites for the already fixed dates
- Quotes from contractors that were higher than expected
- Delays in site work impacting the type of work trainees could undertake.

Feedback regarding the organisation and content of the Summer Schools from trainees, HAR sites and those delivering training was positive. The main theme for changes that could be made to the Summer School was around its length. The longer Summer Schools required a time commitment from trainees and the programme team, which was potentially challenging for those who do not wish to be away from home for long periods of time, for example, those with caring commitments. For some younger participants, the Summer Schools were their first experience of being away from home for an extended period – their participation also required safeguarding to be embedded within the planning. However, the concentrated time at the Summer School potentially led to a deeper bond with participants. The team felt that several shorter blocks of training spread over a year might be more appropriate.

It was the intention at the beginning of the programme that the Summer Schools would be a replicable part of the programme, which would be repeated with the programme's expansion. Although there is a low likelihood of the same investment, Historic England may consider how to promote heritage careers and achieve the delivery of on-site training as part of the projects it is involved in. The lessons regarding the curation of the Summer School learning programme could also be used to inform the organisation of bootcamps and other training programmes.

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<sup>30</sup> [Case Study: Wentworth Woodhouse, Rotherham, South Yorkshire | Historic England](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Case Study: Hopwood Hall, Rochdale | Historic England](#)

<sup>32</sup> [Case Study: Church of St John the Evangelist, Lancaster | Historic England](#)

## 6. Brief conclusion

Overall, the programme contributed to strengthening the heritage construction workforce by training 42 participants across different career stages, with 83% of graduates securing employment in the heritage sector after the programme. Trainees reported that the programme not only introduced them to heritage construction as a viable career but also expanded their understanding of the opportunities available.

The Summer Schools at HAR sites proved to be an especially valuable component, offering participants hands-on experience, confidence-building, and professional networks. Through placements with host firms, participants gained exposure to a wide range of other HAR sites and pre-1919 and National Heritage List for England buildings, with trainees working on an average of seven sites during their placements.

The programme allowed host firms to take on trainees they could not otherwise do due to cost and/or capacity. Host firms discussed a range of positive impacts related to being part of the programme, supporting and improving their approaches to training in the process.

A bespoke recruitment process attracted a range of strong applicants; as recruitment was led by Historic England, this reduced the burden for host firms. Overall feedback from trainees and host firms about the programme's processes, such as application and onboarding, was positive.

The dedicated, multi-skilled, and hard-working programme team were clearly motivated to make the programme a success and offered extensive support to host firms, trainees and partners. The programme team responded well to challenges and embraced opportunities for ongoing improvement of the programme.

Although the scale of the programme may be challenging to replicate due to cost, its insights provide a strong foundation for shaping future heritage skills initiatives and ensuring the programme has a continued impact across the sector.