



High Street Heritage Action Zones Programme Evaluation

Final Report

20
25



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Historic England

Evaluation of the High Streets Heritage Action Zone Programme

Final Report

2025

All images used in this report are from Historic England or AMION Consulting unless specified.

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AMION Consulting would like to thank everyone interviewed, spoken to or engaged over the period of this evaluation.

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Statement:

This report is based on information and insights that are accurate to the best of our knowledge and understanding. Should there be any omissions or required updates, please contact Graham Russell, Chief Executive – AMION, 0330 174 3024 and Email: grahamrussell@amion.co.uk.

Historic England Foreword

It is my pleasure to introduce this evaluation. Much like the innovative High Streets Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) programme itself, Historic England has pioneered a mould-breaking approach to its evaluation so that we fully understand the impacts of the programme and draw out lessons for future place-based work. In its rigour, this evaluation report marks a step-change in heritage-led regeneration – one that strengthens our ability to respond sensitively in future to communities’ needs at both a local and national level.

The evaluation findings are clear; the HSHAZ programme has created lasting benefits from economic growth to community wellbeing. It has strengthened local economies by attracting new jobs, investments, and businesses to historic high streets. It has fostered community cohesion through a renewed sense of belonging, boosting wellbeing and improving people’s lives. It has generated cultural and social growth, making heritage more accessible and inclusive through festivals, events, and public art projects. And finally, it has shown how heritage can accelerate regeneration through collaborative partnerships which, in turn, generate impactful and sustainable change. As a trusted facilitator and enabler, Historic England remains committed to supporting delivery partners with expert advice and evidence-led regeneration strategies.

Delivering this programme against the backdrop of unprecedented social and political changes is a tremendous shared achievement. The Covid-19 pandemic and broader economic pressures undoubtedly influenced what could be achieved. Project partners had to be flexible and adapt their approaches to meet these new realities. Despite these challenges, Historic England’s HSHAZ programme delivered meaningful long-term change to places.

The success of this programme would not be possible without the dedication of our delivery partners who worked in 67 high streets across the length and breadth of the country, our incredible Historic England teams, and the 42,503 volunteer hours from local people who helped bring this vision to life. To every single person who contributed— thank you.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Brennan', on a light grey rectangular background.

Louise Brennan
Regional Director – Midlands, Historic England

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Glossary

This Glossary is intended to support readers in accessing this evaluation report.

Benefit-cost ratio (BCR): An economic metric that compares the benefits of a programme to its costs.

Capital strand: Tangible, physical restoration and repair works on buildings and public spaces in the high streets.

CDEL: Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit – a source of government funding allocated for capital projects.

Civic pride: A sense of pride within a community, fostered by improved local environments and heritage assets.

Community strand: Engaging with local communities to empowering them to help shape the future of their high streets.

Conservation deficit: The gap between the cost of restoring a historic building and what it would be worth after the restoration.

Contingent valuation: An economic research method used to estimate the value of a non-market benefits, meaning it does not have a tangible value, such as stronger sense for place as a result of repairing a historic building.

Cultural consortium: A group of local cultural and community organisations working together to deliver cultural strand projects.

Cultural strand: Activities and events celebrating the history of high streets and their importance to communities.

Delivery partner: An organisation who received project funding and is responsible for implementing projects within a scheme, often local authorities.

Expressions of interest (EOI): A preliminary part of the application process, submitted by potential delivery partners, used to shortlist participants in the HSHAZ programme.

Gross Value Added (GVA): The total value of goods and services produced in an area, industry, or sector, minus the costs of raw materials and other inputs. It shows how much an economy contributes to overall growth.

Heritage Asset: A building, monument, site, or landscape with historical, cultural, or architectural significance.

Historic England (HE): The public body responsible for protecting and promoting England's historic assets and environment.

HSHAZ: High Streets Heritage Action Zone – A programme aimed at revitalising high streets through heritage-led regeneration.

Land Value Uplift (LVU): Land value uplift is the increase in the value of land when it is developed or enhanced.

Local grants programme: Funding provided to local organisations for bespoke cultural activities in specific high streets, as part of the Cultural strand of HSHAZ.

Logic model: A visual diagram that shows how a programme works, linking its resources (inputs), actions (activities), immediate results (outputs), and long-term effects (outcomes).

National commission: Centralised cultural activities and initiatives under the HSHAZ programme, often involving large-scale artistic collaborations¹.

Partnerships in conservation areas (PSICA): A Historic England grant programme supporting conservation and restoration in designated areas.

Place branding: Developing a distinctive identity for a location to improve its attractiveness and perception.

Public realm: Public spaces, such as streets, parks, and squares, which are accessible to everyone.

Quasi-experimental methods: Evaluation approaches using innovative comparison methods to assess programme impact without full controls.

RAID log: A tool for managing risks, assumptions, issues, and dependencies in a programme helping to track potential challenges and ensure effective decision-making.

RDEL: Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit – Funding for administrative and operational activities.

RE-AIM framework: A framework used to evaluate the impact of interventions, focusing on the intervention's Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance.

Strategic Added Value (SAV): The broader impacts of a programme beyond its immediate outputs, for example enhanced partnership working as a result of a HSHAZ scheme.

Senior Responsible Owner (SRO): The Historic England employee that is accountable for the successful delivery of a project or programme.

Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI): A programme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore historic townscapes.

¹ This has been evaluated separately by Audience Agency.



Section 1

Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Historic England's £103 million High Streets Heritage Action Zones programme delivered from 2020 to 2024, aimed to revitalise 69 high streets across England. The initiative brought together over 100 partners to drive economic, cultural, and community renewal in urban areas.

The evaluation provides evidenced based insights on the impact of this heritage-led regeneration programme, on economies, communities and local organisations. It also explores how this impact can be measured and enhanced, and what this means for the economy, culture, and sense of place.

The programme was launched in May 2019 with investment in geographically bounded and linked projects defined as Schemes.

Figure 1.1 Overview of HSHAZ programme, scheme and projects



Source: Historic England and AMION 2025

The HSHAZ programme was funded with £40 million from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) Heritage High Street Fund, £52 million from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's² Future High Street Fund, £3 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) and £7.9 million from Historic England (HE). It also involved considerable amounts of match funding at the project level from local authorities, charities and businesses.

The programme was largely delivered within a period of global and national uncertainty and change. The confluence of the global Covid-19 pandemic, rapid geopolitical shifts, and associated severe economic pressures, created unprecedented challenges for governments, communities, organisations and individuals involved in the delivery of projects across the programme.

Due to the ambitious scale of the HSHAZ programme it required significant coordination. The majority of the £103 million programme spend was distributed as grant funding to local delivery partners, mostly local authorities, with grants ranging from £300,000 to over £5 million. The average grant was circa £1.3 million.

The programme was designed to have three interlocking strands: capital works, community engagement and cultural programming. The capital and community strands were allocated the majority of the £103 million funding, of this £75 million was allocated for capital and £11.7 million for revenue. The cultural strand allocated £8 million of revenue funding and a further £8.4 million of revenue was allocated to programme administrative costs.

At the programme outset 69 Schemes were awarded funding. This evaluation is focused upon 66 HSHAZ schemes as two schemes; Kings Lynn and Scarborough opted out of the programme very early in the process, spending less than £5,000 and achieving no measurable impact. Coventry HSHAZ is also excluded from this evaluation as it was selected as demonstrator project, delivered ahead of the other schemes and has been evaluated separately by Historic England³. All process and impact analysis undertaken in this evaluation on costs and benefits is based on the 66 schemes. When necessary, however, the evaluation refers to 67 or 69 schemes.

The 66 schemes that are focus for this evaluation are shown in Figure 1.2 below.

² During the programme the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (HMCLG) was The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)

³³ Coventry HSHAZ Evaluation: <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2023/coventry-high-street-heritage-action-zone/>

Figure 1.2: Map of HSHAZ areas



Source: AMION 2024

1.2 Evaluation purpose and ambition

Historic England commissioned AMION to produce an independent, high-quality assessment of the full range of impacts delivered by the HSHAZ programme to date, and to assess likely future impacts.

A key objective for the evaluation was to explore the use of innovative methodologies. Embracing both successes and failures in the ability to apply these methodologies and test their usefulness was seen as being crucial in providing valuable insights into what works, what does not and why. The intention was to use this learning to improve future programme design and monitoring systems. Given this explicit focus, the evaluation tested and deployed a mixed method approach. This included theory based and quasi-experimental evaluation methods to establish a robust counterfactual in conjunction with: extensive data and document analysis, a large number of case studies, and a wide programme of consultations. It has also drawn on the DCMS evidence bank⁴ for valuation of relevant benefits and includes a bespoke contingent valuation study, introduced during the evaluation to address gaps in benefit valuation. Best practice approaches from other sectors such as health were explored and have been used to capture and evidence the findings.

⁴ DCMS evidence bank for valuation of benefits. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rapid-evidence-assessment-community-and-heritage-valuation-studies>

This evaluation includes a comprehensive analysis of the capital and cultural strands, and it references the community strand component where possible.

1.3 Programme context

The evaluation considered the key influencing contexts within which HSHAZ was delivered in terms of the external environment (social, economic, environmental factors), regional and local conditions, and implementation (organisational management and project delivery).

External environment: HSHAZ operated within a complex landscape shaped by economic stagnation, an ageing population, rising costs, and global crises such as Covid-19, and international conflicts. Increasing public awareness of sustainability and the UK's net-zero targets added to the complexity by adding to the ambition for heritage-led regeneration initiatives. This changing environment and specific challenges created uncertainties. It has also driven project and programme design innovations.

Regional and local context: Urban centres had been in decline for the many years and increasingly under pressure from changing consumer habits and online retail, which was accelerated by Covid-19. Transforming high streets back into sustainable vibrant social and economic hubs would take significantly longer than the four years of the HSHAZ programme and substantially larger budgets than the programme could provide. Notably, HSHAZ targeted support on the most deprived of local communities aiming to demonstrate how heritage-led regeneration can generate benefits at both local and a national level. These hypothesized benefits are wide ranging encompassing economic, social and environmental benefits as well as the well-being benefits from engaging with cultural and heritage assets.

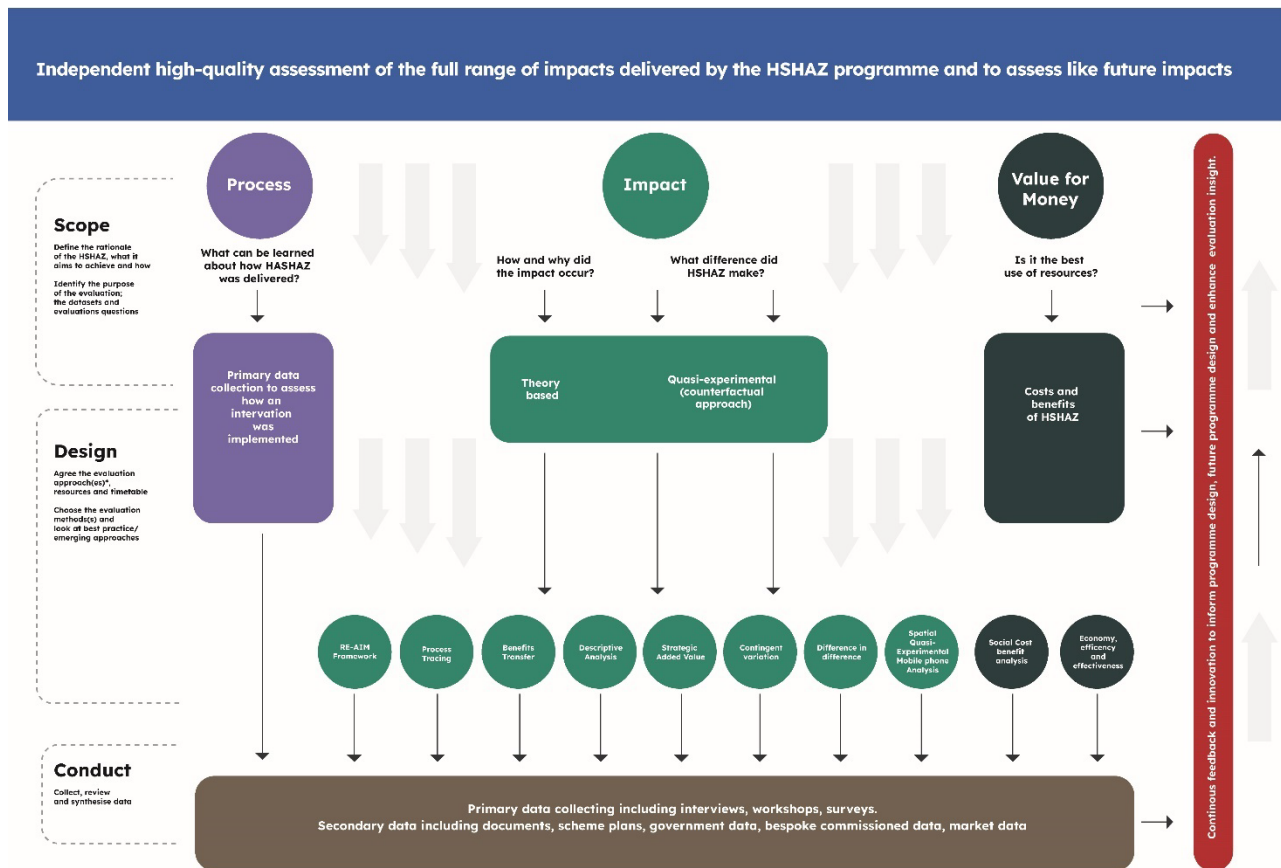
- **Implementation context:** The programme sought to combine national expertise with local partnerships and their strategic priorities. Supporting Scheme delivery involved collaboration between Historic England and over 100 delivery partners, many of which were local authorities. The pressures on local authority budgets, well documented prior to the HSHAZ intervention, only continued to grow during the delivery of the programme. Whilst some provision was made through the HSHAZ direct grant to cover local authority management and administration costs, delivery partners were expected to contribute match funding towards the programme. Match funding included the cost of employing scheme project officers central for the delivery of the programme for the four-year period.

For many local authorities, years of financial and staffing constraints meant that heritage conservation had been deprioritised with the associated loss of heritage design and delivery skills, expertise and relationships with cultural organisations. The HSHAZ programme sought to help increase the capacity of partners undertaking heritage-led regeneration, to showcase what could be achieved, and to provide a strong foundation for heritage-led regeneration and engagement in the future.

1.4 Evaluation approach

The evaluation was commissioned by HE and seeks to “produce an independent high-quality assessment of the full range of impacts delivered by the HSHAZ programme and to assess likely future impacts.” The primary objective was to provide a comprehensive analysis of the programme's influence and forecast its potential future outcomes. The evaluation approach is captured in Figure 1.3 below. Detailed information is available in the methodological appendices (Appendices A - D).

Figure 1.3: Summary of Methodological Framework



1.5 Report structure

The remaining structure and content of the report is as follows:

- **Section 2:** sets out an overview of the HSHAZ planned programme
- **Section 3:** reviews the design, delivery and governance of the HSHAZ programme
- **Section 4:** considers programme performance
- **Section 5:** reviews the programme value for money and the strategic added value
- **Section 6:** sets out the conclusions
- **Section 7:** identifies the lessons learnt and recommendations

A series of appendices accompany this document:

- **Appendix A:** Methodological Appendix: Further detail on wider methodological approaches utilised, case study selection and RE-AIM Framework.
- **Appendix B:** Methodological Appendix: Social and Cost Benefit Analysis
- **Appendix C:** Methodological Appendix: Difference in Difference Analysis
- **Appendix D:** Methodological Appendix: Quasi Experimental Footfall Analysis
- **Appendix E:** Case Studies

Further technical detail is available for the report including diagrams for Appendix D, programme logic models and strategic context. This is available on request from:
evaluation@historicengland.org.uk



Section 2

HSHAZ Programme

2 HSHAZ programme

2.1 Introduction

This section highlights key aspects of the proposed HSHAZ programme including: its three strands; forecast funding and spend profile; programme goal and objectives; geographic focus; and the application and selection process as detailed in the approved business case⁵. It also sets out how the programme evolved and provides a contextual timeline of the HSHAZ. The governance of the programme and resourcing structure are set out and the rationale for the programme in terms of market failures and wider policy ambitions is considered.

2.2 Capital, cultural and community strands

The HSHAZ programme comprised three strands of activity - capital, cultural and community. Although never viewed as being equal in terms of investment or impact it was expected that there would be co-delivery of the three strands, and this would achieve impacts greater than the sum of the parts.

Figure 2.1: The interwoven strands of HSHAZ



Source: Adapted from HSHAZ Business Case (2019)

Activities within the three strands included:

- **Capital strand:** design and management of physical works to buildings, including repair, reinstating lost features, supporting the conversion of historic buildings for new uses and improvement of public realm. It also included community engagement events.
- **Cultural strand:** developing, managing and delivering co-created cultural activities and events celebrating the history of the high street and its importance to local communities. The cultural strand had two separately managed elements:

⁵ HSHAZ Business Case Submitted to DCMS in 2019.

- National Commissions, funded directly by Historic England grants and delivered by local cultural and community organisations.

The Local Grants programme provided targeted funding to local organisations across all 67 high streets.

- **Community strand:** giving local communities a role in deciding what works they want to see happening on their high street and what sort of place they want it to be. A range of activities were proposed including community design, engagement events and participatory activities, for example, strategy development (e.g. Council Community Strategy).

At a local level the three strands were combined and delivered jointly on local high streets as schemes.

With no minimum budget, no agreed output targets and incomplete monitoring data and given the challenges to delivery, a Historic England commissioned programme review in 2021 recommended a reduction in community strand reporting requirements to maintain programme momentum and prevent further delays to capital works. As a result, community activities were fully incorporated into the cultural and capital strands. This evaluation, therefore, focusses primarily on the capital and cultural elements of the programme and references separately aspects of the community strand where these are distinguishable and different from the cultural or capital strands.

2.3 Scheme selection process

The scheme selection process for the HSHAZ programme had two stages: (i) Expression of Interest (EOI) and (ii) Scheme Development. The two-stage process was adopted intending to balance simplicity and detail, ensuring informed decisions while remaining cost effective for applicants.

Stage 1 was a competitive EOI process where applications were assessed against essential and additional criteria, prioritising geographical diversity, project size, equality, and public value. A total of 215 EOIs were received, and 69 applications were shortlisted by Historic England.

Stage 2, scheme development, was not competitive and was designed to enable time for detailed programme design for shortlisted schemes and was supported by Historic England staff helping local delivery partners to refine and develop their plans. On completion of Stage 2, all schemes were made aware of their capital and community strand funding.

For the 69 successful schemes a separate process of funding allocation was carried for the cultural strand. This involved a pilot stage in 2021 for 40 schemes and then a series of grant allocations.

2.4 Forecast funding sources and spend profile

HSHAZ's £103 million programme budget spanned four calendar years and five financial years (2019/2020 - 2023/2024) with the following sources of funding:

- £40 million from the Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport's Heritage High Street Fund
- £52 million from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' Future High Street Fund.
- £8 million of HE partnership funding towards the HSHAZ programme from core Grant in Aid budget.
- £3 million National Lottery Heritage Fund to support the cultural strand with National Lottery Heritage Fund taking an active advisory role in the cultural strand board.

In addition to the financial resources, other important project partners expressed support and committed resources:

- Arts Council England (ACE) committed to support the programme through access to their expertise and networks. ACE adopted a governance and advisory role in the dedicated cultural strand board and the strategic programme board.
- Architectural Heritage Fund (AHF) committed to being national strategic partners in a governance/advisory role. Whilst not contributing financially, leverage from the AHF's £15 million allocation from the Future High Streets Fund was sought. Historic England administrated the AHF programme (Transforming Places Through Heritage) for DCMS and the intent was to provide the opportunity for the two funds to complement each other.

The approved Business Case stated that HSHAZ's central government funding allocations from DCMS and MHCLG were subject to annuality⁶, meaning that budgets had to be spent within the agreed annual profile. An exception was made partway through the first year of the programme when DCMS granted special permission to re-profile £9 million of the first two years of funding due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The HSHAZ programme end date initially fixed at 31 March 2024 was not extended to reflect the delays caused by Covid-19. Other MHCLG programmes of funding initiated at a similar time, such as Local Growth Fund and Get Building Fund, applied and were successful in agreeing substantial, spend and output extensions, to take account of Covid-19 impacts.

The forecast annual spend at the inception of the programme is set out in **Table 2.1** below.

Table 2.1: Forecast Annual spend profile and proportion of funding budget					
Year 1 2019/20	Year 2 2020/21	Year 3 2021/22	Year 4 2022/23	Year 5 2023/24	Total
£3,716	£18,997	£32,606	£28,839	£19,018	£103,176
4%	18%	32%	28%	18%	100%

Source: Historic England Business Case 2019

⁶ Annuity refers to the budgets were dispended annually.

2.5 HSHAZ goal and objectives

The HSHAZ programme was designed to support declining high streets. The goal of the HSHAZ programme as stated in the approved business case was: to make the high street a more attractive, engaging and vibrant place for people to live, work and spend time.

Sitting below this goal, the HSHAZ programme had three investment objectives:

1. To change perceptions of heritage high streets.
2. To support sustainable economic retail and commercial and cultural growth on and around high streets;
3. And, to restore and enhance local historic character.

2.6 Programme outcomes

The identified outcomes included:

Economically and socially sustained

Increased Gross Value Added (GVA) in high street areas and unique destination heritage high streets created

- Vacant buildings brought into use on high streets.
- High street regeneration results in positive investment in the wider area.

Heritage, place and identity

A heritage-led approach is recognised as crucial to economic and social regeneration

- Local heritage of the high streets is better interpreted and understood
- Stronger place brand and increased vibrancy on high streets
- Communities are enthused by and invested in their local high streets and have an increased sense of place and identity
- Perceptions are changed by revealing the stories of places and communities are re-engaged with the uniqueness of their place
- Construction professionals have increased skills relating to historic buildings

Organisational

- Historic England is recognised as a facilitator of economic growth by local and national partners
- Historic England is recognised as an effective local operator
- Staff are more committed to Historic England

2.6.1 Critical success factors

To support the assessment at the end of the programme, specifically to understand the degree to which each of the investment objectives were met, 10 critical success factors (CSFs) were identified by Historic England. These were classified as set out in **Table 2.2** below into 4 themes.

Table 2.2: HSHAZ critical success factors and themes	
Critical Success Factors	Theme
To revitalise historic high streets by investing in the repair and restoration of vacant or under-utilised public realm and heritage assets.	Productivity
To meet changing consumer demands by using the local historic character and distinctiveness to differentiate the high street from competitors and provide unique, curated and immersive experiences.	Productivity
To add economic value over the long term by creating and facilitating new employment and training opportunities which can be taken up by local people.	Sustainable
To address negative externalities on high streets by investing in clusters of historic assets and the associated public realm and stimulating new private investments in mixed commercial, leisure, residential and community uses.	Deliverable
To work with a wide range of local communities to develop a greater appreciation and understanding of the heritage on their high streets.	Inclusive
To work with local businesses and communities, to ensure that local needs, knowledge, insight and narratives drive the local investment programme.	Inclusive
To provide public value through effective use of public resources and engaging in existing or planned regeneration initiatives to achieve wider socio-economic benefits.	Effective

Source: Historic England Business Case 2019

These themes and CSFs strongly indicate that the HSHAZ supported interventions were expected to generate wide and long-lasting impacts beyond the life of the programme.

The CSFs also point towards an expected legacy for the programme arising from a combination of changed planning controls, partner financial commitments, increased civic pride, increased capacity in community organisations and cultural partnerships.

The programme used CSFs rather than Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), highlighting a focus on broad enablers rather than specific measurable performance. This approach is explored further in Section 5.

2.7 Scheme location

In developing the HSHAZ programme, Historic England intended that the funding would support urban areas of need across England. **Table 2.3** provides a breakdown of the 67 schemes taken forward by Historic England by region. The North West, North East and Yorkshire had the most schemes whilst the East of England had the fewest schemes. The two schemes awarded funding but not taken forward, Scarborough and Kings Lynn were in North East and Yorkshire and East of England, respectively.

Table 2.3: Distribution of schemes taken forward by location		
Historic England region	Number of schemes	%
North West	14	21%
North East and Yorkshire	12	18%
London and the South East	12	18%
Midlands	12	18%
South West	10	15%
East of England	6	9%
Total	67	100%

Source: Historic England programme data 2024

2.8 Programme scope and value for money

2.8.1 Programme scope

Two business cases were developed by Historic England for funding for the HSHAZ programme:

- **Business Case 1:** March 2019 – First Full Business Case (FBC) seeking £40 million from DCMS.
- Business Case 2:** September 2019 Revised Full Business Case: seeking £92 million; £52 MHCLG and £40 million from DCMS.

Historic England had made a strong case for heritage-led regeneration in the initial business case. Following this and confirmation from MHCLG of the availability of Future High Streets Fund investment due to the reallocation of resources to align with government priorities, HE had to respond quickly to prepare a robust case for the substantial additional funding for the High Streets' Heritage Action Zone programme⁷. The successful application enabled the programme to significantly increase the number of schemes supported, from 40 to supporting 69 schemes.

2.8.2 Forecast programme value for money

The programme projected a strong economic return, with a **Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of 4.9:1 as a result of generating £440 million of GVA**. This was based on a number of key assumptions related to generation of commercial floorspace, job densities and training impacts with a 20-year horizon for realising benefits. Broader societal impacts such as heritage appreciation, wellbeing, and civic pride were recognised in the business case as being of value but were not measured or monetised⁸.

It is important to note the forecast BCR presented in the Business Case is calculated on the Historic England funding ask only, rather than the total public sector investment. Within the Economic Case of the Business Case, the programme was expected to spend £92 million, whilst attracting a further £194 million from public and private sources⁹. The split of projected match-funding was not known at the time of the Business Case development. **If we assume that the projected match-funding in the Business Case had the same public:private split as the outturn investment, the business case BCR would have been 2.4:1, substantially lower than the 4.9:1 estimated.**

The business case noted that there would be regional variations in impact. **Table 2.4** shows the total and expected BCR by region, indicating higher BCR for South West, North East and Yorkshire regions (7.0:1 to 8.3:1) compared to those in the Midlands and North West. The differences were due to expected project activities and local deprivation levels. As above, the regional BCRs in the business case do not include expected public sector match funding. If they had done, they would be substantially lower.

Table 2.4: HSHAZ programme forecast cost contribution and BCR by region

Historic England region	No. of projects	Historic England cost (£m)	Cost (£m) including match funding		GVA (£m)	BCR (based on HE funding)
North West	14	£19	£41		£61	3.2
North East and Yorkshire	13		£18	£82	£123	7.0
Midlands	13	£17	£42		£56	3.2
East of England	7		£7	£19	£28	4.0
South West	10		£14	£72	£114	8.3
London & South East	12	£15	£32		£57	3.9
Total	69	£92	£288		£440	4.9

Source: Reproduced from Historic England Business Case Nov 2019 – numbers may not add due to rounding in the Business Case

⁸ At the time of the business case these social benefits were not monetised in HM Treasury Business Case Appraisal Guidance. Since the business case was developed, changes to the Green Book place increased emphasis on the importance of identifying and where possible measuring and monetising an intervention's social impacts. The current Green Book method focusses on these social welfare benefits, rather than a GVA assessment arising from jobs and training.

⁹ The Economic Case in the Business Case states a £92 million HE programme, rather than £96 million which is stated elsewhere. This difference may be due to the discounting in the Economic Case but this is not clearly stated.

In keeping with HM Treasury Guidance best practice guidance, the business case also included an assessment of risk, identifying key risks as those related to funding constraints, project delays, stakeholder engagement, and local authority capacity.

2.9 Programme evolution

The programme delivery was kept under review through internal audit assessments, a commissioned external review, and other informal reviews. These led to a shift in emphasis from the community to the capital strand, reduced documentation requirements, and improved technology use. The need for and implementation of these changes are discussed in Sections 4.2.4 of this report.

2.10 Timeline

The HSHAZ programme was delivered during a particularly turbulent social, political and economic context, during a time of unprecedented social restrictions, economic pressures and political instability.

Figure 2.2 seeks to capture the key milestones for the HSHAZ programme and selected contextual landmarks or events as set out in Section 1.2 above.

Figure 2.2: Programme milestones and contextual drivers



2.11 Management and delivery

2.11.1 Overview

In addition to the three strands (Section 2.2) 5% of the funding awarded to delivery partners was to fund administration, delivery and communication and marketing, best practice sharing, peer learning, quality control, evaluation and legacy HSHAZ was designed to be a devolved programme delivery model whereby local partners led on delivering schemes and the individual strands. In all but two¹⁰ of the 67 schemes taken forward the delivery partners were local authorities.

Capital delivery: Following stage 2 of the selection process delivery partners commenced further detailed planning as well as delivery of individual projects within their scheme. Projects were either directly delivered by partners or were commissioned from suitably qualified contractors. Public procurement regulations applied to all works and activities.

Example: Delivery in Swaffham: Following a period of project development, Swaffham HSHAZ through Breckland Council commissioned Urban Symbiotics to develop a Swaffham Town Centre Masterplan.

Cultural delivery: A pilot grants programme was initiated in the 2020-2021 for 40 HSHAZ areas. Following this, grants were awarded to delivery partners, who then distributed the funds to Cultural Consortia. Cultural consortia then delivered projects directly or commissioned other organisations. The grants to all schemes were locally directed and designed to complement the capital works, seeking to ensure that each high street's unique character and needs were addressed. This co-created approach was intended to empower local communities to take ownership of the cultural activity and regeneration process.

Example: Cultural delivery in Redruth: Creative Kernow secured £10,000 under the 2021 Pilot Scheme for the Agents4Change project, engaging young people in shaping Redruth's high street. A subsequent application in 2022 was awarded £80,000, funding 'Redruth Unlimited', a grant scheme for creative projects to complement the Cornwall Council's delivery of the capital works for Redruth HSHAZ inspired by the town's history and community.

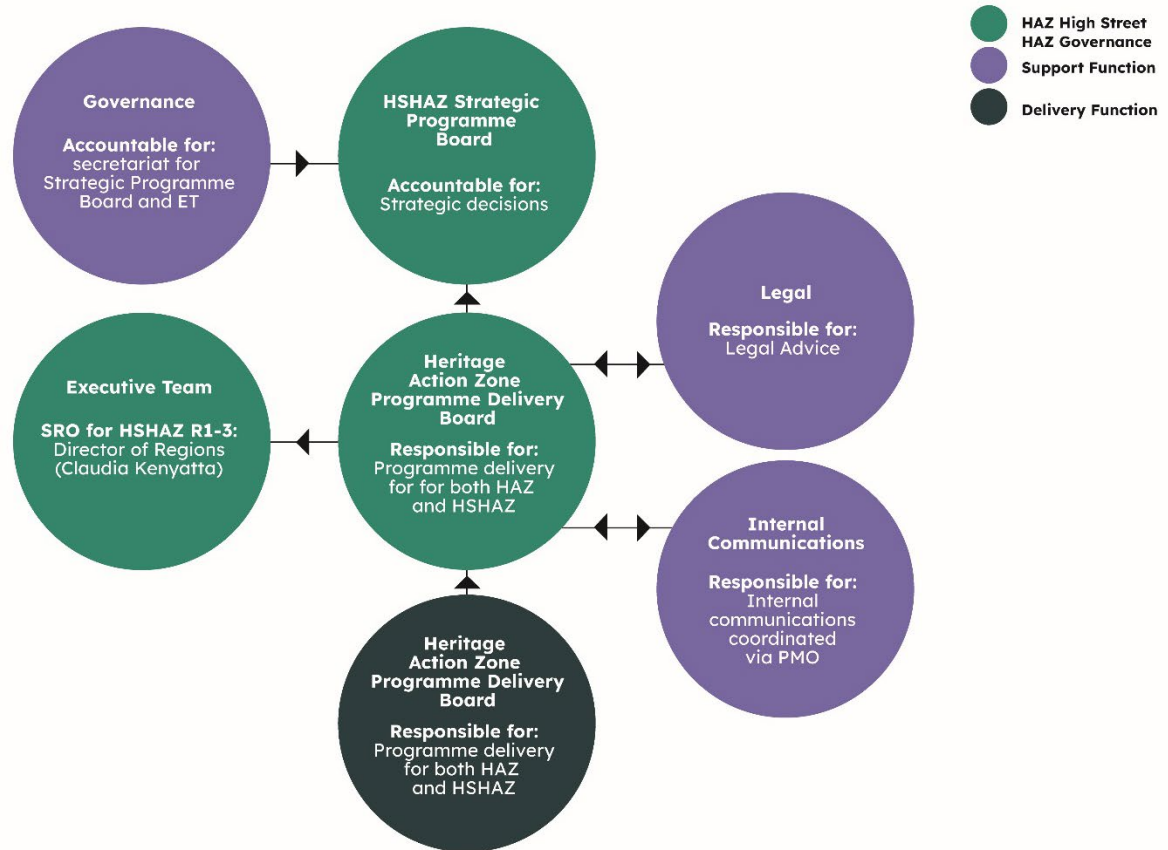
2.11.2 Governance structure

The governance structure set out in the approved business case is illustrated in Figure 2.3. The HSHAZ programme was to be overseen by the Strategic Partnership (SP) Board supported by a Programme Delivery (PD) team focused on delivery, based in part on a review of quarterly monitoring data submitted by delivery partners.

Lead Partners operated within their own local governance and assurance frameworks.

¹⁰ Hastings HSHAZ and Tyldesley HSHAZ were both directed by community interest companies (CICs).

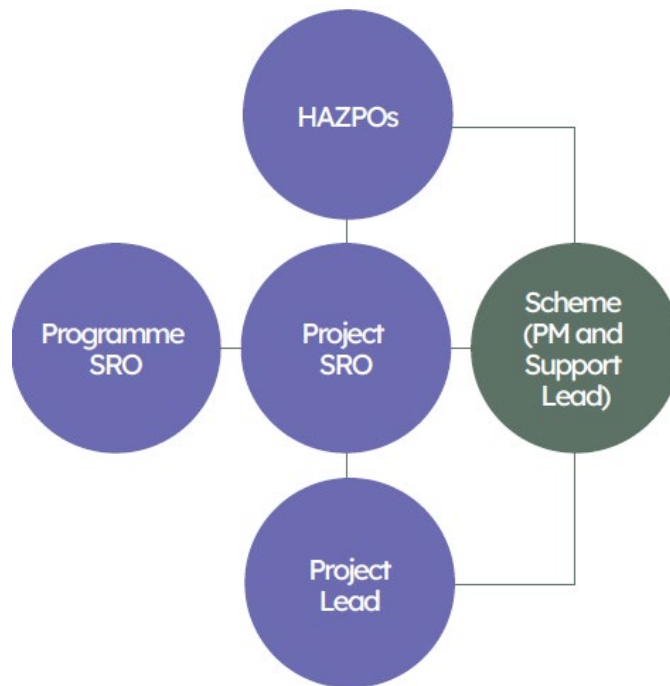
Figure 2.3: HSHAZ governance structure provided by Historic England



Source: Historic England Business Case. The diagram references Heritage Action Zones (HAZ) which were a forerunner to HSHAZ and were also delivered alongside the HSHAZ programme. More detail is picked up in section 2.12.2.

Figure 2.4 below provides an overview of the structure of Historic England Regional Teams for the HSHAZ programme which fed into the HSHAZ Programme Delivery Board. Regional teams included a Programme Senior Responsible Owner, a Project Senior Responsible Owner and a project manager. All 67 schemes were overseen by 12 HSHAZ Project Officers (referred to as HAZPOs).

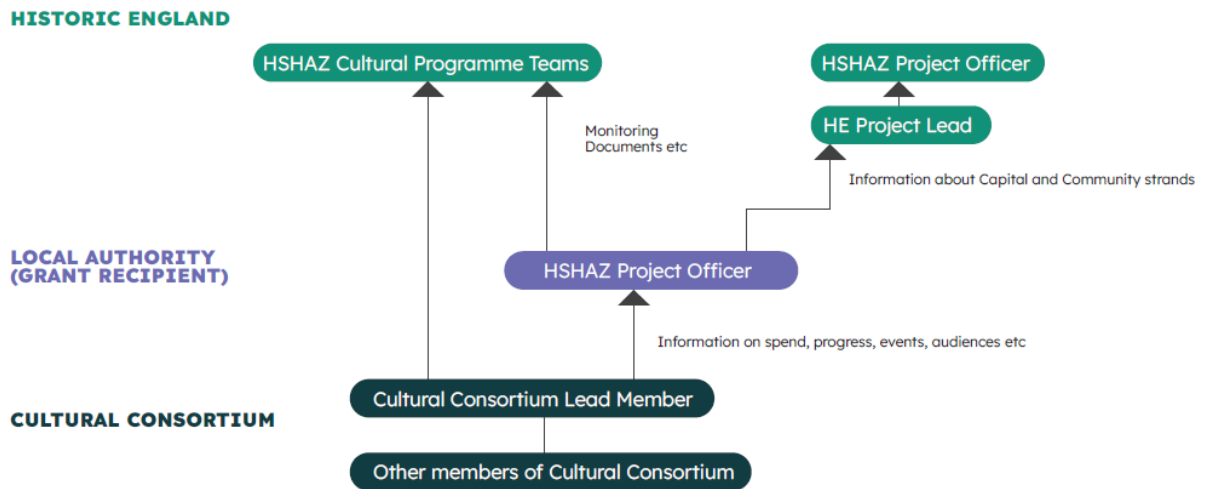
Figure 2.4: HSHAZ regional organogram provided by Historic England



Source: Historic England regional team HSHAZ organogram

The cultural and capital strands had different governance structures. Figure 2.5 below represents the cultural strand governance. There are clear overlaps as a result of the linkages to the HAZPOs and Regional Team as set out in 2.4 above.

Figure 2.5 HSHAZ Cultural strand governance and reporting structure



Source: HSHAZ cultural strand organogram (2019)

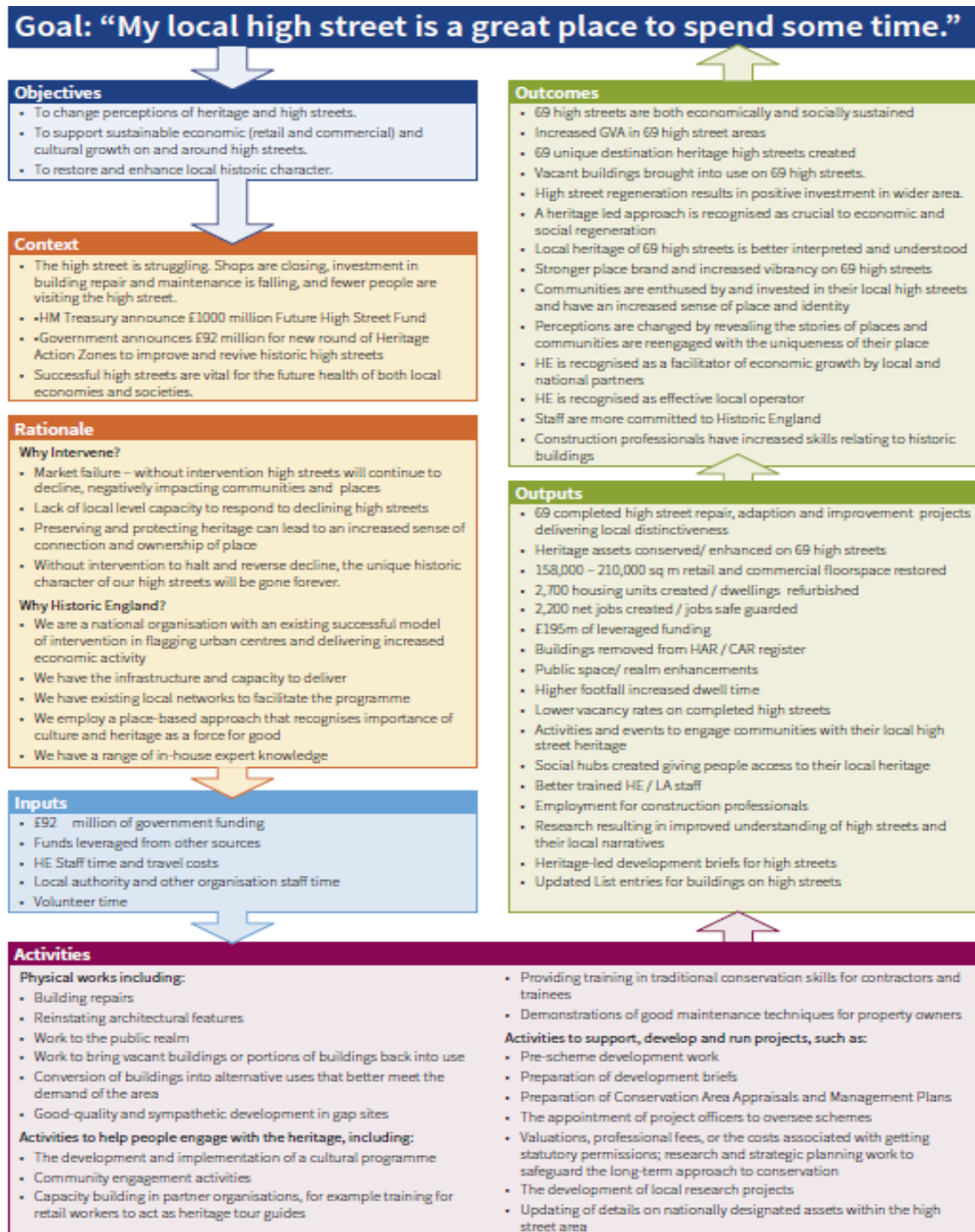
2.11.3 Programme logic model

In keeping with best practice, the business case included the development of a logic model for the HSHAZ programme. Logic models are useful frameworks for aiding the design and the delivery of a programme as well as essential for supporting monitoring and evaluation. Their value comes from making explicit and visual, assumptions on how inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes are related and the causal relationships that are being assumed. This explicit and transparent framework aids in monitoring progress, allowing timely insights into the extent to which interventions (inputs) are as profiled and the extent to which the activities are delivering to cost, time, output scope, scale and type.

Logic models are less useful where monitoring arrangements and data do not enable timely insights into these causal relationships and delivery of goals against milestones. Figure 2.6 below presents the logic model for the full HSHAZ programme¹¹.

¹¹ The Programme Logic Model has the capital strand at its centre.

Figure 2.6: Overall programme logic mode (Nov 2019)



Note: This model precedes the shift from 69 to 67 schemes.

2.11.4 Monitoring and evaluation plans

Historic England were fully aware of the need and committed to developing a comprehensive monitoring system and to have this operationalised early in the programme. HE at the outset of the programme sought to develop and introduce a bespoke programme level grants management and monitoring system. Following difficulties in developing this comprehensive system, a set of monitoring Microsoft Excel documents referred to as Scheme Plans were developed for each scheme to complete and return quarterly. It took a number of months to develop these Excel documents, resulting in the documents not being issued until Year 1 Quarter 4.

The information requested within the monitoring documents included:

- **Finance:** Forecast and actual expenditure profiles for HE grants and match funding.

Outputs: A section summarising activities, outputs, attendee and volunteer figures.

- **Progress:** A template for quarterly narrative summaries to include highlights, challenges, lessons learned, and any requests for changes or amendments.
- **Risk:** The register that identified and categorised scheme risks. This allowed for risk assessment and management with automatic risk rating calculations.
- **Timescales:** Gantt Chart and mapping tasks, dependencies, and project timelines.
- **Projects:** Breaking down HSHAZ funding into discrete projects and work packages. Records associated activities and outputs with details on expenditure, start and end dates, and status.
- **Activities:** Types of work or tasks undertaken, such as capital works, heritage interpretation, community engagement, etc.
- **Outputs:** Deliverables resulting from activities, such as restored shopfronts, new listings, or completed training sessions.

More informal ways of checking and monitoring progress were also established as the programme was delivered. These included direct liaison with schemes, sharing information on SharePoint, dashboards, mini-conferences, bi-weekly online meetings with HAZPOs, dedicated inbox for queries and ad hoc requests for information.

Historic England, aware of the need for robust data to support an evaluation, commissioned research to identify comparator areas to HSHAZ areas, data to support an assessment of changes to footfall and high street composition and survey data to explore public perception. This is explored further in section 3.4 and 3.5.

2.11.5 Change management processes

The business case did not set out a programme level change management process between Historic England and the HSHAZ funders.

Change control procedures at the scheme level were established and communicated to delivery partners in published guidance and, in keeping with best practice, were set out in the grant

agreement. The scheme change management process was communicated to Historic England staff in dedicated internal guidance.

In the event of a scheme being deemed at severe risk the change control agreement allowed for Historic England to take over the scheme management, and direct project delivery. The need for such intervention was expected to be rare as partner capabilities had been assessed during the HSHAZ bidding process. To avoid this event, the programme incorporated built-in change mechanisms, such as providing guidance for partners to mitigate risks, alongside the use of Risks, Assumptions, Issues, and Dependencies (RAID) logs and regular scheme monitoring meetings to communicate and address identified risks, issues and requests for change.

2.12 Rationale for intervention

2.12.1 Market failures

The HSHAZ programme was established to address the decline of historic high streets across England by investing in their regeneration and revitalisation. Previous and current governments have acknowledged that market mechanisms alone are insufficient for the regeneration of high streets¹². This recognition underscores the existence of multiple market failures that contributes to the decline and deterioration of these vital areas, including the following:

- **Public good** – High streets serve as the heartbeat of communities, offering vital social, cultural, environmental, and economic benefits. They are places where people gather, businesses thrive, and local identities are shaped. They foster community engagement, provide access to goods and services, and contribute to the overall quality of life. Their revitalisation is essential for creating vibrant spaces that promote social cohesion and economic resilience.
- **Coordination and information failure** – The economic and social potential of heritage assets, including historic buildings and sites, is often unrealised due to coordination failures and information asymmetries. A key challenge is the "first-mover" problem—individual property owners are reluctant to invest unless they are certain that neighbouring owners will also act. Coordinated investment efforts, such as those facilitated by the HSHAZ programme, help reduce uncertainty, align incentives, and encourage collective action. This in turn lowers risks for individual asset owners and attracts additional private investment.
- **Externalities** – The condition of heritage assets has spillover effects on surrounding properties, businesses, and the wider community. Well-maintained historic buildings enhance the attractiveness of an area, benefiting both property values and local businesses. Conversely, neglected or derelict heritage assets contribute to urban decay and economic decline. Furthermore, low property values can lead to 'conservation deficits', with property owners reluctant to invest in their property due to fears that they will not see the return on

¹² For example: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld5901/ldselect/ldbuiltenv/42/42.pdf> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-strategy-to-regenerate-high-streetsand> <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a797e8140f0b63d72fc64c5/11-1402-understanding-high-street-performance.pdf>

their investment. Grant support can reduce this conservation deficit and supported projects demonstrate the returns available to investors.

- **Information failure** – The full range of benefits arising from investment in heritage and culture has traditionally not been identified, monetised and therefore widely understood. As these benefits are not quantifiable and sometimes not even ‘visible’, this leads to underinvestment in heritage conservation. Without a comprehensive understanding of the nature and scale of all benefits likely to be generated, stakeholders may miss opportunities for investment, resulting in suboptimal longer-term economic outcomes for individuals, communities and society.
- **Equity** – Targeted funding and resources to historically underinvested areas was identified as a key focus for the HSHAZ programme, ensuring that heritage regeneration benefits a diverse range of stakeholders and particularly those not traditionally engaging and benefitting from heritage and culture. The programme also looked to promote local engagement and decision-making, empowering residents and business owners to shape regeneration efforts to reflect their needs.

2.12.2 Alignment with national and regional funding Initiatives

HSHAZ sought to align with and strengthen the impact of heritage-led regeneration programmes in delivery at the outset of the programme including:

- **Townscape Heritage Initiative** - The Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) was launched in 1988 and led by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. It has contributed to the framework of heritage regeneration by supporting the restoration of historic townscapes. Projects under THI typically involved restoration and conservation work in historic urban environments.
- **Heritage Action Zones** – Historic England’s Heritage Action Zones (HAZ) programme, (2016-2024), has focused upon revitalising historic areas by providing and leveraging funding, expertise, and resources. It focused on 20 historic areas across England, helping local communities unlock the economic potential of their historic environments. In some instances, such as Coventry the HAZ areas influenced the HSHAZ boundary and focus.

Partnership Scheme in Conservation Areas (PSiCA) – The PSiCA grant tool supports conservation projects through funding and advisory support, laying the foundation for the HAZ and HSHAZ programmes. It enhances heritage and character in designated Conservation Areas, identified by local planning authorities for their special architectural or historic interest. PSiCA projects focus on targeted conservation and restoration, demonstrating the positive impact of heritage-led investment and setting a precedent for future regeneration efforts.

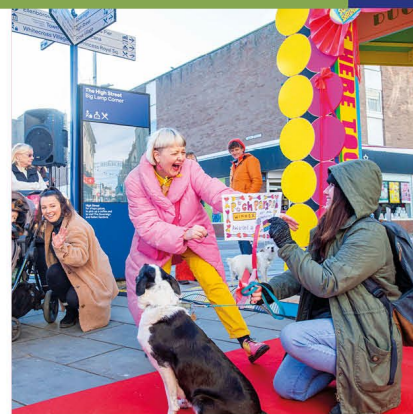
The lessons learned from these earlier initiatives were used to shape the HSHAZ programme. Lessons included the need for clear partner commitments, adaptable programme plans, effective governance, the importance of coordinated evaluation, strong branding, and ensuring that conservation-led regeneration is part of a broader regional strategy. Additionally, concentrating investment in areas where it can have a visible and measurable impact was seen as critical, as was community engagement. Mitigating economic factors, such as vacancy rates, and ensuring that projects aligned with local and national conditions were also identified as vital considerations.

The lessons learnt from previous schemes provided useful evidence and knowledge to draw upon, although it was acknowledged that there were some major differences between the HSHAZ programme, HAZ, THI and PSiCA:

HSHAZ had a much larger funding profile and was focused upon several areas with £103 million allocated for 69 high streets, compared to PSiCA and HAZ's typical funding range of £1 million to £4 million for individual schemes.

HSHAZ involved a multi-tiered delivery structure approach, incorporating central, regional, and local authority collaboration. In contrast, PSiCA was largely delivered through regionalised teams working in partnership with local stakeholders.

Project timelines vary considerably. PSiCA schemes generally take three to eight years to complete, HSHAZ required projects to be delivered within four years. This shorter timeframe meant that HSHAZ to successfully deliver needed to support complex projects with considerable early-stage feasibility and planning work completed or to support less complex and/or less costly projects.



Section 3

Programme Performance

3 Programme performance

3.1 Introduction

This section provides a comprehensive analysis of key financial and output performance aspects of the HSHAZ programme. It considers the planned and out-turn funding allocation and utilisation of funds, as well as the achievement of forecast outputs

The Business Case provided a series of target outputs and outcomes for the capital strand. It did not set out any forecast outputs for the cultural strand or as noted previously the community strand. It is therefore not possible to comment upon the outputs achieved against agreed targets for these two strands. This section outlines actual outputs achieved.

3.2 Financial performance

This section evaluates the programme's financial performance, beginning with an overview of the 2019 agreed funding allocation and examining how resources have been managed to support heritage-led regeneration efforts.

The HSHAZ Business Case¹³ sets out the expected funding profile of the programme, based on investment from DCMS, National Lottery Heritage Fund, MHCLG and Historic England (HE). This profile indicated that there would be £75 million of capital investment, supported by nearly £20 million of revenue programme investment and over £8 million of revenue administration investment giving a total cost of £103 million.

Table 3.1 presents the forecast annual and total funding profile against the outturn costs upon programme completion. The analysis shows the overall programme remained within the allocated budget, with a total spend of £102.2 million against the total forecast spend of £103.2 million. At just under £84 million actual Capital Departmental Expenditure Limit (CDEL) capital expenditure, exceeded the forecast by nearly £9 million. The Resource Departmental Expenditure Limit (RDEL) programme investment outturn at £7.7 million was less than half of the forecast £19 million. The outturn RDEL administration of £10.7 million was 25% higher than forecast £8.5 million.

It should be noted that the spend profile was delivered slightly later than forecast, particularly in 2020/21, in large part to the Covid-19 pandemic. This unprecedented pandemic made several aspects of the HSHAZ programme delivery extremely difficult due to social distancing and the pausing of the construction sector. Individual HSHAZ schemes reported a lack of flexibility in moving funding between years, however, at a national level the programme funding was managed by HE to maintain investment momentum and ensure the funding was delivered in time for the March 2024 deadline. Delivery also took place against the backdrop of significant economic challenges, including the war in Ukraine, which contributed to rising material costs and supply chain disruptions. These factors increased the costs for schemes and presented significant hurdles for timely completion. A further unforeseeable cost increase factor at a scheme level was

¹³ Historic England, (2019); High Streets Heritage Action Zones: Transforming high streets into thriving town centres (Full Business Case)

heritage specialist skills shortages which made securing qualified contractors difficult and made them more expensive. This caused delays and at times necessitated the scaling down of projects.

Table 3.1: HSHAZ Programme funding profile against outturn costs (£m)							
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Forecast funding profile (approved business case 2019)							
CDEL general	£2.0	£11.6	£24.5	£22.5	£14.4	-	£75.0
RDEL programme	£1.2	£5.5	£5.8	£4.2	£2.9	-	£19.7
RDEL administration	£0.5	£1.8	£2.2	£2.2	£1.7	-	£8.5
Total	£3.7	£19.0	£32.6	£28.8	£19.0	-	£103.2
Actual funding profile (as provided by Historic England Nov 2024)							
CDEL general	£2.0	£3.8	£31.4	£30.2	£16.5	-	£83.8
RDEL programme ¹⁴	£0.0	£1.3	£2.5	£2.7	£1.3	-	£7.7
RDEL administration ¹⁵	£0.7	£2.4	£2.6	£2.4	£2.3	£0.3	£10.7
Total	£2.7	£7.5	£36.5	£35.3	£20.0	£0.3	£102.3

Source: Historic England November 2024

Note 1: Numbers may not add due to rounding

Note 2: These figures include the costs for the national commissions to allow a comparison to the Business Case. Outputs and outcomes from these commissions has been evaluated separately by Audience Agency.

3.2.1 Forecast and achieved match funding

The Expression of Interest guidance stated that Historic England “expect most applicants to be requesting no more than 50% of costs from HE”. This expectation was achieved. A **total of £142.8 million match-funding was leveraged from local authorities and other private and public sources, which equates to 58.5% of the total £246 million investment in the HSHAZ programme.** Of this £142.8 million match-funding, £68.5 million was provided by local authorities and £75.5 million was provided by other public and private sources.

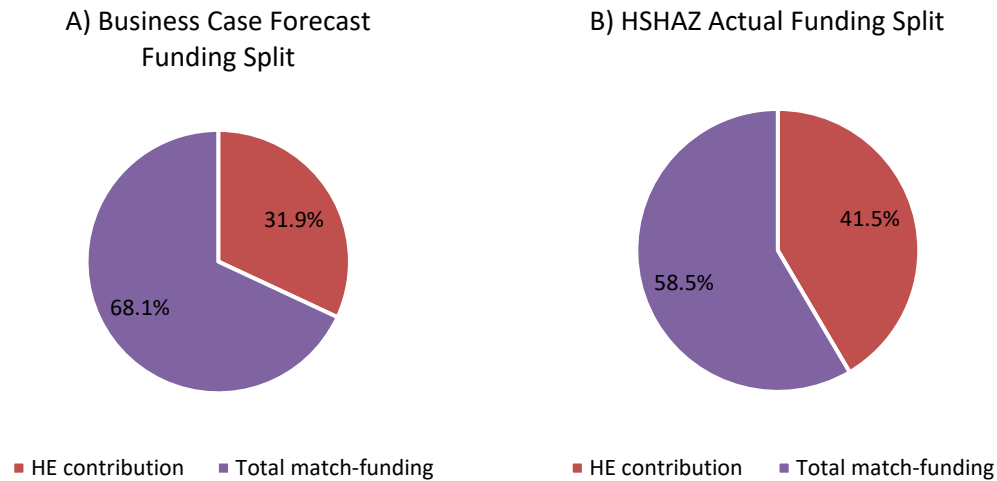
The Business Case indicated that the programme was expected to secure £195 million of match funding from other sources to cover the forecast total project cost. Therefore, the actual match funding secured was some 26% (£51.0 million) less than that forecast. However, in comparison to other public funded programmes delivered in recent years and given the exceedingly challenging context, this level of match funding can be considered to be favourable.

Figure 3.1 sets out the proportion of match-funding secured by the HSHAZ programme against the forecast set out in the Business Case. The HSHAZ schemes, on average, received £1.5 million Historic England funding and £2.2 million of capital from match-funding sources. The largest Historic England allocation was £6.0 million to Hastings HSHAZ, which succeeded in attracting £19.0 million of match-funding.

¹⁴ RDEL Programme costs consists of National Lottery Heritage Fund/HMT funded cultural grants to HSHAZ places and National Lottery Heritage Fund /HE funded cultural strand national commissions

¹⁵ RDEL Administration costs consist of: HMT funded non-grant costs including payroll for HMT funded roles, HMT funded overhead costs (estimated at 1.5% of the Treasury funded programme total), HMT funded from 21/22/HE GIA beforehand: HE grant administration (expected £670,000), AHF grant administration costs of 4.2% of the AHF grant spend (expected £194,000), HE GIA funded marketing match funded works (not staff time or grants), and HE GIA funded: Current 2024/25 year closure costs

Figure 3.1 Proportion of match-funding against Business Case expectations



Source: Historic England

Overall, the HSHAZ programme delivered its investment into areas of clear need and within the identified timeframe, despite significant challenges relating to Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis. Flexibility was shown at a programme level to ensure this, although project teams have identified that further flexibility could have been allowed between years at a scheme level to ease pressures arising from these external socio-economic issues and enable projects that have started to be completed. Although the HSHAZ programme did not attract the total level of match-funding stated in the Business Case, generating over £142 million match-funding from local authority and other sources can be seen as a success particularly in the national, regional and local circumstances. The additional funding secured from local partners in particular highlights the engagement, and commitment achieved as well as the broader investment impact that national funding programmes can leverage.

3.3 Output and outcome performance

3.3.1 Overview

This section reviews the achievement of outputs and outcomes against the programme's target output and outcomes. The analysis focuses on specific outputs, including community engagement levels, revitalisation indicators, and cultural strand outcomes. By measuring these outputs against targets as set out in the approved business case, this section provides a clear indication of the programme's success in delivering tangible benefits to local communities and preserving heritage assets.

3.3.2 Outputs

The business case and logic models (Section 2.8.3) identified several clear outputs expected to arise from the HSHAZ programme¹⁶. The outputs with clear targets relate to the main components of the capital strand, although it is worth noting that several of the actual outputs from the capital strand did not have pre-defined targets. The outputs without targets included public realm created/upgraded, which were substantial. This lack of target setting could reflect that these were new activity areas for Historic England and there was not sufficient knowledge to forecast such outputs. It is also possible that a lack of a target for such outputs indicated that public realm and other outputs without targets, on the scale delivered, were not the original focus for investment but evolved as they reflected local priorities. The lack of a target for such outputs makes monitoring and evaluation more challenging. In keeping with best practice, and as stated by a number of consultees, national or local targets could have been introduced mid-programme to guide remaining programme monitoring and delivery at a local level.

The cultural strand did not have any output targets identified in the logic model or business case. This was due in part to much of the activity not being fully planned at the business case stage. Our review has nonetheless considered the scale of the events, and the number of visitors attracted to the cultural activities.

As noted above no measurable outputs were identified in the logic model or business case for the community strand. Following the recommendations of the mid-programme review to reduce the requirements for community engagement no monitoring data was required/collected for this strand of activity. Therefore, there are no community strand outputs are presented here.

Based on the availability of agreed targets and actual outputs¹⁷, the output performance assessment has been divided into the following sub-sections:

- Assessment of key capital work outputs against stated targets
- Review of other delivered capital strand and cultural strand outputs

Assessment of key capital work outputs against targets

Table 3.2 presents the performance of the HSHAZ programme in terms of its capital performance. The HSHAZ programme has delivered new commercial space, housing, and public realm improvements on 66 high streets¹⁸.

¹⁶ The employment and GVA outcomes have been separated into their own section below to demonstrate the methodology and the comparison to stated job and GVA targets from either the logic model or the business case

¹⁸ The overall programme included the Coventry demonstrator HSHAZ scheme however, this is outside of scope for this evaluation. Due to this, to enable a fair comparison against the Business Case targets, the target for 'high streets delivered repairs and enhancements' has been adjusted to 68.

Table 3.2: HSHAZ programme – performance against capital works outputs				
Output	Original target	HSHAZ programme	%	Comment
Leveraged funding (£m)	£195 m	£144 m	74%	As discussed above, significant match-funding was secured however, this fell short of the £195 m target set in the Business Case.
Number of high streets with completed repair, adaptation and improvement projects delivering local distinctiveness	68	66	97%	Two schemes (Scarborough and Kings Lynn) opted out of the programme. The programme did not replace the schemes and therefore, only 66 high streets had completed improvement projects.
Number of high streets with heritage assets conserved/enhanced	68	60	88%	The scheme plans provided a specific output for 'heritage assets conserved/enhanced'. 60 HSHAZ schemes delivered at least one conserved/enhanced heritage asset. Based on the overall objective for the programme, it is surprising that this was not a universal achievement. It is also recognised that this could also have been down to errors in the monitoring forms which collated information ¹⁹ .
Number of high streets with vacant buildings brought into use	69	36	52%	The programme set ambitious targets for all high streets to bring vacant buildings back into use. While 36 schemes successfully achieved there was a significant shortfall in achieving this target. It is important to note, however, that not all initial scheme plans from HSHAZ schemes included bringing buildings back into use as a primary objective. This suggests more co-ordination was needed between local delivery partners and central management teams. The long-term use and occupancy of buildings brought into use were not fully understood as the monitoring data did not collect information at this level of detail. Exploratory analysis of building use data revealed some inconsistencies, suggesting the need for improved data collection and monitoring. The case study analysis helped to identify the potential longer-term occupational benefits that could be achieved by bringing these buildings into use.

¹⁹ Despite data cleaning and checking, final monitoring data returns contained errors which could not be addressed. This was particularly true for outputs which could have been misinterpreted.

				If bringing vacant buildings back into use is a clear objective, it should be explicitly communicated to partners during the planning of interventions to ensure alignment and maximise impact.
Vacant or underused commercial floor space brought back into use or new commercial floor space created (e.g. new build/conversion)	184,000 sqm	43,564 sqm	24%	The commercial floor space targets for the programme were ambitious and were not met. Over 43,000 sqm of commercial floor space delivered by the capital strand, split 35,074 sqm of space brought back into use and 8.490 sqm of new floor space created.
Vacant or underused residential unit brought back into use or new residential unit created (e.g. new build/conversion)	2,700	224	8%	Based on industry-standard intervention rates, the entire programme would have needed to focus on housing delivery to achieve 2,700 additional units. The programme delivered 224 new housing units, with 53 units brought back into use and 171 new units created.
Public realm area improved	Not stated	119,442 sqm	-	The logic model did not state a target sqm for the public realm improvements. The programme did deliver 119,442 sqm of public realm work. Based on consultations with case study sites, these works have been well received by the public and have made more attractive town centre settings. Furthermore, there are some areas where substantial public realm works are underway or have attracted further funding but as they were not completed by programme end, they could not be included as outputs in the monitoring forms.
Number of historic building or heritage asset repaired/conserved	Not stated	723	-	The logic model did not state a target number of historic buildings or heritage assets repaired/conserved. As a focus for Historic England, a target output should have been set to enable a full evaluation of this component of the works. On average, each HSHAZ conserved over 10 historic buildings or heritage assets which have helped to maintain and enhance the character of these historic centres.
Number of historic shopfronts restored or reinstated	Not stated	462	-	The logic model did not state a target number of historic shopfront restorations. As a major focus for the programme, a target output should have been set to enable a full evaluation of this component of the works. On average, each HSHAZ has restored seven historic shopfronts. These improvement works were appreciated by the public based on our contingent valuation study. Additionally, based on our case study site visits, the HSHAZ investment has demonstrated the benefits to surrounding

				businesses who have since undertaken their own works. This catalytic impact is not captured in the monitoring returns but is clearly a desired and positive impact of the programme to date and in the longer term.
Heritage At Risk (HAR) assets removed from the register	Non stated	9	-	The logic model did not state a target number of historic buildings or heritage assets removed from the HAR register. As a focus for Historic England, a target output should have been set to enable a full evaluation of this component of the works. Removing nine assets from the HAR register demonstrates the quality and importance of the works in a number of locations.

Note: Assessment status is green for >=100%, amber for 65-100%, and red for <65%

The HSHAZ capital strand delivered significant levels of outputs. In terms of number of high streets delivering repairs, 97% of the original target was achieved. A total of 60 high streets, conserved or enhanced heritage assets as part of their programme, which was 90% of the original target.

Outputs relating to the number of homes and commercial floorspace delivered or brought back into use, underperformed against expectations. However, it is worth noting that the housing and commercial delivery targets were exceedingly ambitious. If delivered, these targets would have led to 41 new housing units and 2,788 sqm of commercial floorspace in every HSHAZ scheme. If all HSHAZ capital investment (£83.8 m) was directed towards achieving the overall housing target of 2,700 new units across the programme, the HSHAZ grant would provide (on average) £31,000 per housing unit²⁰. This intervention rate is similar to a typical larger housing scheme, rather than a high street regeneration programme (of which housing on upper floors is one small part) and where economies of scale do not apply. This analysis suggests that it would be extremely difficult to meet the stated housing and commercial floorspace targets, in addition to the public realm interventions and historic building improvements.

As set out above there were capital works outputs delivered for which no targets were identified, including a total of 119,442 sqm of public realm improvements, which have generally been well received by local communities. Additionally, the programme led to a significant historic shopfront restoration programme, with 462 building fronts improved. The bespoke contingent valuation study (see Section 5) demonstrates the high value that residents placed on these improvements to their local high street.

The programme has brought meaningful change to numerous high streets and acted as a catalyst for heritage-led regeneration in many areas requiring revitalisation. Whilst the HSHAZ capital strand did not fully achieve all the targets outlined in the logic model, it undoubtedly delivered valuable outcomes and laid a strong foundation for heritage-led regeneration in many areas.

The approved Business Case was ambitious and set high targets for the programme. National funding programmes of this kind should be ambitious to deliver real change in local areas and such ambitions can also help to secure funding at the application stage. However, in this instance, it appears that the targets were overly ambitious, meaning they were unlikely to be reached and can give the perception of failure despite the positive scale and impact of the actual outputs generated to date, and likely to be delivered in the future.

Review of other achieved capital and cultural outputs

In light of the programme changes to the community strand (See Section 4.2.4), the capital and cultural strands made substantial progress in engaging with local communities, as well as developing strategies, planning tools, and capacity building activities to support HSHAZ and future heritage-led regeneration.

The public and engagement events in the cultural strand attracted nearly 1.5 million visitors across the country, whilst the public and engagement events in the capital strand attracted around 1.3 million visitors. This level of attendance is significant, demonstrating that the HSHAZ programme connected with residents. This theme of community engagement is further

²⁰ This intervention rate has been calculated using the total outturn capital investment from the programme, £83.8 million, divided by the target of 2,700 homes from the Business Case.

supported by the level of volunteer engagement, with over 15,000 volunteers involved across the capital and cultural strands.

Table 3.3 sets out the outputs achieved through the capital and cultural strand, for measures which did not have a target within the original Business Case.

Table 3.3: HSHAZ Programme – Delivery of other key outputs	
Output	HSHAZ Programme
Capital strand	
Amenity list entry	358
Amended scheduling	13
Apprenticeship scheme (Number of schemes)	25
Apprenticeship scheme (Number of attendees)	14
Artwork/installations	336
Construction training activity (number of activities)	80
Construction training activity (number of attendees)	634
Consultation event/activity including online (number of events)	838
Consultation event/activity including online (number of attendees)	34,637
Engagement event/activity including online (number of events)	6,608
Engagement event/activity including online (number of attendees)	390,323
Feasibility study	338
Heritage/archaeological research study	584
Interpretation boards/digital displays	274
New listings	15
New local listing	15
New or revised heritage statement or conservation management plan	47
New or revised historic area assessment/conservation area appraisal	125
New scheduled monument	0
Other professional activity (number of activities)	247
Other professional activity (number of attendees)	1,214
Public event/activity e.g. open day (number of events)	1,695
Public event/activity e.g. open day (number of attendees)	931,712
School education event/activity (number of events)	592
School education event/activity (number of attendees)	27,782
Supplementary planning or design guidance	290
Town guide/heritage trail	3,230
Training sessions provided to volunteers (number of activities)	160

Training sessions provided to volunteers (number of attendees)	607
Volunteer hours (total)	42,503
Volunteers (total)	5,024
Cultural strand	
Apprenticeship scheme	1
Apprenticeship scheme (number of attendees)	4
Artist in residence (number of days)	4,100
Artwork/Installations	1,088
Consultation events	2,330
Consultation event (number of attendees)	8,339
Engagement events inc. workshops	6,220
Engagement event inc. workshops (number of attendees)	255,857
Exhibitions	2,719
Heritage research studies	79
Heritage research study events (number of attendees)	378
Interpretation Display	155
Other professional training activities	393
Other professional training activity (number of attendees)	16,218
Public events	1,269
Public events (number of attendees)	1,140,878
School educational events/activities	331
School educational events/activities (number of attendees)	9,424
Town Guide/Heritage Trails	3,120
Training sessions provided to volunteers	237
Training session provided to volunteers (number of attendees)	575
Volunteer hours	77,840
Volunteers	10,098

Source: Historic England Monitoring Documents²¹

3.3.3 Employment and GVA outcomes

Based on the HSHAZ logic model, the programme set out to deliver **2,200 net jobs created / jobs safeguarded**. Using the GVA per Full Time Employment (FTE) metrics within the Business Case, it was estimated that this would lead to a **net GVA contribution of £99.2 million per annum for 20 years**. These ambitious jobs and GVA estimates drove a high forecast Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) for the overall HSHAZ programme.

²¹ Following engagement with delivery partners, it is suggested that the cultural outputs are higher than these stated. However, the higher figures could also be affected by double counting and so for clarity, monitoring data from the project scheme plans are used.

In order to calculate the actual employment delivered by the HSHAZ programme²², a hybrid employment density for town centre uses (30 sqm per job) has been applied to the total floorspace delivered over the programme, utilising the employment densities for different uses within the Homes and Communities Agency Employment Density Guide²³. Given the information available, it has been assumed that 75% of the new floorspace is currently occupied and occupancy remains at this level over the buildings' lifetime.

The GVA calculations have been undertaken by applying the relevant local GVA per FTE figures from Experian 2024 data for town centre uses to the employment calculations. For the net additional employment calculations at a national level, we have assumed a deadweight of 10% for vacant/underused spaces which were previously in some form of use. A displacement rate for regeneration through physical infrastructure of 28.5% has been applied.

The analysis suggests that the HSHAZ programme has delivered an estimated **1,089 gross jobs and 716 net jobs nationally**. This equates to 16.5 gross jobs per HSHAZ and 10.8 net jobs per HSHAZ. This employment contributes **£34.9 million net GVA per annum**, or **£0.5 million net GVA per HSHAZ per annum**.

Therefore, as shown in **Table 3.4**, the HSHAZ programme is estimated to have delivered around 33% of its intended employment target, largely due to the lower-than-expected delivery of commercial floorspace within the capital works. The employment and GVA assessment are based on the operational impact of commercial floorspace that has been delivered or restored through the HSHAZ capital strand. Additionally, further employment will have been generated within the delivery teams responsible for managing and implementing the schemes, but this has not been calculated to allow a true comparison against the targets in the Business Case and logic model.

²² As AMION did not have access to the original economic impact model for jobs and GVA used in the Business Case, we used standard assumptions to approximate the methodology. It is not expected that our assumptions would have materially changed the jobs and GVA calculations, but instead it is the reduced floorspace delivery which is driving the difference in the outturn performance against targets.

²³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/employment-densities-guide>

Table 3.4: HSHAZ Programme – Forecast Employment and GVA Performance and Estimated Outturn

Output	Target	Estimated outturn	%	Comment
Net jobs	2,200	716	33%	The original targets were based on the ambitious commercial floorspace outputs. As the commercial floorspace delivery was greatly reduced compared to original targets, the jobs and GVA targets were similarly not met.
Net GVA per annum	£99.2 million	£34.9 million	35%	However, the programme does deliver 716 net additional jobs in high street locations that were previously falling behind. A total contribution of £34.9 m demonstrates the economic value that will continue longer-term.

Note: Assessment status is green for $\geq 100\%$, amber for 65-100%, and red for $< 65\%$

3.4 Exploratory footfall analysis

Footfall was frequently cited in interviews with schemes as having seen positive change. Changes in footfall can be driven by multiple factors and to explore this further and provide better understanding, an exploratory quasi-experimental approach assessing footfall across 10 HSHAZ areas was undertaken. Data was commissioned from HUQ, a provider of digital footfall data from mobile phones. The 10 HSHAZs selected were the subject of case studies generally representative of the 66 HSHAZ covered in this evaluation in terms of location, scheme size and socio-economic characteristics. The footfall data was analysed from 2019 to October 2024 (6 months after schemes has completed). More detail on the methodology is provided in Appendix D.

The primary objective of the exploratory assessment was to explore whether footfall data could be used to reliably inform the assessment of the effectiveness of HSHAZ activities, as well as to explore potential approaches to future evaluation in similar programmes.

Each of the 10 areas was evaluated based on spending profiles, footfall patterns and comparison to a synthetic model (to provide a counterfactual). An assessment of individual HSHAZ areas revealed varied impacts:

- Leominster, Middlesbrough, and Ryde showed early signs of improvement in footfall, although their results tend to decrease over time. This supports the idea that some benefits, such as improved local amenities, may start to attract more visitors before the official completion of the schemes. These mixed results indicate that while certain areas benefit from HSHAZ activities, others do not see the desired impacts over time.
- Two HSHAZs; Gloucester and Harlesden showed signs of footfall improvement in the more recent data. Both areas are also case studies and Gloucester's HSHAZ was noted to have been delivered within the context of a larger regeneration strategy for Gloucester.

-
- One HSHAZ area which demonstrated continuous footfall improvement is Tyldesley, which shows moderately significant results across all assessment points.
 - The other four HSHAZs – Leeds, Poole, Swaffham, and Wakefield – showed no measurable improvement in footfall. The case study examinations, suggests in some instances, this stagnation may be attributed to broader regional challenges, investment levels, or variations in footfall in surrounding urban areas. It could also be connected to limitations in the methodology such as timescales (collecting data pre- and post-intervention).

The changes described above are demonstrated in Figure 3.2 provides a colour coding analysis of footfall change.

Figure 3.2: Colour coded changes in footfall

	April 2024	January 2024	October 2023	July 2023	April 2023
Gloucester	Orange	Yellow			
Harlesden*	Yellow	Orange	Orange		Yellow
Leeds					
Leominster			Yellow	Orange	Orange
Middlesbrough		Orange	Orange	Orange	Green
Poole					
Ryde		Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green
Swaffham					
Tyldesley	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange	Orange
Wakefield			Yellow		

Key

Green	Green represents statistically significant changes in footfall
Orange	Orange represents moderately significant changes
Yellow	Yellow shows a weaker significant change
Blank	Blank no change.

Note: Appendix D provides a detailed description of the methodology, findings and challenges.

*Harlesden HSHAZ finished earlier than other schemes (in 2023) 1so its impact profile may be different.

Source: AMION using HUQ 2024

The analysis of footfall data highlights significant variations in potential impact but also fluctuations in footfall depending on factors not easy to identify. Whilst all areas undoubtedly suffered due to the Covid-19 pandemic it is not possible to comment with validity on the scope and scale within each area and the degree to which this and other external factors influenced outcomes. While one area, Tyldesley HSHAZ, demonstrated sustained footfall improvements, several others showed minimal impact from the programme.

The use of footfall data based on mobile phone data suggests this is a useful technique to provide insights, but it has limitations and needs a wider contextual understanding to inform an interpretation of the results.

3.5 Difference-in Differences analysis of attitudinal survey

Historic England commissioned Verian to undertake an Attitudinal Survey in 2021 and 2024 for all HSHAZ areas and a series of comparator areas. This survey provided a baseline position from which to test if HSHAZ interventions changed residents' perceptions of their area. Data was gathered in two waves, the first in 2021, early in the programme, and in 2024 when most

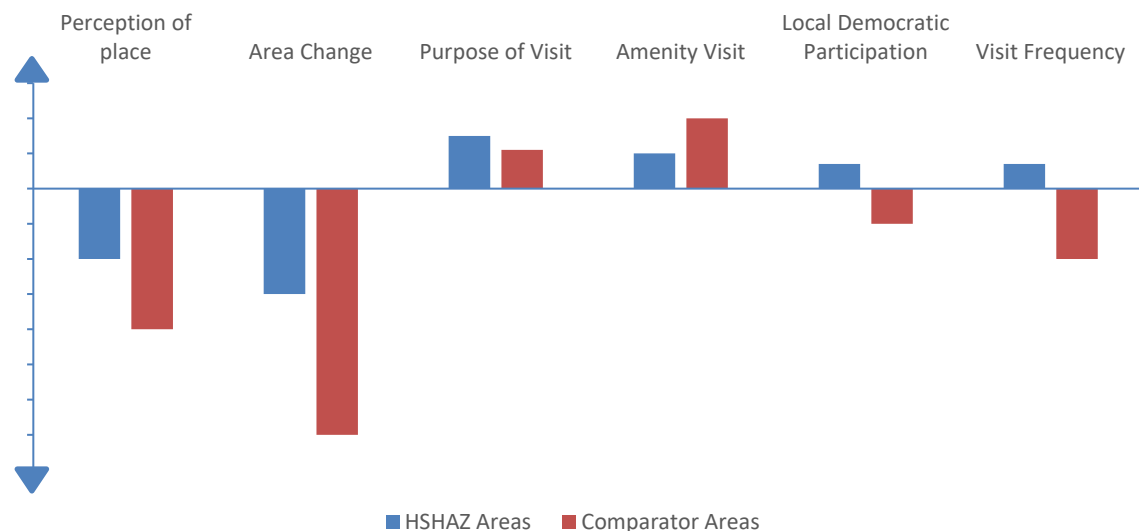
interventions had finished. Similar data was collected from comparator areas for each HSHAZ area. The survey provided a series of pre-identified metrics relating to perceptions of/attitudes towards local heritage and high streets, along with dimensions of social capital, community cohesion and civic engagement.

To analyse the survey data and assess the impact of the intervention, a Difference-in-Differences (DiD) approach was employed. The DiD model is a statistical method used to compare the changes in outcomes over time between a treatment group (those exposed to the intervention) and a comparator group (those not exposed). More detail on the methodology is provided in Appendix C.

The findings of this analysis, summarised in **Figure 3.3**, highlights how perceptions of place, amenity and sustainability, attitudes towards heritage and experiences with local democracy have changed within HSHAZ areas, relative to comparator areas. A 'Relative Improvement' in HSHAZ areas can be caused by:

- The HSHAZ area performing stronger than comparators when both show improvement
- The HSHAZ area performing less weakly than comparators when both decline
- HSHAZ area showing positive performance and comparator area showing a negative performance.

Figure 3.3: Infographic to show movement of key metrics between Wave 1 and 2 in HSHAZ areas and Comparator areas



Source: AMION Analysis using Verian Data 2024 – Chart length is only indicative to show comparative change.

- **High street perception:** Survey questions on high street perception examined views on local history, pride, attractiveness for socialising, and environmental connectivity. Across all of the key metrics, the HSHAZ areas demonstrate a slight, yet 'Relative Improvement' in perceptions over the comparator areas. Whilst HSHAZ areas generally performed worse in terms of the desirability of the high street in Wave 1, findings from Wave 2 show that further decline was

less severe in HSHAZ areas than in comparator areas. HSHAZ areas were also found to have become increasingly conducive to socialising, whilst comparator areas were judged to have become less appropriate for meeting with friends.

- **High street change:** An assessment of high street changes covered perceptions of recent changes and satisfaction with local buildings. In both HSHAZ areas and comparator areas, respondents felt the condition of the local area had worsened, though this perception was observed to a lesser extent within areas where HSHAZ interventions had been delivered. Furthermore, an increased satisfaction with local building appearance was observed in HSHAZ areas, further supporting the narrative that HSHAZ areas outperformed comparator areas in terms of high street change.
- **Sustainability, purpose of visit:** Covering the ‘post-Covid’ and ‘last twelve months’, these responses generally revealed lower visiting rates in HSHAZ areas for uses including, shopping, visits with children, and accessing services. However, the decline in visits for specific purposes such as accessing services observed in HSHAZ areas was less pronounced than in comparator areas, thus implying a limited degree of ‘Relative Improvement’.
- **Sustainability, amenity visits:** Survey questions on visits to amenities (e.g., shops, restaurants, museums) showed generally lower visit rates in HSHAZ areas than comparator areas. Across the majority of the specific amenities, the number of visits increased more in comparator areas than in HSHAZ areas, thus, demonstrating ‘No Improvement’. The exception to this trend relates to visits to ancient monuments and outdoor areas, where HSHAZ areas saw relatively greater increases between Waves 1 and 2 than in comparator areas.
- **Sustainability, visit frequency:** ‘Post-Covid’ and ‘last twelve months’ timeframes were used to assess frequency in terms of daily, weekly, monthly and annual visits. Generally, HSHAZ areas outperformed comparator areas in having a less significant decline in visits or a larger increase over the appropriate frequency and/or timeframe. For less frequent visits (monthly and annual), ‘No Improvement’ was identified for HSHAZ areas relative to comparators.
- **Local historic character:** An assessment of knowledge and attitudes about local heritage showed that HSHAZ areas observed smaller declines in knowledge and appreciation for historic uniqueness than in comparator areas.
- **Local democracy/participation:** Questions on civic engagement reflected a ‘Relative Improvement’ in HSHAZ areas, where respondents increasingly felt decision-makers considered their views, and planning meeting attendance showed a relative increase compared to comparator areas.

The DiD analysis of the Verian Attitudinal Survey suggests that the HSHAZ programme has helped to improve, stabilise and/or slow the decline of perceptions relating to heritage high streets, civic participation and connectivity. While the changes are modest, areas with HSHAZ interventions have generally shown more resilience against declining trends seen in comparator areas, particularly in relation to community engagement and pride in local heritage.

Whilst some indicators such as visit frequency and participation in local planning saw small positive shifts in HSHAZ areas, the programme’s impact upon key economic indicators (see

Section 4.2.2) suggests additional challenges in stimulating economic activity. Overall, the analysis shows that HSHAZ has supported heritage and community pride, though there are additional measures or factors which are also important in catalysing the economic vitality of high streets in scheme areas.



Section 4

Delivery and Strategic Added Value

4 Delivery and Strategic Added Value

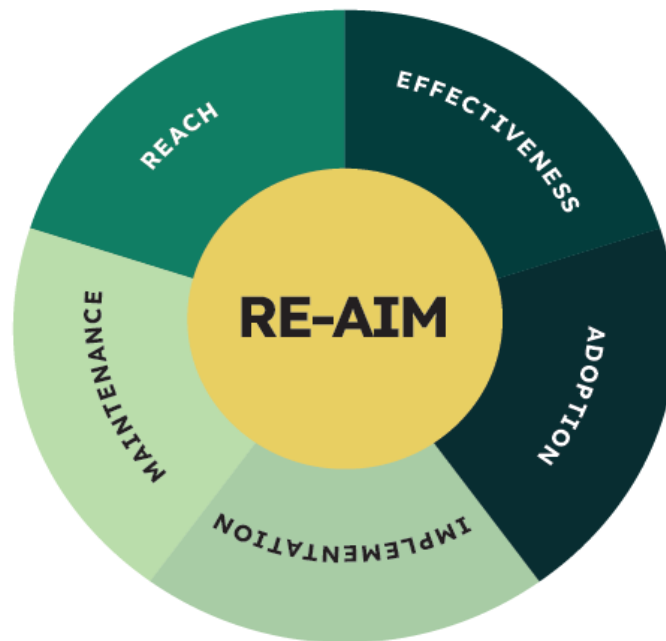
4.1 Introduction

This section assesses the design, delivery and governance of the programme using the RE-AIM framework. This aspect of the programme is not considered separately for the capital and cultural strands as the evidence could not generally be differentiated and/or similar issues were raised. Where differences were apparent these are identified. This section also assesses the wider strategic added value (SAV) of the programme in terms of leadership, influence, leverage, synergy and engagement.

4.2 RE-AIM

The RE-AIM framework²⁴, provides a comprehensive evaluation approach that considers the each, Effectivenessreach, ffectiveness, Adoption, Implementationreach, effectiveness, adoption, implementation, and maintenance of an intervention's activities and impact. It allows for the incorporation of more standard evaluation foci related to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Figure 4.1: RE-AIM framework: key assessment components



Source: AMION 2024 - adapted from University of Colorado and RE-AIM.org

²⁴ <https://re-aim.org/>

4.2.1 Reach

The assessment of 'Reach' seeks to identify the number, proportion, and representativeness of the individuals who participated in the HSHAZ programme through the marketing of the programme opportunities, the application selection process and the design and delivery and governance of schemes and projects.

Reach: programme marketing and selection process

Historic England received 215 expressions of interest (EOIs). Over 55% (185) of all local authorities in England and 14 community interest groups and societies submitted an EOI. This indicates a "good" reach for Historic England's marketing of the programme.

Of the 66 schemes in this evaluation, 64 were delivered by local authorities and two were delivered by community interest groups (Tyldesley and Hastings).

In terms of the reach of successful schemes, the geographic spread also suggests a good reach for the programme. **Table 4.1** sets out the proportion of schemes within the HE defined, and government office defined, regions. There was a slightly greater representation in the North West (21% of schemes) and lower representation of schemes in the North East at 5% of schemes but 18% when included with Yorkshire and the Humber.

Following the selecting and sifting processes for the EOIs, the data shows success by region is largely similar to application share for all regions except the West Midlands which had 16% of applications but around 8% of successful awards. This reflects selection criteria and the existence of multiple EOIs from local authorities in this region.

Table 4.1: Proportion of HSHAZ Schemes and EOIs by HE and Government Office Region							
Successful Schemes						EOIs	
HE Region	Count	Percentage	Gov Office Region	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
North West	14	21%	North West	14	21%	39	18%
North East and Yorkshire	12	18%	North East	3	5%	7	3%
			Yorkshire and the Humber	9	14%	22	10%
London and the South East	12	18%	London	5	8%	10	5%
			South East	7	11%	32	15%
Midlands	12	18%	East Midlands	7	11%	18	8%
			West Midlands	5	8%	34	16%
South West	10	15%	South West	10	15%	34	16%
East of England	6	9%	Eastern	6	9%	18	8%
Total	66	100%		66	100%	215	100%

Note: Totals do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Despite a local authority dominated delivery model within the programme, each local authority approached the programme differently. This provided opportunities and learning for both the local delivery teams and Historic England.

Reach: Target population engagement

One of the essential criteria for selection was that the ‘HSHAZ will be delivered with demonstrable support of the local community’. A further criterion was ‘evidence of how the scheme will result in a wider range of people engaging with their local heritage’. The latter was not evidenced in post award monitoring data. For example, while some cultural projects engaged thousands of people in a single event, the absence of baseline data on the socio-economic profiles of those previously engaging with local heritage, coupled with the lack of data collected during the events to establish a counterfactual, meant that no evidence was available to indicate the extent to which a ‘wider range of people engaging’ amongst target groups had been achieved.

The HSHAZ logic model identifies “communities” as the target population, but again no composition of this target population is defined. The HSHAZ programme had a potentially wide reach in regard to the population it has impacted up on. A total of 19 million²⁵ people live within a 30-minute drivetime of a HSHAZ scheme, 28.4% of the population of England²⁶.

Stakeholder mapping in workshops with Historic England staff identified a series of community and stakeholder groups which were impacted by the programme. These included:

- Local Community Groups
- Local Authorities/Government
- Politicians
- Residents
- Visitors
- Community organisations
- Teachers and other staff from educational settings
- Religious communities
- Contractors
- Businesses
- Developers
- Historic England strategic partners (e.g. Arts Council England)
- Charities, cultural and other community organisations

²⁵ As identified in GIS analysis undertaken by Geolytix for the HSHAZ Programme.

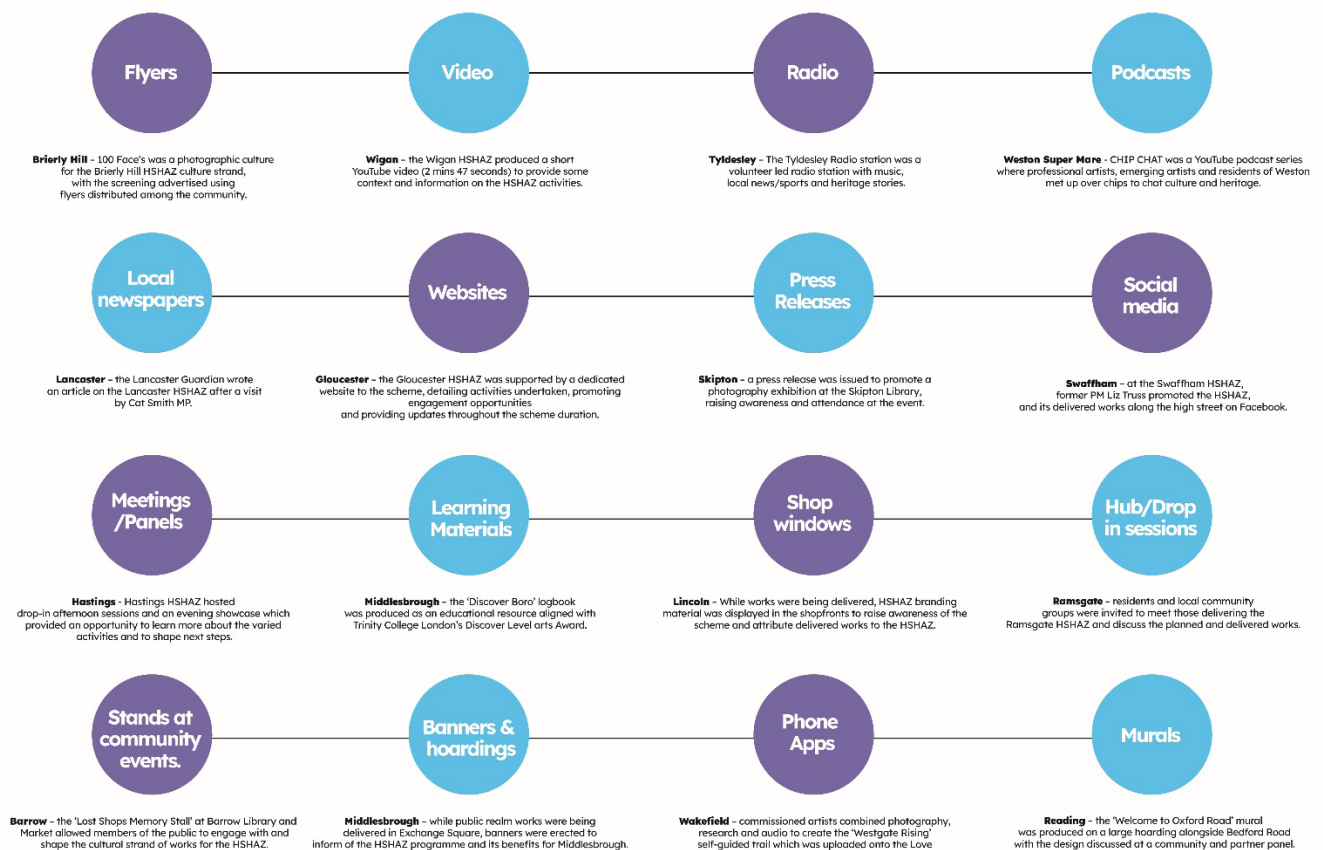
²⁶ Census 2021

The stakeholder groups for each local scheme varied and was influenced by how the scheme was designed as well as how well the delivery team members were embedded or experienced in the heritage or cultural sector.

Reach: marketing and communications

A wide range of communication tools were utilised both at the programme level and scheme level. Activities ranged from lamppost erected banners through to innovative uses of social media. The communications reach of the HSHAZ programme ensured the activities of the programme were visible to a spectrum of residents and visitors. A sample of the marketing and communication methods implemented are showcased in **Figure 4.2**.

Figure 4.2: Variety of communication methods utilised



The overall programme size was communicated through various channels, showcasing the level of spend. The figure used for communications was £95 million and whilst this reflected some earlier estimates, the final figures was notably higher²⁷. In messaging terms, it would also have been possible to use the expected level of match funding at £140 million which combined with

²⁷ <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/news/struggling-historic-high-streets-95m-funding-boost/>

the central government funding could have enhance the communication around the scale and ambition of the programme and associated interest.

Reach: Scheme communications

Communications for HSHAZ proved effective, securing extensive media coverage:

National reach: Historic England achieved 86 national media stories across major newspapers and online platforms, reaching several million readers (See Example in Figure 4.3).

- **Local impact:** 385 local stories highlighted HSHAZ regeneration efforts, drawing attention to high street revitalisation.
- **Covid-19 resilience:** Coverage featured images of socially distanced individuals, subtly reflecting the programme's adaptability during the pandemic.
- **Positive sentiment:** Media sentiment averaged 96% positive, with minimal criticism, primarily regarding temporary pedestrian disruptions.
- **Social media engagement:** Social media activities reached approximately 679,000 people, with restoration photos generating high engagement, particularly on Facebook.

A demographic analysis of social media engagement revealed that younger and female audiences remained underrepresented, suggesting an opportunity to refine strategies for broader age and gender inclusivity.

Between April 2022 and September 2024, communications on the HSHAZ programme reached a significant audience through Historic England's national channels. A total of 3,235,550 posts were made, reaching 5,547,637 accounts and generating 12,805,369 impressions with 1,250,597 engagements. During this period, 128 posts were shared on HE's national channels. Communication audience data²⁸ suggests that the majority of engagement came from men, with the largest age group being 45-54.

Figure 4.3: Example media communications which drew upon HSHAZ



In December 2019, Guardian journalist, Simon Jenkins called the HSHAZ Programme “a more intelligent government initiative” and draws upon evidence from previous Historic England work in Derby which shows smartening up old high streets makes them attractive destinations to casual shoppers and visitors.

Source: Guardian Media Group 2019

²⁸ Caution was exercised around demographic data collected by media and social media monitoring as such this is indicative.

4.2.2 Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the relationship between intended and actual results. Section 3 above assesses the performance of the programme in terms of outputs compared to the ambition as outlined in the Business Case and the Logic Model.

Table 4.2 below sets out the overarching goal of the HSHAZ programme and the associated three underpinning objectives and provides an assessment on the extent to which they have been achieved, likely to be delivered in the future or where HSHAZ has made a positive impact.

Table 4.2: Effectiveness	
Programme Goal and Objectives	Assessment of achievement
Goal: “My local high street is a great place to spend some time.”	
The HSHAZ programme has delivered improvements across all 66 high streets included in this evaluation. In some cases the HSHAZ was supporting existing regeneration programmes to extend their scope and scale, in other areas HSHAZ was fundamental in beginning the evidencing of the impacts of heritage-led regeneration. As set out above there are some observable increases in footfall and positive changes in perceptions. Evidence from the Attitudinal Survey was more positive (see Section 5.3 and Appendix C) with attitudes towards local areas more positive depending on what criteria was selected. This can only be seen as positive given the context of many high streets continuing to struggle with issues such as vacancy rates and declining footfall. Given the context it is clear that the HSHAZ programme alone could not revise the fortunes of these high streets and create a vibrant, welcoming environments to spend time. The evidence suggests that the programme has arrested some high street decline, but wider attitudes and local internal and national and global external forces remain challenging to confront.	
Objectives	
Objective 1: to change perceptions of heritage and high streets.	Progress on changing public perceptions of heritage and high streets has been mixed. Interviews with delivery partners suggest that schemes have showcased the cultural value of historic buildings. The perception of heritage as a driver of regeneration is more positive, as local authorities and partners more strongly recognise the programme’s ability to attract people to the high street, supported by the contingent valuation study showing that people highly value it.
Objective 2: To support sustainable economic (retail and commercial) and cultural growth on and around high streets.	The impact varies but most schemes have at least seen modest economic improvements (See Section 7). However, there are promising signs that several improvements will be sustained. This is important in the context of many of the macro challenges which continue to challenge urban areas; declining retail activity and economic instability,

Table 4.2: Effectiveness

Programme Goal and Objectives	Assessment of achievement
	especially in the wake of continued low levels of growth and productivity.
Objective 3: To restore and enhance local historic character	The programme has led to significant progress in restoring key heritage assets with all high streets seeing restorations and enhancements (as set out in section 3). The programme's activities have improved the aesthetic appeal of many high streets. The scale and appreciation of the improvements in historic assets does depend on several factors including local context, delivery, planning and stakeholders involved.

Consultees and workshop participants were generally positive regarding the programme's progress towards its overarching goal of revitalising high streets, preserving heritage, and supporting economic development. However, rather than fully deliver on them it was felt that progress was made towards them. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that several challenges were present in capturing this change through the data available.

Effectiveness: Wider outcomes

A series of wider outcomes were realised through the programme, and these are explored below:

Improvements in quality of life

Some schemes, such as Kirkham HSHAZ, had a partial focus on health outcomes²⁹. Results of a scheme level evaluation highlighted changes to cultural participation and sizeable indirect community benefits³⁰. An independent evaluation, using a different methodological approach from this evaluation, of the Redruth HSHAZ scheme also suggested a positive relationship between the scheme and good health and wellbeing (valued at almost £1 million per annum) linked to therapeutic benefits from art and heritage and health benefits from participating in learning³¹. These provide a useful step towards understanding the link between HSHAZ activities and improvements in quality of life. The contributions of schemes to improvements in quality of life are within the context of many urban areas being dominated by high levels of noise and poor air quality. A report by Public Health states that the "value of high-quality built environment interventions, especially in terms of their impact on health and the local economy, is not fully understood by policymakers"³². As stated earlier, greater understanding of the impacted or targeted population groups could provide greater understanding of population health changes.

²⁹ The Kirkham Heritage, Health and Wellbeing programme as part of the HSHAZ.

³⁰ Kirkham Futures - Kirkham High Street Heritage Action Zone - Final evaluation report of the Heritage, Health and Wellbeing Programme (Phoenix Rising) May 2024 Toby Williamson & Dr Eva Cyhlarova

³¹ <https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/redruth-high-street-heritage-action-zone> -

³²

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ace155b40f0b617dca7110e/26.01.18_Healthy_High_Streets_Full_Report_Final_version_3.pdf

Greater environmental sustainability

Positive environmental and carbon reduction measures were not explicit objectives at the start of the programme and the focus did not evolve substantially. The sustainability outcomes of the HSHAZ programme were described as “a happy accident” by several interviewees. In the context of achieving net zero goals, this has been particularly valuable, though evidence was not comprehensively collected. Environmental benefits included:

- The use of locally sourced materials in much of the building preservation or enhancement, timber or stone, reducing the carbon footprint from transportation.
- Reducing the need for new construction and the associated emissions.
- Urban greening initiatives were also a key feature in HSHAZ schemes (such as Wednesbury and Swaffham), enhancing the public realm and contributing to placemaking. Stoke on Trent HSHAZ also developed a green space to grow edible plants.
- Several schemes, leveraged their work to enhance low-carbon transport infrastructure, promoting active travel and improving bus routes. In Leeds, for example, the HSHAZ programme complemented major investments in transport planning, while in Swaffham, the HSHAZ contributed to longer term efforts to mitigate impacts from road transport through improved pedestrian access and improved public realm.

4.2.3 Adoption (Ownership)

This section assesses the extent of “adoption/ownership” of the HSHAZ initiative by key stakeholders, organisations, and local entities. Adoption is important because it determines how widely an intervention is taken up in relevant settings or by organisations. This section reviews adoption of the HSHAZ programme by Historic England, delivery partners and wider stakeholders including community organisations businesses and residents.

Table 4.3: Summary table of adoption and ownership

Topic	Details	Challenges	Adoption Status (High, Medium and Low)
Strategic context alignment	The HSHAZ programme and associated local schemes were generally well-aligned with both national and local strategic goals. National priorities, such as “levelling up” and post-Covid-19 recovery, were strongly emphasised, though there was less focus on other core national policy areas such as sustainability and health despite potential to align. The application process ensured a good match between HSHAZ and the missions, priorities, and capacities of local delivery organisations. This alignment contributed to the strategic development of delivery partner organisations, facilitating the creation of local heritage strategies, enforcement guides, and master plans, some of which became Supplementary Planning Documents that now influence planning decisions on commercial frontages.	Some interviewees noted that the local focus sometimes led to prioritising economic ambitions over the social, cultural, and heritage-focused goals of HSHAZ programme. For example, some local schemes prioritised economic outcomes, such as infrastructure upgrades, over heritage-focused projects, potentially reducing the social and cultural impacts.	High
Adoption by Historic England	The adoption of the HSHAZ programme by Historic England employees built on the organisation’s prior experience in heritage initiatives (e.g. HAZ programme and PSICA scheme – see Section 2). Workshops with the	Newer staff occasionally struggled with the extensive information and evolving organisational focus. Existing staff also were also not always convinced that the	High

Table 4.3: Summary table of adoption and ownership

Topic	Details	Challenges	Adoption Status (High, Medium and Low)
	HSHAZ programme team and Regional Teams highlighted internal discussions on Historic England's evolving role from safeguarding buildings to embracing social public and cultural connections. These discussions reflect a maturing organisational approach and evolving understanding of heritage and its wider role in regeneration.	triple strand model was right and this led to challenges in fully absorbing HSHAZ's strategic shift from safeguarding heritage assets to public engagement with heritage assets and heritage-led regeneration.	
Adoption by delivery partners	The HSHAZ programme was largely well-adopted and understood by delivery partners, though the 2021 rapid review highlighted that early adoption was slower than expected in some cases. Some delivery partners were new to working closely with Historic England, while others had prior experience, which meant they could draw upon information, existing contacts and shape their approach to align with HSHAZ. Interviews with delivery partners reflected positively on how the programme had shifted institutional approaches to heritage and regeneration for their organisations. There have been several areas exploring HSHAZ successor schemes and despite concerns about financial constraints and the future of local government funding, many authorities have continued to plan for future projects and/or take on staff. As one interviewee highlighted, "HSHAZ has become a personal legacy for some delivery lead partners	A notable number of delivery organisations underestimated the project management requirements, which challenged delivery timescales and costs. Furthermore, some delivery partners relied on small teams or a single individual which restricted the extent of the organisation adoption of the scheme. In some contexts, HSHAZ was seen as a small piece of a larger 'regeneration' jigsaw, particularly where there was an existing regeneration programme or ambitions. This can be seen as both a positive and a negative; it meant that HSHAZ works were sometimes not prioritised or well understood but also meant that the funding could complement and extend the impact of other regeneration activities. The pandemic hindered many local	Medium

Table 4.3: Summary table of adoption and ownership

Topic	Details	Challenges	Adoption Status (High, Medium and Low)
	[delivery partners] with more local building owners interested in future opportunities.”	authorities' ability to focus on scheme delivery, causing delays in development. Political changes also disrupted decision-making, impacting several schemes. For example, shifts in political leadership following local elections affected organisational priorities leading to pauses in delivery.	
Adoption beyond Historic England and delivery partners	The HSHAZ programme fostered positive relationships with a wide range of partner organisations, including the Arts Council and the National Heritage Lottery Fund. Collaborations with these organisations were particularly effective, grounded in a shared vision for cultural heritage preservation. Other organisations involved included sub-national governance structures such as Local Enterprise Partnerships and Combined Authorities, business organisations like business improvement districts, and several universities. For instance, D2N2 LEP ³³ supported communication and marketing for Buxton HSHAZ, Skipton BID secured a new five-year term and collaborated with HSHAZ on long-term planning, and the University of Kent participated in the Chatham HSHAZ scheme through the Urban Room in Medway.	While collaborations with key partners were strong, engagement with some business organisations and governance structures varied due to differing priorities and capacities. Reliance on single individuals in local delivery teams limited broader engagement and progress; their absence disrupted continuity and hindered collaboration with essential council departments. The reliance on one person could hinder work continuity and limit broader engagement within the council teams, making it harder to achieve integrated and effective outcomes.	Medium

³³ Local Enterprise Partnership for Derby, Derbyshire, (D2) Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (N2).

Table 4.3: Summary table of adoption and ownership

Topic	Details	Challenges	Adoption Status (High, Medium and Low)
Adoption by local cultural consortia or organisations	The HSHAZ programme was generally well-received, though some challenges arose in adoption, particularly due to resource allocation and project management capacity and competency. It fostered strong relationships with a variety of cultural partners, including local arts groups, local community groups and businesses. These collaborations proved effective, arts and cultural organisations raising their profile but also understanding more about local heritage and approaches to historic and heritage-led regeneration. Some interviews with delivery partners said HSHAZ was responsible for bringing cultural and heritage organisations together for the first time and even the process of preparing the application and the subsequent projects was transformative for them working together and have since secured further funding for shared activity.	Resource limitations and varying project management capabilities sometimes affected adoption, though the programme helped establish new and lasting cultural partnerships.	Medium
Businesses	Private sector involvement in the HSHAZ programme was essential, particularly due to the role of retail and private landlords in co-funding and undertaking the capital works. Whilst data was not formally collected from business owners on the impact of their grant on the business in terms of turnover or jobs, anecdotal evidence supports the view that businesses that did participate saw positive outcomes. The level of private sector involvement varied in part due to context, for example Selby's HSHAZ programme covered a broad area, which dispersed the business involvement. In Barnsley, a set of	Engagement with businesses faced challenges, as not all property owners were easily accessible, many high streets had buildings owned by hard-to-reach owners, foreign companies or pension funds. Some businesses also found the costs of proposed works unaffordable and given uncertainties during the Covid-19 pandemic. Businesses were concerned about investment returns	Medium

Table 4.3: Summary table of adoption and ownership

Topic	Details	Challenges	Adoption Status (High, Medium and Low)
	regeneration programmes in the town (which included HSHAZ) saw businesses in Barnsley became more enthusiastic after witnessing improvements in footfall and trade.	despite average intervention rates of 80%.	
Community groups & residents	Community groups were integral to HSHAZ schemes, with engagement levels generally high but varied depending on the model of delivery. Community-run schemes, such as those in Hastings and Tyldesley, benefited from local embeddedness, while schemes led by local authorities depended largely on existing relationships within the community. Community engagement often focused on cultural activities rather than scheme concept design or delivery. Local history or heritage groups were often but not always involved in schemes, contributing to research and cultural activities, as seen in places like Tewkesbury and Huddersfield. Positive community group engagement within schemes varied significantly, influenced by scheme design, leadership, socio-economic factors, and resource limitations. Residents played an important role in the adoption and ownership of some HSHAZ schemes. In towns such as Tyldesley and Swaffham, inclusive decision-making enabled residents to actively shape design and delivery of projects and the overall scheme. The involvement of residents was varied across schemes. Most schemes had an element of community participation, with stakeholders spanning from schools to local pubs. This	Community engagement was generally high but inconsistent, with variations based on delivery models, leadership, and socio-economic factors affecting participation levels. Interviewees saw that public engagement in HSHAZ schemes often favoured those typical demographics (e.g. likely to be or already interested in heritage buildings). Although some schemes, like those in Leeds, successfully engaged diverse groups less typically connected to heritage, including LGBTQ+ communities.	Medium

Table 4.3: Summary table of adoption and ownership

Topic	Details	Challenges	Adoption Status (High, Medium and Low)
	engagement was believed to have fostered a sense of community ownership around schemes but the measurement of diversity or reach (see Section 4.2.1) means that conclusions cannot be drawn on the adoption of local areas.		

4.2.4 Implementation

This section considers the implementation of the programme delivery and management, the systems deployed, and the guidance and support mechanisms set up. It also considers the use of budget and resources and necessary adaptations to delivery.

Implementation: Programme delivery and management

Consultations for this evaluation highlighted a maturing of programme management expertise in Historic England, though early gaps in monitoring systems, clear KPIs, governance structures and oversight were seen as impacting delivery. In keeping with best practice, Historic England kept the implementation of the programme under review and commissioned internal and external reviews throughout the delivery period, as set out below. A number of internal audits identified systemic issues noting they affected progress tracking, objectives, and accountability.

- A “rapid review” commissioned by HE in February 2021 to support programme development highlighted challenges, including a lack of detailed scheme project planning, some 70% of the schemes had not been fully worked through. The mid-programme review considered Year 1’s progress, delivery and expenditure. The review showed that the governance set up had given the programme Delivery Board too much decision-making responsibility and coordination between the cultural, capital and community strands was substandard. This was assessed to have led to inefficiencies, with projects operating independently without aligning with national priorities. Additional issues were exacerbated by “excessive scheme requirements” and the Covid-19 pandemic masking deeper structural problems. The rapid review stated that there was a lack of a clear delivery plan for schemes, inadequate central coordination, and no consequences for failing to deliver, which significantly impacted the programme’s overall progress and effectiveness. This document made several recommendations including the recommendation to reduce the requirements for documenting community engagement activities, in order to ensure that the overall programme maintained momentum and to ensure that the capital works were not delayed. Community activities continued across the majority of projects, particularly where schemes built this into their cultural strand activities.
- A Government Internal Audit Agency audit from 2023 (one of four conducted during the programme) revealed several issues in the programme’s management, with outputs behind schedule or undefined, incomplete data, and inadequate monitoring mechanisms. Key performance indicators were not effectively used, and monitoring indicators were inconsistently reported. The audit also highlighted how different delivery partners demonstrated varying levels of expertise, resulting in inconsistencies in data recording and gaps in communication, especially concerning residential and commercial projects.

Historic England responded to these gaps and challenges through several changes to data collection, programme management including reductions in requirements for data collection for the community strand and, greater guidance for schemes regarding practical delivery. A Programme Director role was also created to lead delivery, filled by an experienced member of staff internally. By closure of the HSHAZ programme there was considerably greater knowledge and efficiency in programme management. For example, there was enhanced understanding of monitoring data, how to best engage stakeholders, and how to integrate conservation with

economic and community outcomes. These improvements provide a strong foundation for future schemes, offering a blueprint for managing complex, multi-stakeholder, multi-year mixed use heritage projects.

Staff management and skills

The HSHAZ programme was highly dependent on internal collaboration within Historic England, with the central programmes team coordinating efforts by regional project leads and Project Officers (HAZPOs) who engaged directly with external partners.

The team structure (as outlined in section 2.9.1) shows the lines of reporting, whereby delivery partners or cultural consortia partners on schemes provided information to the programme management team. They in turn reported to the programme delivery board. However, the programme organograms also highlight the complexity of inputs across the wider team, with multiple advisory and communication channels.

Consultations with Historic England staff indicated that there was ambiguity in roles and responsibilities which they felt were the result of resource limitations within the central team. This was particularly the case between regional project officers and the central programme team, which led to overlaps and inefficiencies. Under-resourcing was felt to affect the ability to provide timely support to scheme partners, resulting in delays to delivery. Higher than anticipated queries from scheme leads and also stakeholders led to inconsistent response times from the central team during peak periods highlighting the need for improved communication and clarity regarding timelines and responsibilities among all partners – as a result further guidance re delegated decision making and roles and responsibilities was provided. A Programme Director role was inserted into the Programme to help champion communication and oversee delivery in response to the year one review.

The ambiguity of roles coupled with the pressures of fixed-term positions were identified as a cause of low staff morale amongst HAZPOs and some turnover for that role. It was felt that whilst there were more HAZPOs than originally envisaged (12 compared to an original 6), more staff at all levels could have addressed some of the communication issues. The introduction of a “HAZPO wellbeing plan” in 2021 aimed to address some of the acute morale issues, but some concerns from some staff remained throughout the programme linked towards workload and job descriptions. Furthermore, due to the reliance on single individuals, absence due to sickness lead to delays in scheme progress in some cases when they were unavailable.

Despite these challenges, the expertise of Historic England's staff was often highly regarded by delivery partners. This high regard was almost universally highlighted in relation to the technical guidance on complex heritage, architectural and planning issues with many local scheme partners citing that from this deep well of knowledge and experience HE staff were able to be pragmatic in advising on designs and materials that were most cost effective.

Lead partners:

The HSHAZ programme was intentionally a devolved delivery model, to allow delivery partners to tailor their approach to their local contexts. While this flexibility facilitated adoption, it created challenges in achieving consistent reporting and outputs performance across schemes because of the different levels of capacity, competency and financial resources across lead delivery partners.

The Hastings and Tyldesley HSHAZ schemes, led by Community Interest Companies, demonstrated the potential of community-led models, showcasing the versatility of HSHAZ when adapted to different delivery structures. Historic England provided these schemes with tailored support, and this was believed to have supported greater organisational capability to delivery partners to deliver project activities.

Implementation: systems, guidance and support mechanisms

As noted in Section 2.10, the HSHAZ bespoke Evaluation and Monitoring Framework was developed part way through the programme (in 2023) and the associated Grants Management System took time to embed which hindered effective monitoring throughout the scheme. The Microsoft Excel-based solutions which were rapidly developed and deployed by the end of the first year meant there was limited testing of the Excel based solution. When operationalised it became clear the system was not widely understood and had teething issues. These issues were frequently mentioned by interviewees from Historic England and delivery partners. These were identified as a constraint to data collection and a contributing factor to poor communication.

Tools such as MS Planner, Power BI and Formstack were introduced for time management and data collection across the programme. The integration of these towards the end of the programme (2022 onwards) demonstrated a commitment to developing programme management and led to a more structured, adaptable, and effective approach to delivery.

The issues faced in relation to monitoring were identified in the audits undertaken. To address these issues, Historic England continued to enhance its programme delivery through the development of management tools. This included knowledge sharing platforms, risk rubrics, regular review of outputs, finance reports and a lessons-learned log developed throughout the programme. These contributed to Historic England's ongoing programme management development. These provide the basis for sound future programme structures and effective delivery.

Implementation: economy, budget and resource allocation

The HSHAZ programme was completed within budget, although its outputs were lower than anticipated (see Section 3). The programme demonstrated overall compliance with Government best practice related to public procurement and HR regulation. This is evidenced through the audits, compliance reports and reviews of documents which show adherence to procurement and HR regulations.

The increase in the HSHAZ programme funding (see Section 2.3) and, the associated expansion from 40 to 69 schemes clearly increased central and regional management resource demands. Consultations indicated that existing management resources (e.g. 6 people and 12 HAZPOs) were insufficient for the added complexity as a result of the increased number of schemes. Despite this, interviewees were positive in some cases, noting that resources were increased to reflect regional variations in the number of schemes leading to staff increases in the North West, Yorkshire, and Midlands.

Consultations revealed instances where resource duplication or overlapping efforts occurred. This was largely attributed to communication gaps between the capital and cultural strands, leading

to scenarios such as residents in areas such as Kirkham receiving similar resource requests or events being scheduled too closely together (e.g. Hexham) creating resource inefficiencies.

Implementation: adaptations made during delivery

The HSHAZ programme underwent several changes between 2020 and 2024 as national and local contextual changes affected delivery and programme management evolved. The programme had significant flexibility within its scope to determine how finances were spent, meaning that the programme could reallocate underspend across schemes and between projects within a particular scheme. As noted previously the DCMS and MHCLG funding was subject to annuality meaning underspends could not be carried forward between financial years. Whilst this was lifted during 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 due to Covid-19 during subsequent years annuality was strictly imposed at scheme level. The majority of consultees considered this was unduly restrictive and did not reflect the reality of post-Covid-19 challenges such as continued labour and materials cost increases. This lack of flexibility was identified as negatively impacting the scope and scale of delivery.

Many consultees, particularly delivery partners noted that other national funding initiatives such as Getting Building Fund, Towns Fund and Growth Fund all had 12 or more months extension to spending and output deadlines. To secure widespread and harder to reach SMEs to engage and invest requires demonstrator projects to be visible and generate obvious benefits. Covid-19 slowed down the delivery of demonstrator projects meaning other catalysed investments were slower to be realised also. At the end of the programme many delivery partners pointed to a pipeline of projects from local businesses but there was insufficient time and funding available to bring these projects forward.

Digital tools were adopted in response to Covid-19 (e.g. Microsoft Teams), allowing greater cross team collaboration. As the country sought to implement social distancing and it was understood construction work could continue, in some cases this led to fewer distractions and improved operational efficiency. The subsequent cost of living crisis caused some landlords to withdraw from the projects and the introduction of Levelling Up funding was felt to have deprioritised HSHAZ funding in some HSHAZ areas.

To encourage participation, in many schemes, Historic England increased its grant funding offer for historical building improvement works, from 70% to 90%, from 2022 where the need was evidenced. Despite this flexibility and relatively high intervention rate, interviewees noted that rising material costs and skill shortages represented almost insurmountable barriers to project delivery.

4.2.5 Maintenance (sustainment of intervention/legacy)

The likely sustainability of the HSHAZ programme is assessed by its legacy and future integration into the practices of both Historic England and partners.

Maintenance: within Historic England

As interviewees reflected, Historic England has undergone a learning journey throughout the programme, with notable improvements in programme management and structures now firmly

in place. Regular reviews and the use of a "Lessons Learnt" log helped reflect on the progress and challenges, ensuring that valuable insights have been captured and shared. Whilst this was a positive step forward its longer-term value could be hampered by the scale of the use of short- or medium-term contracts for staff. During the programme this led to expertise not always being preserved within Historic England.

Maintenance: by delivery partners and wider stakeholders

Many schemes are exploring future HSHAZ type projects or expanding heritage-led regeneration. This growing interest points to the programme's long-lasting influence, with several areas now exploring future heritage schemes, such as potential PSICA (Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas) projects in Breckland Council following the success of Swaffham HSHAZ. In Leeds, smaller-scale HSHAZ-type grants are being utilised and the part of the urban centre in which the scheme was based is more of a focus for ongoing regeneration aspirations.

A strength of the HSHAZ programme cited by interviewees has been the engagement with a diverse network of stakeholders, including schools, community groups, and cultural organisations. This involvement has generated long-term cultural and social relationships. In Middlesbrough HSHAZ, the cultural strand delivery partner; Navigator North has increasingly integrated heritage into its core work, illustrating how the programme has had lasting effects on the future cultural identity and community pride activities.

Another key strength of the HSHAZ programme has been the connection between culture and heritage, with many organisations excited to continue exploring this link. Community ownership of projects has become a defining feature, with local communities taking responsibility for many of the activities initiated through HSHAZ. For instance, in Tyldesley, the M29 Radio and Makers Market have continued (following being set-up during the HSHAZ scheme). In Harlesden, a pre-existing Refugee Education programme has expanded as part of the HSHAZ initiative. These examples show how the programme's interventions have been well received and are contributing to the programme's legacy.

Maintenance: longer-term

Interviews with delivery partners and Historic England staff revealed a shared belief in the long-term maintenance of the HSHAZ programme, grounded in both formal structures and the passion of local authorities and community groups. While financial challenges may impact future projects, the programme has fostered a legacy of community-led heritage conservation. Many HSHAZ's have generated interest in heritage and cultural opportunities for their urban areas which is as broad as building maintenance training for housing associations and continuing arts programmes. A further example is the relationship between the Isle of Wight Newport HSHAZ scheme and Southern Water focused upon a HSHAZ public realm project which also sought to utilise sustainable drainage systems which will support environmental "future proofing" of the local area.

Efforts to sustain change beyond the HSHAZ programme have focused on securing heritage assets and ensuring continued funding for projects, preventing momentum from stalling post-closure. Interviews suggest that cultural consortiums created for HSHAZ's remain active, and many initiatives continue to strengthen (e.g. the Hastings Maintenance Club promoting the upkeep of

historic properties). Leominster Cultural Consortium post HSHAZ secured £75,000 from Arts Council England to support expanded activities, crediting their success to the experience and projects developed through the HSHAZ initiative. However, external factors affecting delivery partners such as local government funding means that despite positivity, several were unable to retain personnel at the end of a scheme.

In some areas the physical building changes enacted by HSHAZ schemes is less visible. It was identified by some schemes, that works undertaken have not transformed buildings or could be identified easily. This was also apparent on visits to schemes. Furthermore, visits to some schemes have also revealed that works to historic assets already appear to have degraded within a short period of time.

Concerns were raised in interviews with schemes and workshops with project officers and others over a “democratic deficit” in some schemes. This was regarding the feedback loop between the schemes, community and decision-makers. While public engagement was generally strong, there were instances where stakeholders felt that their input did not adequately influence the funded work, or the dialogue post-completion communications was not clear. This disconnect was believed to have led to dissatisfaction among some community members who felt their voices were not fully integrated into the programme outcomes or ‘put down’ after scheme closure.

Sustaining change beyond the HSHAZ programme has focused on securing the future of heritage assets through new listings and the removal of buildings from the Heritage at Risk register. The HSHAZ Major Enhancement Pilot Project sought to update the National Heritage List which resulted in 27 new listings and 718 amended listings. Positively, the works of several HSHAZ schemes meant that their position as an “at risk” Conservation Area was to be reassessed.

4.3 Strategic Added Value

Strategic Added Value (SAV) is a framework which has evolved as a concept from its first use by Regional Development Agencies seeking to evaluate their performance. It is used to evaluate the impact of an intervention by assessing six elements: leadership, influence, leverage, synergy, engagement and innovation. It offers a framework for assessing the broader, often more intangible but equally important, contributions of public interventions. Traditionally the SAV framework uses five aspects of added value, as set out below in Figure 4.9. A ‘new’ element of SAV has more recently been added representing the shift in public policy towards innovation.

Figure 4.4: Strategic Added Value



Source: AMION 2024, adapted from Department for Business, Innovation and Skills 2012

An overview of the strength to which the HSHAZ programme has generated or is likely to generate SAV is set out in **Table 4.4** for the capital and the cultural strands.

Table 4.4: Strategic Added Value			
SAV component	Assessment of HSHAZ programme	Examples from HSHAZ schemes (Capital)	Examples from HSHAZ schemes (Culture)
Leadership and catalysing	The HSHAZ programme provided sector leadership by initiating heritage-led regeneration and catalysing investment in restoring historic buildings from local and national partners. This has often resulted in greater appreciation of the potential of historic and heritage-led regeneration.	The HSHAZ capital works have encouraged cross-departmental working between planning, engineering, lighting, and operations teams within local authorities (LAs). In some LAs this has been transformational in changing their views of the benefit of heritage-led regeneration. For example, HSHAZ works in Lincoln have showcased what works for heritage-led regeneration, paving the way for future regeneration plans in the city.	The HSHAZ scheme was responsible for bringing local groups together in many LAs for the first time. This has resulted in shared views of needs and solutions. There are many examples of the schemes strengthening local cultural leadership, embedding capacity within councils and community groups which will have long term legacy impacts. For example, Stalybridge's successful bid for Greater Manchester Town of Culture 2022 was supported by the HSHAZ scheme.
Influence	The programme influenced local authorities and private sector stakeholders to value heritage conservation by showcasing economic, social, and cultural benefits from heritage-led investment. This resulted in restoration and investment in historic buildings and activities beyond that funded directly by HSHAZ.	HSHAZ schemes have encouraged additional local businesses, to undertake heritage-led improvements. For instance, owners in Leeds are restoring their historic shopfronts, influenced by the impact on nearby HSHAZ supported upgrades. Applicants that were unsuccessful within the EOI stage have also been identified in other funding being awarded (often with activities reframed around retail or use of space, but with a historic angle).	Several examples were cited during consultations and workshops of how the programme has influenced local businesses and residents and enhanced appreciation and participation in culture. For example, many HSHAZs provided educational materials, and these have been used to incorporate heritage topics into curricula, as seen with the inclusion of Eldon Street in geography lessons in schools in Barnsley.

Table 4.4: Strategic Added Value

SAV component	Assessment of HSHAZ programme	Examples from HSHAZ schemes (Capital)	Examples from HSHAZ schemes (Culture)
Leverage	The HSHAZ programme successfully leveraged funding from sources such as the National Lottery Heritage Fund, local councils and other public sector and private sector sources to optimise projects' scope and impact.	Many schemes attracted additional funding or resources with several citing funding from Future High Street Fund as leveraging greater impact (and HSHAZ influencing the design of funding). For example, the Wednesbury HSHAZ attracted £20 million for their conservation area from the Levelling Up Partnership, building on the HSHAZ scheme's initial successes.	The collaboration between local councils, heritage bodies, and community groups has resulted in improved coordination and strategic focus on heritage as a key driver for regeneration. For example, the HSHAZ in Burnley leveraged partnerships with local authorities and private businesses, securing funding for the development of cultural venues. Furthermore, similar examples of leveraging are expected to continue to grow with several cultural consortia or partnerships looking to continue for e.g. Huddersfield Cultural Consortia and Leominster cultural consortium.
Synergy	The programme promoted synergy by uniting local authorities, heritage bodies, and businesses in cohesive regeneration strategies, ensuring collaborative restoration of public spaces and historic areas.	The HSHAZ in Weston-super-Mare encouraged synergies between various local council departments, including planning, engineering, and cultural services. This cross-departmental synergy ensured that heritage preservation was integrated into wider urban regeneration projects, such as streetscape improvements and the restoration of public spaces.	Collaborative working which developed synergies was identified across all schemes. For example, Middlesbrough Cultural Partnership, led by Navigator North enhanced public engagement and led to successful community-driven heritage cultural campaigns and projects.
Engagement	The HSHAZ programme fostered collaboration among businesses, community groups, and public bodies	Engagement with over 8,465 young people and projects like 'Memories Shared' connected vulnerable groups	The Tyldesley Tales project encouraged residents to actively participate in telling their local stories. This project

Table 4.4: Strategic Added Value

SAV component	Assessment of HSHAZ programme	Examples from HSHAZ schemes (Capital)	Examples from HSHAZ schemes (Culture)
	for a cohesive approach to heritage-led regeneration. It encouraged community involvement, giving residents a role in shaping projects as well as local authorities and national bodies.	with local heritage in Weston-super-Mare HSHAZ. The Heritage Officers Group in the North West promoted heritage across the region, and over 2,000 participants attended local events.	invited community members to share their personal histories, which were then published in a book and celebrated in public events. This form of community engagement was seen to empower local residents to take ownership of their heritage, instilling pride and encouraging wider involvement in heritage preservation effort.
Innovation	The HSHAZ programme delivered innovation in its broadest sense. This included Innovative reuse of historic spaces, combining respect for heritage with modern needs, such as creating co-working spaces and cultural venues. The programme also provided Innovative ways of working with stakeholders and communicating to communities.	Local schemes introduced a variety of innovations including drawing upon delivery mechanisms less familiar to urban regeneration (e.g. Community Interest Companies), communication methods (e.g. urban rooms and podcasts) and digital engagement tools, virtual reality applications, social media campaigns, and online heritage trails. Many innovations expanded community interaction with heritage and provided learning on how to engage people with heritage-led regeneration.	It was highlighted that whilst regeneration with cultural activities is not 'highly innovative' in the sector, it was new and innovative for many organisations involved in HSHAZs, with the experience and benefits of the approach enlightening for many. There were also many examples of innovative outputs. For example, the "Voices of Westgate" project in Wakefield involved creating an educational comic book to promote local history and heritage to children, showcasing the importance of preserving heritage for future generations



Section 5

Value for Money

5 Value for Money

5.1 Overview

This section provides an assessment of the value for money of the HSHAZ programme, focusing on the capital and cultural strands. As noted in Section 3, the community strand had no targets nor output data collected as it was entwined into the other two strands once delivery started.

The main approaches that have been used to assess value for money relate to:

- Social cost benefit analysis (SCBA)³⁴ to determine the total net present social value (NPSV)^{ibid} and BCR^{ibid} of the project; and
- 3Es analysis to examine the relative economy, effectiveness, and efficiency of the HSHAZ investment.

5.2 Social cost benefit analysis

5.2.1 Methodology

As part of this evaluation, **AMION has undertaken a SCBA to inform the wider value for money (VfM) assessment.** The results presented below, in keeping with HMT Green Book best practice, use a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) to enable the programme to be compared to other evaluation evidence and intervention benchmarks. The assessment has been undertaken in line with HMT Green Book and other departmental guidance, such as the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's Appraisal Guide (2023) and Department for Culture Media and Sport's Culture and Heritage Capital programme. **A full method statement is provided in Appendix B, whilst a summary is provided below.**

The SCBA of the HSHAZ programme impacts to date and likely future impacts aligns with Green Book guidance by adopting the following assumptions:

- The costs and benefits are presented relative to the reference case with a 28.5% displacement rate applied based on guidance for physical regeneration and image/cultural projects.
- Monetised costs and benefits have been converted to 2024/25 prices using Gross Domestic Product (GDP) deflators.
- The financial costs of HSHAZ have been provided by Historic England, utilising expenditure figures from each of the 66 HSHAZs included in this evaluation over the

³⁴ Social Cost-Benefit Analysis (SCBA): A method to assess a project's overall impact on society by considering both financial and non-financial factors (e.g., environmental and social effects).

Net Present Social Value (NPSV): The total value of a project's social benefits minus its social costs, adjusted for the time value of money.

Benefit-Cost Ratio (BCR): A ratio comparing total social benefits to total social costs; a value above 1 indicates the project is beneficial.

duration of the delivery period. The administration costs have been applied to the capital and cultural strand on a pro-rata basis.

- The economic cost assessment is based on the public sector costs from the HSHAZ programme and local authority match-funding

A range of economic benefits have been evaluated using established methodologies from Green Book, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Department for Culture Media and Sport and Department for Transport, and other relevant government guidance (e.g.HM Treasury Magenta Book). A benefit transfer approach has largely been used to apply robust values from government guidance to the outputs from the HSHAZ programme. A bespoke contingent valuation study has been undertaken by AMION to assess the use and non-use economic benefits attributed to the restoration and improvement of historic high street shopfronts. This important component of the programme's outputs cannot be accurately valued using benefits transfer approach from the DCMS Evidence Bank or other industry studies.

The list of monetised benefits is presented as follows:

- Land value uplift (capital strand)
- Wider land value uplift (capital strand)
- Public realm amenity benefits (capital strand)
- Labour supply benefits (capital and cultural strand)
- Wellbeing benefits from new employment (capital and cultural strand)
- Wellbeing benefits from volunteering (capital and cultural strand)
- Wellbeing benefits from education and social programmes (capital and cultural strand)
- Wage premium benefits from education programmes (capital and cultural strand)
- Cultural use benefits (capital and cultural strand)

Heritage use and non-use benefits (capital strand)³⁵

Active mode transport benefits (capital strand)³⁶

- Strategy development benefits (capital strand)
- Distributional analysis (capital and cultural strand)

It is important to recognise that the programme is also expected to result in several substantial wider benefits that are not currently capable of being captured in the SCBA monetised analysis.

³⁵ A benefit transfer approach from an appropriate study has been used to measure the use and non-use benefits from historic buildings repaired or conserved whilst a bespoke contingent valuation study from AMION has been used to measure the use and non-use benefits from the historic shopfront improvements.

³⁶ The active mode benefits have been monetised for the capital strand based on the delivery of enhanced public realm and permanent installation boards and digital displays. The interpretation displays from the cultural strand are assumed to be temporary and, therefore, has formed part of the non-monetised assessment

Building upon the analysis of quantifiable impacts, an assessment of these wider and clearly very important benefits associated with the programme has been undertaken.

In line with the latest MHCLG Appraisal Guide best practice, an assessment of non-monetised impacts has been undertaken for the capital and cultural strand using a seven-point scale from large adverse to large beneficial based on the definitions set out below.

Table 5.1: Qualitative assessment scale for non-monetised impacts	
Impact	Commentary
Large adverse	Large disbenefit likely to materially impact on VfM
Moderate adverse	Important disbenefit but will not on its own significantly impact on VfM
Slight adverse	Small disbenefit unlikely to have material impact on VfM
Neutral	No impact
Slight beneficial	Small benefit unlikely to have material impact on VfM
Moderate beneficial	Important benefit but will not on its own significantly impact on VfM
Large beneficial	Large benefit likely to materially impact on VfM

5.2.2 Capital strand assessment

Green Book compliant social cost benefit analysis

Table 5.2 presents the financial and economic costs of the HSHAZ capital strand. The financial costs have been converted into economic costs within the social cost benefit analysis by adjusting for inflation in line with Green Book guidance. This adjustment ensures all costs are in present 2024/25 prices³⁷. **The total public sector economic cost of the capital strand totals to £186.1 million.**

³⁷ Within social cost benefit analysis, costs and benefits are expressed in present prices because it allows for a fair comparison between different options by adjusting for the time value of money. This approach means that costs and benefits occurring at different points in the past or future are valued based on their current worth, enabling a direct assessment of the overall economic impact of a project or decision.

Table 5.2: Economic and financial costs of HSHAZ capital strand (£m)

Funding	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Financial Costs							
HSHAZ (HE)	£2.7	£5.7	£33.8	£32.4	£18.5	£0.2	£93.3
LA match	£1.9	£4.1	£24.5	£23.5	£13.4	£1.1	£68.5
Total	£4.6	£9.8	£58.3	£55.9	£31.9	£1.4	£161.9
Economic Costs							
HSHAZ (HE)	£3.4	£6.8	£40.8	£36.5	£19.6	£0.2	£107.4
LA match	£2.4	£4.9	£29.6	£26.5	£14.2	£1.1	£78.7
Total	£5.8	£11.7	£70.4	£63.0	£33.9	£1.4	£186.1

Note: Numbers may not add due to rounding

Table 5.3 presents the benefit assessment for the HSHAZ capital strand. Following Green Book methodologies for monetising economic benefits, **the capital strand is assessed to have delivered over £245 million of benefits.**

Table 5.3: HSHAZ capital strand – benefit assessment (£m, 24/25 prices)	
Benefit	HSHAZ Capital Strand
Residential Land Value Uplift (LVU)	£7.6
Commercial LVU	£28.8
Wider LVU	£4.8
Amenity	£9.6
Heritage Use	£31.5
Heritage Non-Use	£27.1
Cultural Use (including future operation)	£50.2
Education wage premium	£11.4
Education wellbeing	£1.4
Volunteer wellbeing	£0.6
Employment wellbeing	£1.0
Labour supply	£16.4
Active mode	£13.4
Strategy development	£15.2
Distributional analysis	£26.1
Total	£245.4

Note: Table references use and non-use values; **use values** arise from direct interactions like tourism or education, while **non-use values** reflect the importance of preserving heritage for future generations or its intrinsic worth, even if never physically experienced.

The delivery of the HSHAZ capital strand is likely to have resulted in the following substantial wider economic benefits that are not captured in the SCBA analysis:

Unlocking future heritage regeneration – The HSHAZ programme has delivered 358 amended list entries, 338 feasibility studies, 584 heritage/archaeological research studies, 47 new or revised heritage statements or conservation management plan, 125 new or revised historic area assessment/conservation area appraisals, and 290 supplementary planning or design guidance documents. These studies align directly with the ambitions for the HSHAZ programme to create the conditions for future heritage regeneration. The activities have been led by local partners based on the key assets and needs of the area. This work can be expected to initiate a future programme of regeneration utilising key best practice guide documents. Currently, the benefits have been monetised on the basis that the benefits of these strategies at least meet the programme cost. However, substantial future heritage-led regeneration cannot take place without these strategies in place and, therefore, it is likely that the benefits are greater than stated in the monetised benefit assessment.

- **Legacy benefits** – The programme has demonstrated the benefits of heritage-led regeneration to businesses and communities. As discussed in the RE-AIM assessment in Section 4.2, there is already evidence of further non-grant funded investment in buildings immediately surrounding HSHAZ schemes, as building owners look to continue the momentum started by the HSHAZ programme. Furthermore, some areas have been successful in winning other funding bids due to the enthusiasm and knowledge gained by their HSHAZ work. The programme looked to revitalise areas in need, and initial evidence suggests that further investment may be made based on the work delivered to date. These wider benefits are further explored in the Strategic Added Value assessment in Section 4.3.
- **Image and community perceptions** – Primary research evidence indicates that the HSHAZ capital works were largely well received by the public. Additionally, the difference-in-difference analysis in Section 3.5 indicates an increased satisfaction with the appearance of the local buildings in HSHAZ areas and that HSHAZ areas have become increasingly conducive to socialising.
- **Stimulation of cultural and tourism businesses** – The capital strand has collaborated with various cultural and tourism businesses and organisations to develop projects and enhance their potential impact. This effort has fostered local partnerships, enabling stakeholders to work together on initiatives that benefit the community. Additionally, local businesses are likely to experience benefits from increased footfall and increased visitor spending based on the HSHAZ interventions creating a more attractive public environment.

Capacity building – as noted in the RE-AIM assessment in Section 4.2, consultations with local authority and community teams has indicated that the HSHAZ programme has been a learning experience, which has meant they are better placed to deliver regeneration schemes in the future in terms of design and delivery. Better relationships have been developed both internally at the local organisation level and externally between organisations and Historic England.

Table 5.4 presents the non-monetised impact assessment. There are several substantial non-monetised benefits which are likely to increase the value for money assessment above the BCR identified using the monetised benefit assessment.

Table 5.4: Non-monetised impact assessment for capital strand		
Benefit	Reference Case	HSHAZ Capital Strand
Unlocking future heritage regeneration	Minor adverse	Moderate beneficial
Legacy benefits	Minor adverse	Moderate beneficial
Image and community perceptions	Moderate adverse	Moderate beneficial
Cultural and tourism sector	Neutral	Slight beneficial
Capability building	Neutral	Slight beneficial

The key results of the SCBA assessment based on quantified benefits and non-monetised impacts are summarised in the Evaluation Summary Table in **Table 5.5**.

As can be seen below, **the capital strand of the HSHAZ programme has an BCR of 1.32:1, indicating 'acceptable' value for money**. The non-monetised benefits presented above indicate that the value for money of the scheme is likely to be much higher than the BCR suggests. In particular, the ongoing legacy impacts from initiating a programme of heritage-led regeneration of need are likely to deliver substantial benefits over a twenty-to-thirty-year period. Once these non-monetised benefits are accounted for, it is possible the capital strand has represented 'medium' value for money. Therefore, based on the monetised and non-monetised impact assessments, the HSHAZ Capital strand falls within the **'acceptable to medium'** category for VfM

Table 5.5: HSHAZ programme – capital strand evaluation summary table	
Output	HSHAZ Programme
A. Present Value Benefits (£m)	£245.4
B. Present Value Costs (£m)	£186.1
C. Net Present Social Value (A-B)	£59.3
D. BCR (A/B)	1.32:1
E. Significant non-monetised impacts	Future heritage regeneration: Moderate beneficial Legacy benefits: Moderate beneficial Image and community perceptions: Moderate beneficial Cultural and tourism sector: Moderate beneficial Capacity building: Slight beneficial
F. Value for money category	Acceptable to medium

The SCBA assessment is based on achieved outputs and robust methodologies from government guidance. However, certain benefit assessments incorporate assumptions as part of their calculation, namely the heritage non-use, public realm amenity, and future cultural use benefits. The following scenarios have been modelled to understand how the BCR would change based on adjustments to the technical assumptions included within the assessment,

- Heritage non-use benefits: The existing DCMS evidence identifies that a local authority is a typical catchment for non-use benefits. However, it could be argued that the non-use benefits would only be felt by a smaller catchment for certain circumstances, for example a rural town. To test this assumption, we have modelled:

- Non-use heritage benefits for residents within a 10-minute drivetime catchment;

Non-use heritage benefits for residents within a 20-minute drivetime catchment.

- Amenity benefits: There is clear Homes England guidance on the amenity benefit arising from new public realm in urban settings. Where there have been improvements delivered, 50% of this value has typically been applied in previous assessments. Given the scale of the public realm interventions in key town centre settings, the upside benefit potential has been tested by modelling 75% of the new public realm value for enhanced public realm.
 - Future cultural use values: Based on the deeper analysis of case study sites in (see Section 5.2.4), it is considered reasonable that (on average) each HSHAZ will attract 12,000 visitors per annum to cultural and social development activities. The case study evidence demonstrates a wide range of new facilities created as a result of projects such as new museums, community centres, and refugee education centres. This visitor figure has been applied over a 25-year period, in line with guidance for redevelopment projects. In order to test this assumption, the following scenarios have been modelled:
 - Each HSHAZ attracts (on average) 6,000 visitors per annum to new cultural activities at floorspaces brought back into use.
 - Each HSHAZ attracts (on average) 24,000 visitors per annum to new cultural activities at floorspaces brought back into use.

These sensitivity tests generate a range of BCRs from 1.2 to 1.6. This analysis provides further confidence that the value for money of the HSHAZ capital strand falls into the **acceptable to medium category**. The core BCR of 1.32 also falls in the middle of this range demonstrating and therefore, is robust to changes to key modelling amendments.

Comparison to the HSHAZ Business Case – local GVA assessment

The HSHAZ Business Case was produced in November 2019. At this stage, government guidance for value for money assessments largely focussed on local place-based analysis with benefits arising from GVA impacts. Best practice guidance has since moved to emphasise the estimation of social welfare analysis in line with the SCBA approach set out in Section 5.2 above.

To enable comparison of the forecast BCR in the approved Business Case to the outturn BCR, this section presents an analysis of the out-turn position based on the GVA approach used in the business case.

The approach in Business Case has been summarised as follows:

- The assessment is based on GVA impacts from jobs (arising from new commercial floorspace) and training during the project delivery;

- The GVA impacts persist for 20 years³⁸ with 3.5% discounting applied;
- The following local additionality assumptions were considered within the Business Case assessment:
 - Deadweight: 33.9%
 - Displacement: 51% to 62% for jobs calculation, and 52% to 76% for training calculation.
 - Leakage: 11.3%

It should be noted that the core BCR of 1:4.9 in the business case was calculated based on the Historic England cost contribution only, rather than the total public sector cost arising as a result of match funding. This was not in keeping with guidance available at the time the business case was produced, although it is recognised that the level of match funding from public sector was not estimated the business case. The assumption, although not stated, could have been that the majority of the match funding was expected to come from the private sector.

To allow a direct comparison to the BCR in the Business Case, the above additionality assumptions have been modelled based on the achieved jobs and training outputs from the HSHAZ capital strand. The mid-point displacement range has been applied for the jobs and training calculations. The same GVA approach has been followed, with values updated to 24/25 prices where relevant in line with the cost calculations.

As set out on page 42 of the business case, “based on the core outcomes, the Benefit Cost Ratio delivered by the High Streets HAZ programme is estimated at 4.9:1. This means for every pound invested in the programme, there is an economic return of £4.90. The cumulative net GVA generated (over 20 years) by the programme is estimated as £440 million”.

However, as noted above, the BCR was not calculated on the total expected public sector cost contribution. **As stated in Section 2.8.2, if we assume that the projected match-funding in the Business Case had the same public:private split as the outturn investment, the BCR would have been 2.4:1. We have modelled both scenarios below to allow for these calculations.** It is critical to recognise that the business case would have had a lower BCR if the total public sector investment was accounted for within the calculations. The Green Book compliant approach (above) is based on the total public sector cost.

The GVA benefits from the delivered jobs and training completions as part of the HSHAZ capital strand have been modelled replicating the approach in the Business Case, with the following findings:

- The HSHAZ Capital strand has a **BCR of 2.1:1 based only on the Historic England expenditure**, compared to 4.9:1 in the Business Case.
- The HSHAZ Capital strand has a **BCR of 1.2:1 based on the total public sector expenditure**, compared to 2.4:1 in the Business Case.

³⁸ It should be noted that even for a local GVA approach, a 20-years assessment is considered optimistic. A 10-year assessment was more acceptable at the time.

-
- Given that HSHAZ programme has delivered around 33% of its intended employment target, largely due to the lower-than-expected delivery of commercial floorspace within the capital works, it is understandable that the achieved BCR based on GVA is lower than the BCR in the Business Case.

This range of outturn BCRs from the HSHAZ capital strand based on a local GVA approach provides reassurance that the programme likely represents ‘acceptable to medium value’ for money once all public investment is accounted for. The BCRs from the GVA approach is presented in more detail in table 5.6.

Table 5.6: BCR comparison to business case based on GVA approach		
Value	Business Case (19/20 prices, £m)	HSHAZ Capital Strand (24/25 prices, £m)
Benefits		
Jobs GVA Benefits	£392	£200
Training GVA Benefits	£48	£21
Total Benefits	£440	£221
Costs		
Historic England cost	£92	£107
Total public sector cost	£185	£186
BCR		
BCR (GVA: Historic England cost)	4.9	2.1
BCR (GVA: Total public sector cost)	2.4	1.2

Capital strand assessment findings

The capital strand of the HSHAZ programme has a BCR of 1.32:1 based on Green Book compliant methodologies, indicating ‘acceptable’ value for money. The non-monetised benefits indicate that the value for money of the scheme is likely to be significantly higher than the BCR alone indicates. In particular, the ongoing legacy impacts from initiating a programme of heritage-led regeneration in areas of need are likely to deliver substantial benefits over a twenty-to-thirty-year period. Once these are included, it is possible the programme could reach ‘medium’ value for money.

5.2.3 Cultural strand assessment

Table 5.7 presents the economic costs of the HSHAZ cultural strand. The total public sector economic cost of the cultural strand totals to £10.0 million.

Table 5.7: Economic and financial costs of HSHAZ cultural strand (£m)							
Funding	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	Total
Financial costs							
Historic England	£0.06	£1.1	£2.5	£2.6	£1.2	£0.02	£7.4
Local Authorities	£0.01	£0.2	£0.4	£0.4	£0.2	£0.01	£1.3
Total	£0.07	£1.3	£2.9	£3.0	£1.4	£0.02	£8.7
Economic costs							
Historic England	£0.07	£1.3	£3.0	£2.9	£1.3	£0.02	£8.5
Local Authorities	£0.01	£0.2	£0.5	£0.5	£0.2	£0.01	£1.5
Total	£0.08	£1.5	£3.6	£3.4	£1.5	£0.02	£10.0

Note: Number may not add due to rounding. Historic England funded by HM Treasury.

Table 5.8 presents the benefit assessment for the HSHAZ cultural strand. Following Green Book methodologies for monetising economic benefits, the **cultural strand is assessed to have delivered £17.7m of benefits.**

Table 5.8: HSHAZ cultural strand – benefit assessment (£m, 24/25 prices)	
Benefit	HSHAZ cultural strand
Cultural use	£13.6
Volunteering wellbeing	£1.2
Education wellbeing	£0.7
Education wage premium	£0.1
Labour supply	£0.1
Employment wellbeing	£0.1
Distributional	£1.8
Total	£17.6

The delivery of the HSHAZ cultural strand is likely to have resulted in the following substantial wider economic benefits that are not captured in the SCBA analysis:

- **Image and pride in place:** The cultural strand has enhanced the image of the areas, improving the pride in place felt by residents. This non-use benefit can be experienced through existence (knowing a cultural asset exists), bequest (knowing cultural assets will be available to future generations), and altruistic (knowing a cultural institution is available to other people alive today) values. The DCMS Cultural and Heritage Capital Evidence Bank provides studies which measure the non-use value from year-long cultural festivals. The evaluated events are judged to be larger in value than the hyper-local cultural activities delivered within each HSHAZ. Therefore, these benefits have not been monetised, however, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that these impacts will be substantial. Our stakeholder engagement has demonstrated that the cultural activities have been well received by residents.
- **Cultural sector development:** The Covid-19 pandemic disproportionately affected cultural artists and businesses as social distancing protocols significantly limited the opportunities in the sector over a prolonged period. The cultural strand provided a much-needed economic and artistic stimulus to local creative organisations, delivering events that would not otherwise have taken place. The cultural events were popular, drawing in new audiences and providing a platform for freelancers and businesses to promote their talent. Against the backdrop of the pandemic, the benefit of supporting these grassroots organisations was undoubtedly significant beyond any immediate economic value.
- **Community cohesion and partnership working:** Local stakeholders and communities collaborated with local authorities to deliver the varied cultural strands across the country. This partnership-working has led to a series of qualitative benefits such as community connectedness, knowledge transfer, and skills development. Local organisations feel

empowered to continue the recent cultural regeneration delivered in their towns and are better placed to do so based on the expertise gained from the HSHAZ cultural strand.

- **Wayfinding:** The cultural strand delivered 155 temporary installation displays to support the delivery of the events and activities. These displays helped to make the events as accessible as possible to all audiences. It is likely that the displays will have enhanced the pedestrian journey quality at the events.
- **Promotion of capital strand activities:** The cultural activities largely took place alongside the physical regeneration being delivered as part of the capital strand. In a number of instances, the marketing materials at the events helped promote the investment into key assets as part of the capital strand, helping to gain buy-in from residents. Additionally, the attendances at events are likely to have benefitted from the recent investment into the fabric of the high streets.

The below table presents the non-monetised impact assessment.

Table 5.9: Non-monetised impact assessment for cultural strand		
Benefit	Reference Case	HSHAZ Cultural Strand
Image and perceptions	Neutral	Large beneficial
Cultural sector development	Minor adverse	Moderate beneficial
Community cohesion and partnership working	Neutral	Moderate beneficial
Wayfinding	Neutral	Slight beneficial
Promotion of capital strand activities	Neutral	Slight beneficial

The key results of the SCBA assessment based on quantified benefits and non-monetised impacts are summarised in the Evaluation Summary Table in **Table 5.10**.

As can be seen below, **the cultural strand of the HSHAZ programme has an BCR of 1.76:1, indicating 'medium' value for money**. The non-monetised benefits presented above indicate that the value for money of the scheme is likely to be significantly higher than the BCR suggests, particularly relating to safeguarding existing culture communities and growing future cultural sector development and pride of place of local residents. Once these non-monetised benefits are accounted for, it is possible the cultural strand has represented 'high' value for money. Overall, it is assessed that the HSHAZ cultural strand delivered 'medium to high' value for money.

It should be noted that the cultural strand of the HSHAZ programme benefitted from the physical regeneration as part of the capital strand. Ensuring capital and cultural (activity) strands of future programmes are co-designed and aligned in their objectives will help to maximise the value for money of both investments.

Table 5.10: HSHAZ programme – cultural strand appraisal summary table

Output	HSHAZ cultural strand
A. Present value benefits (£m)	£17.6
B. Present value costs (£m)	£10.0
C. Net present social value (A-B)	£7.6
D. BCR (A)/B)	1.76:1
E. Significant non-monetised impacts	Image and pride of place: large beneficial Cultural sector development: moderate beneficial Community cohesion and partnership working: moderate beneficial Wayfinding: slight beneficial Promotion of capital strand activities: slight beneficial
F. Value for money category	Medium to High

The SCBA assessment is based on achieved outputs and robust methodologies from government guidance. The key variables in our assessment relate to future attendees at artworks/installations as part of the legacy benefits, the higher range of visitor forecasts, and the cultural use value applied to event attendees, although this value is based on an average of several appropriate studies in the DCMS Cultural and Heritage Capital Evidence Bank. To provide further reassurance to the BCR calculations and value for money assessment, the following scenarios have been modelled:

- 5-year period for legacy benefits from artworks/installations;
- The higher range of visitor forecasts from sources outside of the scheme plans;
- £4.4 cultural use value applied to event attendees- based on lower end of studies assessed;
- £10.4 cultural use value applied to event attendees- based on higher end of studies assessed.

These sensitivity tests provide a range of BCRs from 1.3 to 2.2. This analysis provides further confidence that the value for money of the HSHAZ cultural strand falls into the medium to high category. The core BCR of 1.76 also falls in the middle of this range and, therefore, is robust to technical changes.

Once the non-monetised benefits are accounted for, it is assessed that the HSHAZ cultural strand delivered '**medium to high**' value for money. It should be noted that the cultural strand of the HSHAZ programme benefitted from the physical regeneration as part of the capital strand and vice versa. However, despite this benefit, there were numerous examples of activities in each stream being undertaken separately and synergies emerging unplanned.

5.2.4 Delivery summaries and case study analysis

The HSHAZ programme represents a locally led approach to heritage-led regeneration. To explore the programme in more detail, 20 activity reviews and 9 case studies³⁹ were undertaken to offer a bottom-up view of these projects. The schemes included within the scheme overviews and case studies sample were selected to be representative of the 66 schemes included in this evaluation based on geography, scheme grant award size, scale of historic assets and delivery model. The approach to selection is outlined in detail in Appendix A.

AMION undertook an expansive approach to capture this perspective, providing insights that are highly instructive and valuable to the evaluation process.

- **Case studies:** The case studies review the outputs achieved through each HSHAZ scheme against its stated targets and assesses likely value for money using government compliant methodologies. Whilst each case study provides a unique perspective on the challenges and successes encountered in the implementation of HSHAZ projects, showcasing the collaborative efforts between local authorities, community organisations, and stakeholders their value is in being taken together to give a view of the programme as a whole.

The collection of case studies highlights the diverse impacts of HSHAZ projects across towns and cities, demonstrating how these initiatives have strengthened community pride, enhanced local economies, and preserved cultural heritage.

The insights from these case studies contribute to a broader understanding of the HSHAZ programme processes and impacts as well as the complexities and benefits of heritage-led urban regeneration. By examining objectives, activities, and outcomes, stakeholders can derive valuable lessons to guide future projects, ensuring that heritage conservation remains an integral part of urban development strategies.

The following summarises some of the key themes emerging from the case studies, with further details provided in the individual documents included in Appendix E. These themes reflect the multifaceted impact of HSHAZ schemes.

- **Breadth of activities:** The scheme overviews reveal a wide variety of initiatives across capital projects, community outreach, and cultural events, all aimed at celebrating local heritage. These include varied cultural events designed to engage diverse audiences, some of which successfully attracted substantial attendance or footfall (e.g. cream tea event in Swaffham), others engaged groups less engaged with heritage (e.g. such as events focused upon the LGBTQ+ community in Leeds) and others promoted local heritage through other creative activities (e.g. beer mats in Middlesbrough).
- **Enthusiasm:** The dedication and enthusiasm of those closely involved in delivering the projects was evident, with a clear sense of pride in local heritage that has extended to

³⁹ 10 case studies were originally planned but one was not able to be finalised due to unforeseen circumstances related to delivery and programme constraints.

stakeholders. Site visits undertaken by the evaluation team included enthusiastic signposting, articulation, histories and stories around the schemes.

- **Legacy and operational impacts:** The case studies indicate that several facilities brought back into use are supported by detailed business plans for future operation, which are likely to draw in significant visitors. Poole HSHAZ has re-established Scaplen's Court as a focal cultural attraction, which is expected to double the amount of visitors to the complex alongside provision of a far more significant community space. Additionally, Harlesden HSHAZ has reconverted the old HSBC bank into the headquarters for Refugee Education UK. Their business plan and initial usage of the facility highlights an extensive cultural event offer as well as a refugee support and education programme.
- **Programme-level challenges:** The case studies illustrate some of the challenges for the evaluation including difficulties in accurately identifying, quantifying, and valuing the full range of activities and impacts across projects, which has affected comprehensive evaluation efforts. This is particularly the case around educational outreach and materials which may have a longer-term impact upon recipients or students.
- **Diverse delivery models and governance:** Only one scheme in the case study sample (Tyldesley) was community-led. The remaining case studies although local authority led highlight the differences across schemes, illustrating a range of approaches in governance and project management for example county councils working with town councils, or councils working with their own internal culture teams or with well-established community or cultural consortia.
- **Community empowerment:** A strong focus on community empowerment is evident across the case studies and the scheme overviews, demonstrating a commitment to fostering local ownership of heritage assets. This has nurtured community pride and encouraged active participation in regeneration efforts, with communities becoming increasingly invested in the outcomes. For example, residents in Tyldesley have taken forward a music festival started through the HSHAZ to continue the legacy and drive positive change. Additionally, the collective and collaborative efforts of the New Briggate Cultural Consortium in Leeds saw the delivery of an immersive and diverse cultural strand, with a collection of take-home art available for residents and visitors. Lastly, the Cathedral Quarter HSHAZ cultural strand in Gloucester was seen as a huge success, with one project described in consultations as 'a brilliant example of a community-engaged artistic project'.
- **Partnership working:** The case studies showcase the importance of partnership working, with numerous engagement events and initiatives fostering collaboration between Historic England, community groups, local authorities, and other stakeholders. This approach has been essential in mobilising local participation and ensuring the projects resonate with the communities they serve. For example, establishment of delivery teams within Middlesbrough Council and with external stakeholders has been strengthened because of the HSHAZ programme, establishing new relationships and solidifying existing ones. Following the successful completion of Middlesbrough HSHAZ, Historic England staff expressed interest in further engagement in Middlesbrough and the surrounding area, recognising its potential and opportunities.

Wakefield HSHAZ was another example of strong partnership-working, as involvement of communities and schools was an ongoing commitment. Local schools in Wakefield are continuing to incorporate history packs and materials regarding Wakefield into the curriculum to enhance and awareness.

Another key finding from the case study review was that **the benefits of the programme are spread across the country, with most schemes delivering value for money**. The case studies, which were representative on several key scheme criteria, delivered similar type of outputs and outcomes with a BCR typically above 1.0:1. There was largely positive feedback from project teams and key stakeholders on the beneficial impacts delivered for local communities. This finding **strengthens our programme-level value for money assessments for both the capital and cultural strand**, as the assessment demonstrate the programme BCR is not unduly influenced by one or two high or low performing schemes.

Despite this, as one would expect, there was a slight variability in value for money across different schemes reflecting the unique challenges and opportunities present in each location. Tyldesley HSHAZ had the highest BCR of 1.75:1 based on the substantial construction training activities undertaken and heritage assets or building fronts restored. Ryde HSHAZ had the lowest BCR of 0.89:1 as the scheme failed to deliver its major public realm scheme which was the priority for the area. However, funding has now been secured for this public realm and pedestrianisation project in Ryde, and the HSHAZ scheme contributed to this positive position. If this project was included in the social cost benefit analysis, the BCR for Ryde would increase to 1.0:1.

Table 5.11 presents the BCRs for the case study sites. All case studies were expected to deliver considerable non-monetised benefits which would increase the value for money assessment above the stated BCR.

Table 5.11: HSHAZ programme – case study BCRs	
HSHAZ Scheme	Combined Capital and Cultural Strand
Ryde	0.89:1
Leeds	1.20:1
Poole	1.26:1
Swaffham	1.38:1
Gloucester	1.55:1
Middlesbrough	1.59:1
Wakefield	1.70:1
Harlesden	1.74:1
Tyldesley	1.75:1

Note: Light red for BCR < 1.0:1 (poor VfM), yellow for 1.0<BCR<1.5 (acceptable VfM), and light green for 1.5<BCR<2.0 (medium VfM)

5.2.5 Programme level summary

Our analysis has considered the value for money of the HSHAZ programme overall, as well as the individual capital and cultural strands. The HSHAZ programme achieved a **BCR of 1.34:1**, indicating 'acceptable' value for money. Once the non-monetised benefits are accounted for, the value for money assessment for the overall HSHAZ programme rises to '**acceptable to medium' value for money**.

Table 5.12 presents the evaluation summary table for the HSHAZ programme and the capital and cultural strands.

Table 5.12: Programme evaluation summary table			
Output	Capital Strand	Cultural Strand	HSHAZ Programme
A. Present value benefits (£m)	£245.4	£17.6	£263.0
B. Present value costs (£m)	£186.1	£10.0	£196.1
C. Net present social value (A-B)	£59.3	£7.6	£66.9
D. BCR (A)/B)	1.32:1	1.76:1	1.34:1
E. Significant non-monetised impacts	Future heritage regeneration: Moderate beneficial Legacy benefits: Moderate beneficial Image and community perceptions: Moderate beneficial Cultural and tourism sector: Moderate beneficial Capacity building: Slight beneficial	Image and pride of place: large beneficial Cultural sector development: moderate beneficial Community cohesion and partnership working: moderate beneficial Wayfinding: slight beneficial Promotion of capital strand activities: slight beneficial	See assessments for capital and cultural strands
F. Value for money category	Acceptable to medium	Medium to High	Acceptable to medium

5.3 3Es Framework

The 3Es analysis explores the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of the programme. Compliant with Magenta and Green Book approaches, it involved an assessment of the following:

- **The ratio of costs to inputs (economy)** – e.g. has the level of funding allocated and administrative costs been appropriate and minimised where possible? This assessment

considered analysis of baseline data, feedback from the detailed research areas, and findings from the process evaluation – in particular discussions with key stakeholders.

- **The ratio of public sector costs to outputs (efficiency)** – This assessment considered whether the scheme has delivered its primary output metrics and whether the delivery of these outputs represents value for money in terms of economic benefits against public sector costs.

The extent to which the Fund has achieved its objectives and Critical Success Factors (effectiveness) – This assessment utilised a mixed-methods approach to assess the whether the scheme delivered its outcomes. While the programme has specific critical success factors (CFSs), the assessment of value for money also considers ‘equity’ and the extent to which funding has been used to reduce inequalities.

5.3.1 Economy

There was debate amongst interviewees as to the level of funding allocated to each scheme with some discussion as to whether fewer schemes could have had greater impact. However, on balance many believed that the level of funding was suitable. Similarly, administrative costs are in line with similar sized programmes⁴⁰ and were appropriate and minimised where possible. Good examples of efficiency were evident at the national level, particularly through adherence to public procurement regulations. However, there was sometimes duplication of effort at the project level or resources not optimised, for example, in some schemes research tasks were undertaken twice due to the disconnect between capital and cultural strands.

Historic England underwent a significant ‘journey of improvement’; initially with a lighter touch approach to oversight in keeping with their design of the programme as a devolved and local driven set of activities guided by agreed scheme plans and supported by HAZPOs and other skilled central and regional teams. Following progress reviews more appropriate systems and processes were implemented to allow for greater and more timely scrutiny to improve delivery. Despite this, early challenges such as the withdrawal of funding for King’s Lynn due to lack of progress and capacity concerns at the local level demonstrates good decision making.

By the end of the programme efficiencies were achieved through the use of data and technology. Underspends in year one were reprofiled and reallocated to projects in need of additional funds. From the second year, where underspend was identified, two rounds of additional funding were introduced, targeted at well-performing schemes across all regions, using a clear set of criteria to ensure fairness and effectiveness.

5.3.2 Efficiency

An assessment of the programme financial and output performance is set out in **Section 3.3.2** and **Table 3.2** in particular. The analysis indicates that the HSHAZ programme has delivered an estimated 1,089 gross jobs and 716 net jobs nationally. This equates to 16.5 gross jobs per HSHAZ

⁴⁰ When looking at the % of administrative costs to overall project spend for other regeneration programmes such as Regional Growth Fund or Getting Building Fund.

and 10.8 net jobs per HSHAZ. This employment contributes £34.9 million net GVA per annum, or £0.5 million net GVA per HSHAZ per annum.

Additionally, as set out in **Section 5.2.5**, the level of outputs delivered across the capital and cultural strand achieved a BCR of 1.34:1 alongside several notable non-monetised benefits. The overall conclusion for the social cost benefit analysis is that the programme delivered ‘acceptable to medium’ value for money.

The main outputs relating to new housing and commercial space were substantially lower than the targets set in the logic model of the business case. However, this is due to the housing and commercial floorspace targets were overly ambitious, meaning they were unlikely to be reached and could give the perception of failure despite the scale and impact of the outputs generated.

5.3.3 Effectiveness

An overall review of the Effectiveness of the programme has been undertaken in **Section 4.2.2**. This review identified that the HSHAZ programme has made significant progress in delivering the intended heritage-led regeneration. It serves as a strong foundation for further development across multiple historic high streets.

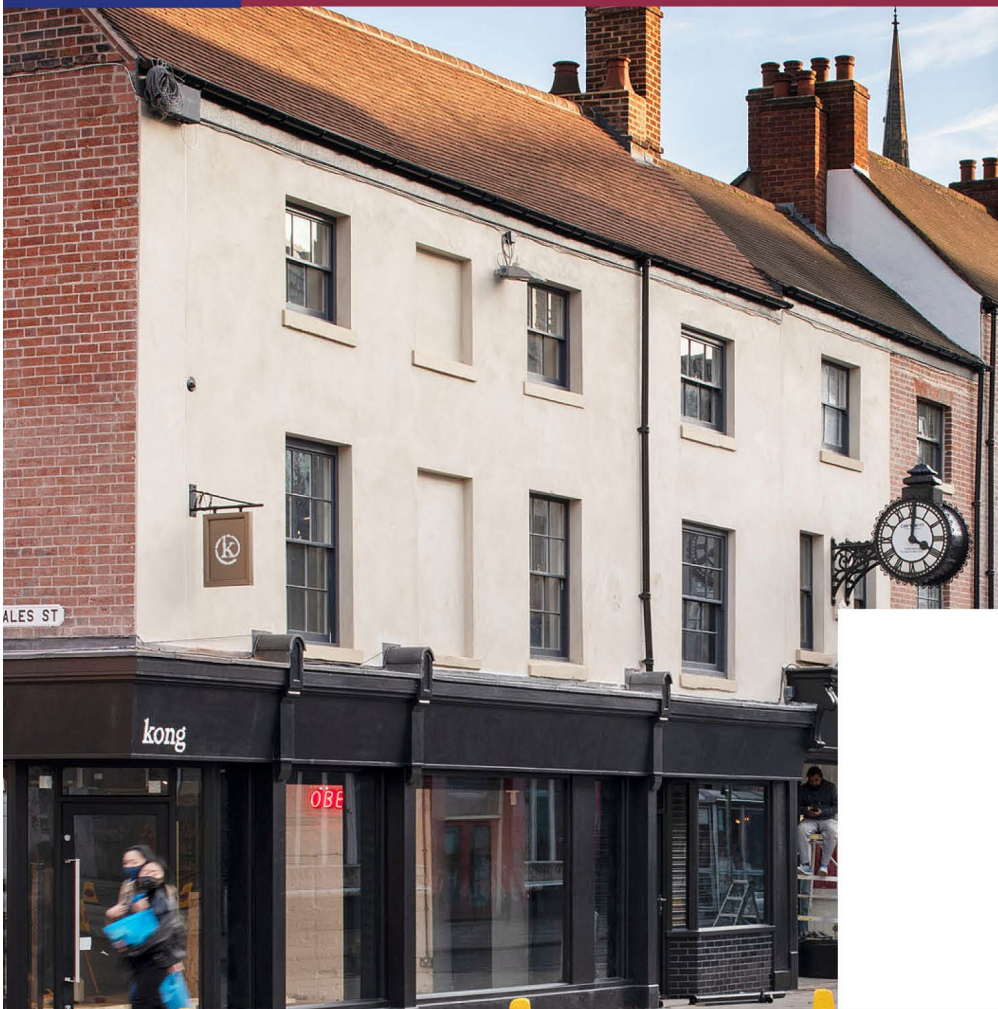
Additionally, as noted in **Section 2.6.1** above, a series of CSFs were identified by Historic England rather than a set of KPIs. Taking into account key outputs and outcomes, the social cost benefit analysis, and comprehensive stakeholder findings, an assessment is made on the extent to which each CSF has been or is likely to be met as more benefits materialise in the future.

The assessment of CSFs is presented in **Table 5.13**. This shows that the two inclusive CSFs and the deliverable CSF were met based on our mixed-methods approach. The two productivity CSFs, the sustainable CSF, and the effective CSF were only partially met, reflecting the underperformance of outputs compared to targets and the difficulties in delivering certain aspects of the programme.

Table 5.13: Assessment of critical success factors

CSF	Assessment	Conclusion
Revitalise historic high streets by investing in the repair and restoration of vacant or under-utilised heritage assets and public realm (Productivity)	Over 50% of the high streets brought vacant or under-utilised heritage buildings back into productive use, whilst 83% of high streets delivered public realm improvements totalling to nearly 120,000sqm of enhanced space. For some schemes, the amount of public realm was extensive (e.g. Swaffham).	Partially met
Meet changing consumer demands by using local historic character and distinctiveness to differentiate the high street from competitors and provide unique, curated and immersive experiences (Productivity)	Our primary research demonstrated that local residents and businesses valued the changes that have taken place, particularly maintaining the character of important buildings for the local area. Some buildings brought back into use are expected to provide valuable services and experiences to residents and visitors. For example, Swaffham Assembly Rooms operating in part as a community centre. However, there is caution over the level of change in some areas, as well as any potential productivity improvements from these interventions.	Partially met
Address negative externalities on high streets by investing in clusters of historic assets and the associated public realm, stimulating new private investments in mixed commercial, leisure, residential and community uses (Deliverable)	The HSHAZ interventions were focused on key gateway sites and heritage assets, helping to create clusters of change in areas of importance for local communities. The programme has been able to attract over £140 million of match-funding from a mixture of private and public sources, as well as connecting with complementary investments in the area to maximise impact. Our research has also identified that the programme has been able to initiate further regeneration in some areas, where businesses are delivering their own building front improvements (e.g. Leeds HSHAZ) or additional funding has been secured (e.g. Barnsley HSHAZ).	Met
Work with local businesses and communities, to ensure that local needs, knowledge, insight, and narratives drive the local investment programme (Inclusive)	The shopfront improvement schemes and building restoration works required significant collaboration with local building owners, which was largely achieved in challenging socio-economic conditions. Various delivery models were used to deliver capital and cultural strands with many examples of community empowerment and involvement across the programme. Within the two community-led schemes Hastings and Tyldesley community empowerment was the driving force behind the HSHAZ. However, in many other schemes, community voice and bottom-up approaches were also driving forces e.g. Kirkham and Selby HSHAZs. Overall, the programme is judged to be reflective of the needs and demands in the area, utilising local expertise to deliver the change.	Met

Work with a wide range of local communities in developing a greater appreciation and understanding of the heritage on their high streets (Inclusive)	The programme has demonstrated the potential for heritage-led regeneration within high street settings. As set out above, in a number of areas surrounding businesses have invested in their properties having seen the impacts from grant supported projects. Additionally, the community-led process for both the capital and cultural strand has upskilled local authority teams and partners to deliver heritage schemes in the future with several schemes looking at Partnership Schemes in Conservation Areas (PSiCA). The programme required substantial partnership-working, the benefits of which will be felt longer-term.	Met
Add economic value over the long-term by creating and facilitating new employment opportunities which can be taken up by local people (Sustainable)	As shown in Section 3.3.3 above, the HSHAZ programme has delivered an estimated 1,089 gross jobs and 716 net jobs nationally. This employment contributes £34.9 million net GVA per annum, or £0.5 million net GVA per HSHAZ per annum. The jobs are likely to be in high street dominant sectors (retail, leisure, culture) which can be occupied by local people, as knowledge of the area is a beneficial characteristic for these opportunities. For example, Lincoln's refurbished Cornhill Market has opened and has seen new businesses set up and grow.	Partially met
Provide Public Value through effective use of public resources and where relevant engaging in existing or planned regeneration initiatives to achieve wider socio-economic benefits (Effective)	As shown in Section 5.2.5 above, the value for money of the scheme is considered 'acceptable' using MHCLG ranges for benefit cost ratios. This assessment partly relies on benefits achieved and expected future benefits. Efforts should be maintained to ensure future benefits are maximised where possible. For example, supporting communities to continue to use resources (e.g. educational) created for them through the HSHAZ programme.	Partially met



Section 6

Conclusion

6 Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This section summarises the report and presents concluding messages on:

- Features of an effective HSHAZ.
- An overview of the findings underpinned using recommended process tracing methodology.
- Overarching policy debates linked to the HSHAZ programme.

6.2 Summary

The £103 million HSHAZ programme aimed to revitalise 69 high streets across England. Funding came from the Department for Culture Media and Sport, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and local public and private sector partners. The programme was delivered in a period of exceptional challenges given the global pandemic, the war in the Ukraine and the ensuing economic pressures and the continued constraints felt by local authorities. As a devolved, locally led programme it required extensive coordination, involving collaboration with over 100 delivery partners. The programme represented a significant shift by Historic England from safeguarding heritage assets to heritage-led regeneration and community engagement with culture and heritage.

The HSHAZ programme has demonstrated significant achievements in community engagement, heritage restoration, and strategic partnerships, contributing to the revitalisation of high streets across England. By securing extensive media coverage, the programme has raised public awareness and fostered a sense of local pride in heritage. The application of the RE-AIM framework has provided a comprehensive evaluation of the programme's reach, effectiveness, and adoption. It highlights the positive impact on local communities and the cultural landscape.

The programme has also faced challenges that have impacted its overall effectiveness. There were no KPIs which impacted the design of activities and monitoring systems to maximise impact upon targeted communities or understand who attended events. The reliance on key individuals within delivery teams and the varying levels of expertise among local authorities led to delays in delivery and in some cases significant rescoping of activities.

The evaluation shows that while the final outputs were in some cases below forecasts this was due in part, to overly ambitious targets. The overall value for money achieved is deemed "acceptable-medium". Several important wider impacts have emerged, whilst other are currently developing and are anticipated to deliver further positive impacts in the future from across the 66 scheme areas. The HSHAZ programme has made commendable strides in enhancing local heritage and fostering community involvement, it is essential to address the identified challenges to ensure sustainable and equitable outcomes. The evaluation has provided valuable insights into programme management practices, both centrally and at the local level. To sustain momentum and expand its impact, there is a clear need for further improvements and enhanced efforts in

engagement and delivery strategies. Future initiatives should focus on refining engagement strategies to include underrepresented demographics, establishing clear communication channels, and developing robust monitoring frameworks. By doing so, the programme can continue to build on its successes and create lasting positive impacts on the communities it serves, ultimately ensuring that heritage is accessible and meaningful to all.

The following sections delve deeper into these concluding observations, offering detailed insights into the characteristics of an effective HSHAZ, how the evidence links to key evaluation hypothesis and the broader policy debates that shaped and were influenced by the programme.

6.3 Key features of an effective HSHAZ scheme and programme

A crucial prompt from a workshop undertaken during the process of evaluating the HSHAZ programme explored the question: What are the features of an effective HSHAZ scheme?

To answer this, it is important to focus on defining what constitutes a **deliverable** and **impactful** HSHAZ, i.e. one that achieves both tangible outcomes and lasting positive change. Interviews and workshop discussions have shown that an effective HSHAZ goes beyond heritage conservation; it intertwines preservation efforts with active community engagement, sustainable development, and economic vitality.

Figure 6.1 outlines the key elements that make an HSHAZ scheme (and programme) successful by drawing upon key data from the evaluation and Historic England's own heritage-led regeneration toolkit⁴¹.

⁴¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-led-regeneration/toolkit/>

Figure 6.1: Key Features of an effective HSHAZ scheme (see also Historic England's own Regeneration toolkit, [here](#))



Culture:

Celebrate Local Heritage:

Develop programmes and events that highlight the historical and cultural significance of the high street, fostering a sense of pride and connection within the community.

Engage the Community:

Collaborate with local residents, businesses, and cultural organisations to co-create activities that reflect the unique identity of the area and encourage wider participation.

Support Creative Regeneration:

Use arts and cultural initiatives to revitalise underused spaces, attract visitors, and boost the local economy while preserving the high street's heritage.

Promote Inclusive Access: Ensure cultural activities are accessible and inclusive, reaching diverse groups and fostering a shared appreciation of the high street's heritage.

Key Features of an Effective HSHAZ Programme

Focus:

For maximum effectiveness, the programme should concentrate on a defined set of conservation areas, where cultural, capital, and community activities are geographically clustered and interconnected.

01

Community Engagement

Local involvement: Engage communities in planning and delivery.
Inclusivity: Involve diverse and underrepresented groups.
Ownership: Foster community pride and ownership.
Feedback: Establish ongoing communication channels.

02

Heritage and Cultural Impact

Preservation: Safeguard historical sites and traditions.
Catalyst for regeneration: Heritage link to all activities.
Cultural integration: Link cultural activities with community needs.

03

Programme Management and Governance

Clear governance: Define roles and accountability.
Flexibility: Adapt to unforeseen challenges.
Stakeholder coordination: Align interests across partners.
Evaluation: Use KPIs and data to track progress.

04

Financial Sustainability

Diverse funding: Secure multiple funding sources.
Long-term planning: Ensure continued support and maintenance.
Resource allocation: Distribute resources effectively.

05

Economic and Social Impact

Job creation: Provide local employment and skills development.
Economic boost: Stimulate businesses and spending through inclusive economy principles.
Social equity: Mitigate inequalities from works and prevent gentrification.

06

Environmental Sustainability

Green practices: Implement energy-efficient designs.
Adaptive reuse: Repurpose buildings sustainably rather than visual changes.
Climate resilience: Future-proof against more extreme weather.

07

Scalability Scalable

Scalable: Able to expand beyond border of focus.
Adaptable: Allow works to respond to different contexts and challenges.
Share best practices for wider use.

08

Communication and Outreach

Effective channels: Use varied media to engage the public.
Awareness: Educate communities about heritage value.
Transparent reporting: Provide regular updates.

09

Innovation and Learning

Technology use: Leverage digital tools.
Innovation: Encourage creative solutions to delivery, engagement, communications and design.
Lessons learned: Capture insights for future projects.

6.4 Process tracing

Process tracing is an effective methodological approach for illustrating and presenting information in a way that supports drawing well-founded conclusions. Recommended by the Magenta Book for evaluating programmes, particularly those operating within complex delivery mechanisms and contexts, process tracing leverages a broad spectrum of available data. This is elaborated upon in detail in the Methodological Appendix (Appendix A). **Table 6.1** outlines the primary change hypotheses alongside corresponding data, potential alternative explanations, and an assessment of confidence or inferential strength, rated on a scale from 1 (very low or no contribution) to 5 (high). Each hypothesis is accompanied by a conclusion from the evaluation team, based on the strength of evidence collected.

Table 6.1: Process tracing summary				
Hypothesis	Data available to support hypothesis	Data that challenges hypothesis	Confidence/Inferential strength for Hypothesis (5= high, 1= very low/no contribution)	Conclusion from the evaluation team
The HSHAZ programme improves high street perceptions	Attitudinal Survey Community and Audience Survey Quasi-Experimental Footfall data Difference in Difference Analysis Interviews	Attitudinal Survey Quasi-Experimental Footfall data Interviews and Workshops	3	The evidence gathered suggests a generally positive shift in high street perceptions, despite a broader trend of declining confidence in high streets. While attitudinal surveys provide some support, the backdrop of ongoing challenges facing high streets means that this evidence is somewhat tempered. The findings indicate a positive influence of the HSHAZ programme, but this is moderated by the size of HSHAZ scheme and the context of wider societal and economic factors that continue to undermine high street confidence.

Table 6.1: Process tracing summary

Hypothesis	Data available to support hypothesis	Data that challenges hypothesis	Confidence/Inferential strength for Hypothesis (5= high, 1= very low/no contribution)	Conclusion from the evaluation team
Economic and cultural growth on high streets	Value for Money (VfM) Analysis Scheme evaluations Interviews	Business case Interviews and Workshops Quasi-Experimental Footfall data	3	The evaluation points to evidence of economic and cultural growth resulting from the programme, with the VfM analysis and supporting evidence indicating positive impacts. The evidence from interviews, workshops, and footfall data shows “growth” but at a modest level compared to the initial ambitions of the programme.
Historic character restoration boosts high street appeal	Scheme plans Listing data Quasi-Experimental Footfall data Interviews and Workshops Contingent Valuation data	Interviews and Workshops Site visits	4	The restoration of historic buildings and assets has visibly enhanced the appeal of high streets, as supported by strong evidence from photos, interviewees and attitudinal surveys. Site visits and scheme plans further validate this, demonstrating a successful restoration effort that is positively received by the local communities. The restored historic character appears to have had a noticeable impact on the attractiveness of the high street areas, enhancing both their cultural value and their appeal to visitors.

Table 6.1: Process tracing summary

Hypothesis	Data available to support hypothesis	Data that challenges hypothesis	Confidence/Inferential strength for Hypothesis (5= high, 1= very low/no contribution)	Conclusion from the evaluation team
Historic England (HE) gains recognition as a facilitator of economic growth	Attitudinal Survey Cultural Deliverer Survey and Close Down Survey Difference in Difference Analysis Interviews VfM Analysis Interviews and Workshops	Interviews and Workshops	3	While the HSHAZ programme has contributed to economic growth, the evaluation presents a more complex picture of Historic England's role as a facilitator. The findings, particularly from the VfM analysis, highlight the challenges in attributing this role directly to Historic England's efforts. Nevertheless, the development of partnerships and effective collaboration between Historic England and other stakeholders suggests an emerging capacity that could foster further growth and economic activity in the future. This was a major programme for Historic England and also one of the first programme's whereby capital and cultural activities were delivered side by side. The programme showcases Historic England's evolution and direction.
Positive spillover investment effects	Scheme plans	Interviews	3	The case studies and programme monitoring data highlight a range of positive spillover effects resulting from the programme. Quantifying the full extent of these effects across all locations proves challenging due to varying local contexts and lack of monitoring data.
	Interviews and Workshops	Case studies		

Table 6.1: Process tracing summary

Hypothesis	Data available to support hypothesis	Data that challenges hypothesis	Confidence/Inferential strength for Hypothesis (5= high, 1= very low/no contribution)	Conclusion from the evaluation team
Enhanced local heritage awareness	Attitudinal Survey Cultural Survey Difference in Difference Analysis Case studies		4	Increased awareness of local heritage appears to be a clear outcome of the HSHAZ programme. This conclusion is drawn from several data sources, including attitudinal and cultural surveys, which show a heightened appreciation for local heritage among communities. Sometimes this awareness and knowledge was from a low base (very little understanding or available history of local areas). However, the evidence also highlights that while heritage awareness has generally increased, there is limited quantitative data to measure the precise scale of this change.
Enhanced partnership collaboration on heritage projects	Scheme plans	Interviews and Workshops	4	The evaluation data and evidence indicates a notable increase in partnership and collaborative efforts on heritage projects, particularly involving Historic England. Evidence from interviews, workshops, and scheme plans suggests that these partnerships are laying the groundwork for wide scale future projects. The positive trend in partnership development highlights a successful outcome of the programme, with a strong potential for long-term benefits in the heritage sector.
Cultural heritage and	Scheme plans Attitudinal Survey Cultural Survey	Interviews and Workshops	3	Whilst there is some positive evidence towards greater participation, the evaluation shows that there is no baseline position from which to gauge success. Furthermore, interviews and workshops

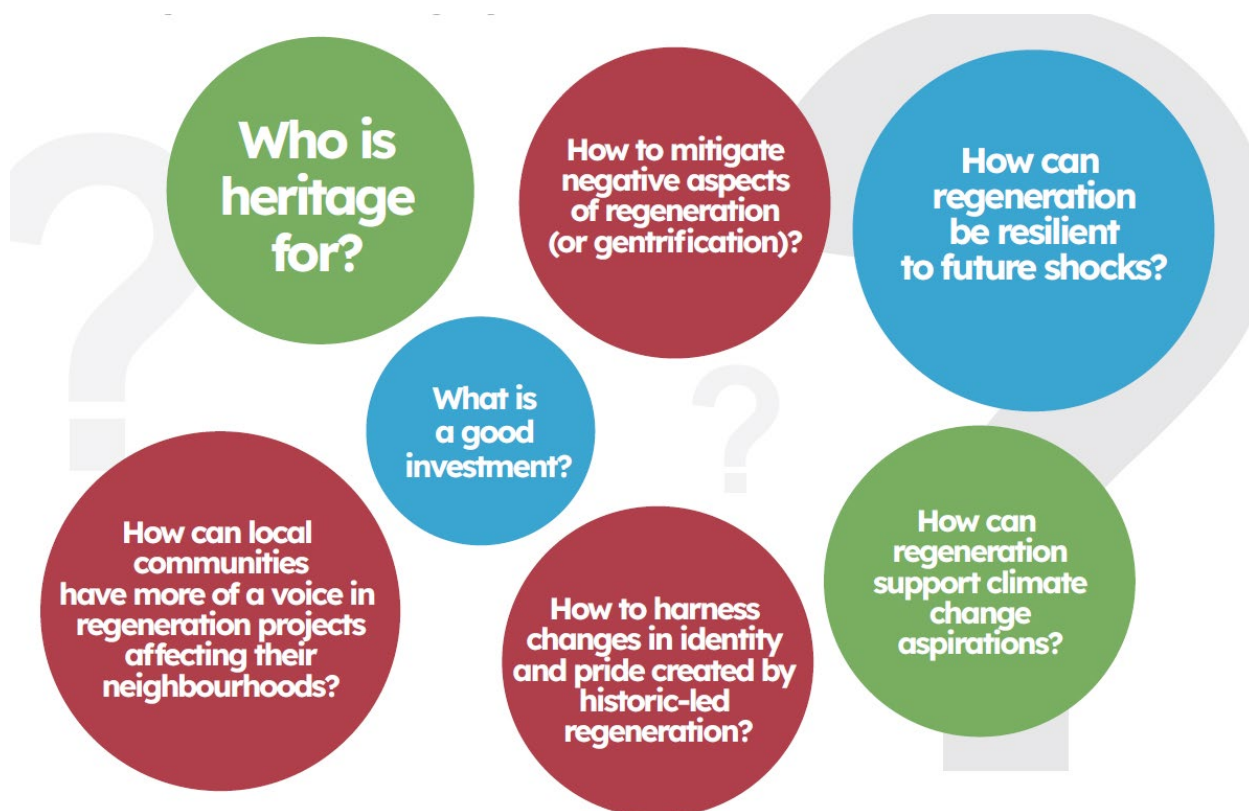
Table 6.1: Process tracing summary

Hypothesis	Data available to support hypothesis	Data that challenges hypothesis	Confidence/Inferential strength for Hypothesis (5= high, 1= very low/no contribution)	Conclusion from the evaluation team
participation grows	Interviews and Workshops			with project staff identified that any change in participation may be short-lived without ongoing support or activities.

6.5 Overarching policy debates highlighted through HSHAZ

A range of insights to key debates occurring in heritage, urban transformation and public policy have emerged through the evaluation which are relevant to highlight. The below graphic captures the key questions which are explored in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2: HSHAZ Key policy debates



The intention is not to fully explore these questions but to showcase how the HSHAZ programme is situated in connection with these policy areas and integrated itself into some compelling areas of debate and dialogue.

6.5.1 Who is heritage for?

The debate around **who heritage is for** has evolved significantly, shifting from a focus on preserving buildings as isolated artefacts of historical value to recognising the centrality of **people** in heritage-led regeneration⁴². This paradigm shift moves beyond the mere physical conservation

⁴² Varied commentators including UNESCO and English Heritage have published on this. This video from Ireland provides an accessible introduction: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPMvg6ThHgE>

of heritage assets to incorporate **community involvement**, ensuring that heritage projects serve local populations rather than just external interests, such as tourists or investors⁴³.

The HSHAZ programme highlights a growing recognition that regeneration should be as much about the **people who live and work in these buildings** as about the buildings themselves. This people-first approach focuses on the social value of regeneration, helping to create spaces that **foster community identity** and **promote cultural cohesion**.

The HSHAZ programme exemplifies an **institutional shift** for Historic England where the emphasis is not just on heritage preservation, but on **heritage as a tool for community development**. This brings into question **who benefits from these regeneration projects** and whether they are accessible and meaningful to the communities they serve.

HSHAZ programme's wide range of outputs show heritage is for everyone

The diverse range of physical outputs from the HSHAZ schemes showcases the extensive communications across various settings.

In pubs, materials such as beer mats, leaflets, and orientation guides—like those featured in the Middlesbrough pub mat exhibition—reflect significant community engagement and historical research into these social spaces. The Black Swan pub in North Walsham engaged in the HSHAZ scheme and is eager to collaborate with the council to establish usage arrangements for the Black Swan Loke Garden and has refurbished the pub to function as a non-profit community venture, positioning it as a potential cultural champion for the town.

A variety of educational resources produced by HSHAZs across Key Stages 1-4 are adding value to educational settings. The Oxford Street HSHAZ project in Reading and the 'Voices of Westgate' initiative in Wakefield HSHAZ has produced educational outputs (including comic books) aimed at celebrating local history and heritage. These resources have been distributed to local schools and libraries, fostering greater awareness among young learners. Additionally, pupils have actively participated in local heritage research, as seen in Oswestry's initiative that encourages students to design shop fronts.

6.5.2 How can local communities have more of a voice in regeneration projects affecting their neighbourhoods?

One of the debates in heritage-led regeneration is the question of community involvement. While governments, developers, and planners often lead heritage-led regeneration projects, there is a growing demand for **greater community participation** in decision-making processes, especially in shaping regeneration projects that directly affect neighbourhoods.

There are several models for involving communities in (heritage-led) regeneration, from consultative approaches to more collaborative, co-creative models⁴⁴. Successful models involve

⁴³ Jones, S. (2016). Wrestling with the Social Value of Heritage: Problems, Dilemmas and Opportunities. *Journal of Community Archaeology & Heritage*, 4(1), 21–37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20518196.2016.1193996>

⁴⁴For example: https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/_foundation/new-site-blocks-and-images/reports/2021/06/transitions_to_participatory_democracy-_report.pdf

local residents in shaping the vision for regeneration projects, ensuring that these projects reflect local needs and preserve community identity.

The HSHAZ programme often used the cultural strand as a vehicle for community engagement, promoting local heritage through arts programmes, public festivals, or heritage education initiatives. These events not only foster a sense of local pride but also allow the community to take ownership of regeneration efforts.

However, there remain tensions around how much real power communities hold in these processes. While engagement may be sought, communities often have limited decision-making power compared to developers and local authorities, leading to frustrations over perceived tokenism.

Inclusive project development in Burnley HSHAZ

The Empire Theatre project within the Burnley HSHAZ highlights adoption by focusing on the involvement of the Empire Theatre Trust and the local community in the restoration efforts. The trust's commitment to restoring public access and engaging the community in the theatre's future demonstrates how barriers to adoption, such as funding and community support, were addressed. The project aims to foster a sense of ownership and pride among stakeholders.

6.5.3 How to mitigate negative aspects of regeneration (or gentrification)?

A recurrent challenge in regeneration is the **disadvantages of gentrification**. Gentrification often leads to the displacement of lower-income residents and small businesses as property values rise, transforming the social and economic fabric of local areas.

Evaluation workshops with HE staff generated debate around the inadvertent negative impacts of gentrification in local areas. For example, where heritage-led regeneration can increase property values and displace existing communities and businesses that no longer can afford to remain in the area can have negative impacts. All of the positive and negative aspects of regeneration are not easily identified within the timeframes of this evaluation.

Beyond physical displacement, there is also the risk of cultural displacement, where the cultural practices and community identity that make neighbourhoods unique are undermined by regeneration efforts aimed at attracting external investment.

There is a growing call for ensuring that the benefits of regeneration are shared equitably⁴⁵, rather than disproportionately favouring wealthier newcomers or developers. Building in a view of how benefits will be distributed at the beginning of a programme can mitigate issues but also enhance benefit adoption.

⁴⁵ See for example from 2010: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a78fcf640f0b679c0a07a71/1795633.pdf>

6.5.4 What is a good investment?

There is a **moral and economic dimension** of regeneration investment. Questions are posed when investing around what kinds of businesses, institutions, or initiatives deserve financial backing during regeneration and whether these investments align with the broader social and cultural goals of the community.

The HSHAZ programme raises questions about the kinds of businesses that are deemed "**worthy**" **investments** in regeneration efforts. For instance, should funds be used to enhance buildings with public health concerns (such as fast-food outlets or pubs), or should priority be given to **businesses** that support the cultural and social aspirations?

Interviews for the evaluation raised queries and concern over where **capital flows** within regeneration—whether funding and ownership of regenerated sites remain within the community, or if the profits and benefits of investment are extracted by external entities with less attachment to the local area. The question of **ownership** also questions roles in regeneration and whether investments should favour **community ownership** and control over assets, or if inward investors should be incentivised.

6.5.5 How can regeneration support climate change and sustainability goals?

While not a central focus of the HSHAZ programme, the relationship between heritage-led **regeneration and sustainability is an area of increased interest**. There is growing interest in how regeneration efforts can support environmental sustainability, both in terms of reducing carbon footprints and in making buildings more resilient to future environmental changes.

HSHAZ schemes incorporated sustainable practices in their restoration efforts. The "Higher Bullring Public Realm Improvements" in Cullompton HSHAZ aimed to enhance the public space with green landscaping and high-quality materials, contributing to a more sustainable and attractive environment for the community.

Heritage-led regeneration can contribute positively to sustainability goals through the reuse of existing buildings, which helps reduce the environmental impact of new construction. Retrofitting historic buildings with modern, energy-efficient technologies can also **reduce carbon emissions and embodied carbon** and make heritage buildings more sustainable in the long term.

Historic buildings can present environmental challenges. However, **balancing historic preservation with the need for energy efficiency** is a growing debate, and the HSHAZ programme has shown that innovative solutions are possible, though not always easy to implement.

6.5.6 How can regeneration be resilience to Future Shocks

The ability of urban areas to withstand **future shocks**—whether from economic downturns, social unrest, or environmental disasters—has become a key area of focus following the Covid-19. The pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of urban environments to sudden crises. The HSHAZ programme demonstrated the importance of creating projects that are economically resilient ensuring that places and buildings are able to remain flexible and pivot towards changing market conditions (e.g. community, retail or tourism).

Engaging communities in regeneration efforts builds social resilience, as communities with strong local networks are better able to withstand external shocks. The social infrastructure that HSHAZ schemes have fostered—through cultural strand and local involvement—can strengthen this resilience.

Future shocks also include environmental crises, and as climate change becomes a more pressing concern, regeneration efforts need to focus on making heritage buildings and urban areas more climate-resilient, ensuring that they are protected from the effects of extreme weather, flooding, and other climate-related challenges.

6.5.7 How to harness changes in identity and pride created by historic-led regeneration?

Pride in historic-led regeneration quote:

"This [HSHAZ celebration event] made me think that History is for everyone."

Pride and identity emerged as central themes throughout the HSHAZ programme, consistently evident in interviews, workshops, and social media analysis. Participants across various schemes expressed **immense pride in contributing to HSHAZ**, which fostered a stronger connection to local heritage and a sense of ownership within communities.

Initiatives, such as Wakefield HSHAZ's youth engagement and Weston-super-Mare's lecture series attended by 600 locals, highlighted how HSHAZ has cultivated pride and cultural resilience. This sense of identity raises questions around the extent to which heritage-led interventions can foster local pride and identity, and how this focus on heritage impacts community cohesion, cultural resilience, and local development.

Pride in historic-led regeneration quote:

"I think I now know more about Selby's history than people who've lived here for a number of years, and that is purely because I went to these events."



Section 7

Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

7 Lessons learnt and recommendations

These recommendations are organised into three categories: evaluation recommendations for informing future evaluation work within Historic England and beyond; delivery recommendations, which build on the evaluation findings to enhance programme delivery; and a broader set of exploratory recommendations for further consideration.

7.1 Future programme delivery recommendations

To enhance future programme delivery, several key recommendations emerged from the evaluation of the HSHAZ programme.

Lesson Learnt 1: Whilst deemed to be complementary, the separate strands (capital, culture and community) did not always interact or work together.

Flexible frameworks for interweaving capital, community and cultural activities: Separating capital and cultural management activities allowed for specific tracking of financial allocations. However, it also led to a divide that did not reflect the intended integrated nature of delivery. In several schemes, capital and cultural aspects were closely intertwined but in others the separation was obvious and to the detriment of the scheme. This led to confusion and/or a lack of communication between project stakeholders. Interestingly, delivery across strands sometimes converged due to existing working relationships. Furthermore, the community strand was not visible despite having separate aspirations and ambitions. The programme could have benefitted from a flexible framework that enables these components to be co-developed and delivered closer together albeit reported separately, enhancing both project cohesion and overall outcomes.

Lesson Learnt 2: Culture and heritage assets can provide benefits to people and businesses that engage with them but without a focus upon people as beneficiaries, the values that individuals or communities receive from culture and heritage are unknown or missed.

More direct focus upon people within programme planning, design, and delivery: There is a movement towards greater focus upon ‘people’ within heritage conservation and regeneration. Across the HSHAZ programme, further focus upon ‘people’ (e.g. audiences or communities) could shape efforts to engage residents and underrepresented demographics in heritage. This also highlights the importance of KPIs, targeted communications, data collection and outreach focused upon beneficiaries.

Lesson Learnt 3: Greater focus on programme management principles at the beginning of the HSHAZ programme could have helped to direct resource allocation. Additionally, enhanced programme management processes (e.g. whole programme level organograms and on-boarding processes) could have overcome issues such as the variability in resources and project management skills across Historic England and delivery partners, which affected delivery consistency.

Adding clarity to complex programmes through programme management principles: Establishing clear governance structures and clear communication links is crucial for enhancing

accountability and streamlining decision-making. As the programme scaled up with increased funding and complexity, the demand for robust planning became greater. Updating the business case as well as greater peer or professional review could have supported a greater focus upon objectives and outputs at an interim stage.

The earlier introduction of a defined governance framework with specific roles and responsibilities for stakeholders, such as local authorities, contractors, and community groups, could have resulted in improved communication, quicker issue resolution, and more efficient decision-making. This clarity could have ensured smoother project execution, transparent oversight, and greater overall success.

Stronger focus on timings, early planning and risk management: For future programme success, more planning time or earlier planning and risk management will be essential components. Historic England could have received specialist advice in evaluation, programme setup, funding, and local authority relationships earlier which could have supported more effective mitigation of issues. Specialist expertise can help avoid common pitfalls and implement proactive mitigation strategies. Collaboration with other recipients of DCMS funding could also benefit delivery. By sharing knowledge and best practices, Historic England can navigate funding complexities and improve coordination. Additionally, offering training to delivery partners, especially community organisations (as done through HSHAZ) but also local authorities, will enhance project management capacity and ensure smoother execution throughout the programme.

Lesson Learnt 4: The evaluation highlighted the absence of clear Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the programme as a significant drawback. There were several critical success factors, outputs, and outcomes sought from the programme delivery. However, without associated KPIs, tracking progress and measuring success is challenging.

Measurable and understood KPIs, goals and objectives: To ensure effective monitoring and alignment across schemes, it is essential to establish clear, measurable goals, objectives, and KPIs. Developing balanced scorecards that incorporate both qualitative and quantitative indicators (e.g. metrics for community wellbeing, social cohesion, local economic growth, and environmental sustainability) can provide a comprehensive view of success. Alongside tracking physical restoration, consistent data collection systems should assess the programme's social, cultural, and economic outcomes, enabling regular evaluation and continuous improvement. For example, engaging people in heritage could have been broken down to engage underrepresented demographics, especially younger audiences.

Although it is more difficult to establish targets for cultural activities prior to establishing the programme of events, consideration should be given to this in future funding programmes. Success in a project extends beyond meeting deadlines and budgets. It requires achieving intended outcomes, creating lasting impacts, and addressing stakeholder needs. Flexibility is also crucial—proactively negotiating with central government or other authorities can help adapt to challenges and maintain the project's relevance and effectiveness throughout its lifecycle.

Lesson Learnt 5: Where conducted well, community engagement emerged as one of the programme's most popular components, with numerous scheme projects demonstrating the importance of involving local communities in both cultural or capital design and delivery. This

hands-on approach for schemes fostered a strong sense of ownership and pride. However, challenges remain in reaching underrepresented demographics.

More direct community engagement: Targeted outreach and inclusive strategies are essential to bridge these demographic gaps and ensure that all voices are represented. Communities can (and many argue, that they should⁴⁶) be more deeply involved in programme and project planning. While some HSHAZs have successfully engaged communities, there is the potential for further embedding of community participation throughout development. Approaches such as citizen panels, design charrettes, or community visioning sessions enable local input into project direction and details. These participatory methods ensure that future initiatives align with local priorities and cultural nuances. Active engagement from the outset helps integrate community perspectives into decision-making, while ongoing communication channels allow for continuous feedback, ensuring the project remains relevant and builds lasting support.

Establish strong communication lines and ongoing dialogue: Creating continuous communication channels with delivery partners helps maintain relevance and responsiveness throughout project implementation. Regular feedback opportunities allow adjustments to be made based on local needs and preferences, strengthening trust and commitment. Delivery forums and where possible 1-2-1 online support are valuable channels for this ongoing dialogue.

Continue to build upon local linkages: Integrating local history and cultural significance into regeneration efforts reinforces the area's unique character and fosters community pride. By embedding cultural elements designed by local individuals/organisations/communities into project design, heritage initiatives can resonate more deeply with residents, enhancing the project's relevance and long-term acceptance. Understanding local traditions, stories, and landmarks adds authenticity and creates a connection that residents are proud to support.

Inclusive economy approaches to business and employment integration: HSHAZ and other heritage projects can risk benefiting external agencies, businesses or contractors without creating local economic gains. Learning from inclusive economy approaches such as the Preston Model⁴⁷ and other social value techniques, it is possible to introduce policies prioritising local businesses, employment and skills, ensuring that heritage projects further benefit the community. For example, this could further encourage contracts that support local businesses, artisans, craftspeople, or heritage specialists, creating economic ripple effects within the community.

Ensure inclusivity in outreach: Engaging underrepresented demographics, particularly young people, should be a priority to cultivate future stewards of heritage. Developing targeted outreach strategies, such as working with local schools, youth groups, and social media campaigns, can effectively connect with younger audiences. This inclusivity ensures that the benefits of heritage-led regeneration extend across all segments of the community.

Lesson Learnt 6: The decentralisation of decision-making within the HSHAZ programme brought both benefits and challenges. Local authorities gained autonomy to tailor projects to their communities, which enhanced relevance and responsiveness. However, when decision-making

⁴⁶ https://www.thersa.org/globalassets/_foundation/new-site-blocks-and-images/reports/2021/06/transitions_to_participatory_democracy-report.pdf

⁴⁷ <https://www.preston.gov.uk/article/1791/The-definitive-guide-to-the-Preston-model>

was too removed from the programme's core objectives and oversight, it led to inconsistency, strategic drift and challenges in monitoring. The balance between decentralisation and oversight is fine but is needed.

Balancing delivery and collaborations with local partners: Balancing flexibility with strategic alignment is essential to ensure that local adaptations serve overarching goals. The HSHAZ programme fostered strong partnerships between the private sector, non-profits, local authorities, and cultural institutions to maximise resources and impact. The programme encouraged collaboration among stakeholders to share resources and knowledge to drive collective impact. Building upon this, Historic England will need to continue cultivating local linkages which will ensure that future (regeneration) activities resonate with residents and reinforce community pride.

Lesson Learnt 7: HSHAZ has seen innovation in a variety of forms; everything from delivery (e.g. CIC's delivering heritage-led regeneration) to digital tools and interactive virtual storytelling helping to unlock heritage for communities.

Continue to encourage innovative approaches: Fostering innovation in its broadest sense is essential to breaking new ground and exploring how heritage regeneration can be more engaging and impactful. By adopting creative ideas, delivery mechanisms and emerging technologies, future programmes can enhance community engagement and find new ways to bring heritage to life.

Lesson Learnt 8: The programme benefitted from regular audits and reviews which led to changes. This showed the evolution of programme management for Historic England.

Establish regular "Health Checks" for programme components: To ensure the ongoing relevance and success of HSHAZ schemes and projects, it is essential to manage the programme in stages, incorporating periodic independent and internal "Health Checks." These reviews should assess each programme component against original goals and KPIs, ensuring alignment and identifying any necessary adjustments. Internal reviews and community feedback should be integrated to maintain accountability, relevance, and effective resource allocation. The timing of these health checks should be set during the business case development as part of the management case.

Maintain flexibility in programme delivery: Resilience and adaptability are crucial in regeneration, where unforeseen challenges often arise. Flexibility within programme delivery enables project managers to respond effectively to unexpected changes, whether financial, logistical, or environmental. This approach allows for adjustments to be made, ensuring the project remains viable and aligned with strategic goals.

Ensuring a long-term legacy: For HSHAZ projects and schemes to be sustainable beyond initial funding, there must be mechanisms for ongoing maintenance and community involvement. This includes establishing dedicated maintenance plans, identified and secured future funding through partnerships and local investments, and fostering local ownership through community-led initiatives. By engaging residents from the outset, projects can also maintain their cultural and physical integrity beyond initial funding, ensuring continued relevance, care, and long-term success for the high street.

Continue to encourage collaboration: Effective programme delivery requires collaboration between local authorities, businesses, and community organisations. By fostering partnerships, resources can be shared, and collective impacts are amplified. Encouraging multi-stakeholder involvement ensures diverse perspectives are considered and helps build a robust support network for project success.

Lesson Learnt 9: The evaluation had a strong focus upon data, but the programme did not always leverage the diverse data sources to enhance decision-making, output tracking, and community engagement. This also led to skills issues identified around the use of data platforms and emerging technologies.

Increase the use of data and technology across Historic England: The programme's potential to utilise data and technology is far broader than the scope and scale implemented during the programme. This is particularly the case given the often exploratory 'feel' to these tools (e.g. using PowerBi to display data) rather than reliance on established best practices (e.g. integrating automated data pipelines into Power BI to ensure real-time updates and consistent reporting). Furthermore, integrating diverse data sources, such as footfall, local economic patterns, and heritage site characteristics, can significantly refine programme design and support innovative decision-making. Digital platforms could also transform project tracking and community engagement; for example, using interactive dashboards to visualise data insights in real-time. Investing in staff training is key to enabling them to experiment with these evolving technologies, boosting project delivery and fostering deeper, more dynamic engagement.

Lesson Learnt 10: HSHAZ interviewees and workshop participants identified disbenefits from heritage-led regeneration which may inadvertently lead to local challenges. Disbenefits including gentrification, displacing long-term residents due to rising property values and increased polarisation of areas were cited as observed or potential issues.

Tackle disbenefit concerns: To mitigate risks around disbenefits, implementing proactive measures within programme design such as affordable housing commitments, community benefit agreements, and policies that prioritise the needs of existing residents. For some schemes, exploring flexible or mixed-use developments that incorporate spaces or use for social benefits like community spaces, social housing or spaces for start-ups (or local artists and essential workers), could help shape regeneration promotes inclusivity and prevents the displacement of vulnerable communities. The negative issues require long term tracking to understand how the regeneration has impacted local areas.

7.2 Wider recommendations

To further enhance heritage-led regeneration efforts, several additional recommendations can support a more inclusive, resilient, and community-centred approach. These insights focus on celebrating local heritage, fostering partnerships, and building adaptability into project frameworks.

Lesson Learnt 11: The evidence reviewed for this evaluation shows mixed results connecting pride, identity and the HSHAZ projects. There are some promising data outputs (connected to heritage engagement and footfall) which require further exploration. The results of the surveys

differ from the qualitative insights from the case studies, speaking to delivery partners leads and wider stakeholders connected to delivery.

Explore the role of local history and pride and identity: The relationship between heritage, history, and pride or identity is not fully understood. Understanding it further can provide invaluable insights into ways that future regeneration programmes are designed. This may also provide rewarding intersection for policy makers; helping to align national priorities with local values, building trust where disconnection or need has been observed and creating a programme that appeal across political spectrum.

Lesson Learnt 12: The educational benefits from the HSHAZ programme vary from scheme to scheme but are also likely to be realised over the longer term. A challenging element to evaluate which was viewed as overwhelmingly positive was any heritage and cultural education initiatives or outreach undertaken across HSHAZ schemes.

Promote cultural and heritage education: Educational activities, particularly targeting younger generations, can ensure a lasting appreciation of local heritage. Incorporating heritage education into local schools and youth-oriented programmes helps young people develop a sense of identity and ownership, inspiring future advocates for heritage conservation. The impact of cultural history education activities such as this for the longer term should also be greater understood and, looking at examples from other sectors, is believed to be a valuable approach. Lessons from sectors such as environmental, education, or public health initiatives could provide insights into designing programmes that instil long-term engagement and behavioural change. By adapting these strategies, heritage education could more effectively inspire sustained interest and action among younger generations.

Lesson Learnt 13: Programmes with a hard-stop often lack sustained impact. The HSHAZ programme has seen various positive legacy projects but more structured approaches to building long-term partnerships with local stakeholders, such as businesses and community organisations, can create a robust support network that ensures sustainability and enhances the programme's lasting relevance.

Explore approaches to strengthen local stakeholder partnerships over the long term: Building lasting partnerships with local businesses, cultural institutions, and community organisations is key to strengthening the impact of heritage programmes. Some schemes and projects within the HSHAZ programme were believed to have been short term with little long term legacy. Developing relationships can ensure both sustainability and that projects gain access to valuable resources, local expertise, and community connections, all of which contribute to more effective delivery. Over time, these partnerships can create a robust support network, enhancing the resilience and long-term success of heritage initiatives while ensuring they remain relevant and well-supported within the local context.

Lesson Learnt 14: The pandemic highlighted gaps in organisational preparedness for large-scale disruptions. Future programmes should incorporate comprehensive crisis resilience strategies to address potential challenges such as economic downturns, environmental events, and geopolitical risks.

Incorporate crisis resilience planning: As many evaluations in recent years have reflected, very few organisations had a pandemic on their programme risk lists. As such, challenges in responding to the pandemic had little precedence or guide. However, the pandemic and increased geopolitical risk mean that to ensure programme continuity and adaptability, future programme working should incorporate more robust crisis resilience planning. When reviewing the macro potential challenges, economic downturns, conflict and environmental events have been identified as more likely according to industry commentators⁴⁸ and pan Governmental bodies⁴⁹, meaning that planning for organisations, programmes and projects needs to better consider this.

Lesson Learnt 15: HSHAZ has shown that transforming historic buildings for contemporary and sustainable uses is important. Examples throughout schemes of community hubs or mixed-purpose spaces showed great promise for greater economic and cultural returns. However, this requires further exploration and could be interwoven into activities further.

Explore most impactful changes to heritage assets and communities: Adapting historic buildings for new purposes, such as community hubs or mixed-use spaces, offers greater economic and cultural benefits than other capital works. Adaptive reuse preserves a building's heritage while meeting contemporary needs, boosting local economies, and creating vibrant neighbourhoods. Cosmetic changes may enhance appearance, but they fail to provide long-term value or sustain the building's function. By focusing on reuse, we ensure the continued relevance of historic buildings, creating spaces that blend the past with the present for lasting community impact.

Integrate sustainability goals more centrally into heritage projects: Long-term sustainability should be a core principle of future projects and programmes, encompassing environmental, social, and economic dimensions. By integrating green building practices, promoting local employment, and considering long-term maintenance needs, projects can align with broader sustainability goals and remain valuable community assets well into the future.

Lesson learnt 16: The programme's communication strategies and monitoring systems required greater focus and structure. A lack of defined KPIs and focused data collection hindered the ability to accurately assess the impact and reach of the communications. Future initiatives should prioritise clear communication frameworks and robust monitoring practices to ensure effective evaluation and improved outcomes.

Strengthen Programme Communications: In future, there should be clear communication strategies with targeted outreach to underrepresented groups, ensuring all stakeholders are well-informed and engaged throughout the programme.

Implement Robust Monitoring and KPI Frameworks: When starting a new programme, developing and integrating Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) from the outset, alongside a comprehensive monitoring system to ensure accurate data collection, enabling better tracking of programme impact and outcomes.

⁴⁸ https://www.ey.com/en_uk/insights/geostrategy/2024-geostrategic-outlook

⁴⁹ <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-risks-report-2024/digest/>

7.3 Evaluation recommendations

This section outlines lessons learnt from the evaluation and the broad recommendations which can support future evaluation activities:

Lesson Learnt 17: Broader evaluation frameworks provide greater insight into the process, impacts and value for money.

Wide and comprehensive evaluation framework: The evaluation demonstrates the benefits of adopting a comprehensive evaluation framework, moving beyond the narrower focus often seen in public policy assessments. Implementing the RE-AIM framework—covering Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance—has allowed for a well-rounded view of programme outcomes. This approach will allow Historic England (and sector) evaluators across culture, heritage and sport with valuable insights into the dimensions essential for capturing the full impact of heritage-led regeneration efforts.

Lesson Learnt 18: Evaluation guidance was not provided to partners at the beginning of the schemes, leading to inconsistencies in analysis and local insights.

Evaluations guidance provided to partners at project inception: Provide partners with clear, Government best practice⁵⁰ compliant evaluation guidance to standardise evaluation processes. This guidance should include specific methodologies, metrics, and reporting formats, ensuring all partners follow a consistent approach. The guidance would also make it easier for partners to deliver evaluation and collect robust data. By doing so, data collected will be comparable across different regions, enabling a more accurate analysis of outcomes at the local level. Additionally, offering training or workshops on applying this guidance can help partners understand expectations and improve the overall quality and reliability of the evaluations. This will support better decision-making and evidence-based policy adjustments in the future.

Lesson Learnt 19: The data collection mechanisms were not adequately structured or maintained, which limited the ability to monitor or evaluate the programme fully.

Programme and scheme monitoring: Implementing robust monitoring systems at the start (to baseline) is essential to track progress and deliver confidence. A comprehensive monitoring framework for Historic England that includes regular data collection and analysis can track progress and outcomes more accurately. This ongoing monitoring would provide a steady flow of information, helping project managers make informed decisions throughout the programme and adjust strategies as necessary. Evaluation partners should have a more prominent role in shaping monitoring documents and resources.

Longer term evaluation: Monitoring and data collection should not be limited to the programme's active phase. Longer-term evaluation is equally critical to fully understand the impact and legacy of the intervention. Establishing mechanisms for ongoing evaluation after the programme concludes can help capture data on sustained outcomes, long-term benefits, and any unintended consequences. This approach enables organisations to assess whether the

⁵⁰ As outlined in the HM Treasury's Magenta Book.

programme's results align with its original goals over time and whether benefits endure beyond the initial implementation period.

Lesson Learnt 20: Historic England had varied reporting mechanisms and definitions which were addressed later on in the programme in some instances. Establishing from the start, common definitions and standardised reporting outputs can ensure that confusion or issues do not emerge later.

Standardising reporting outputs: Defining terms used across the programme (e.g. output definitions or definitions around terms like 'footfall') and setting common reporting standards minimises the risk of misinterpretation and ensure that metrics are consistently understood across stakeholders. Consistent definitions and metrics will allow for more accurate comparisons and clearer communication of outcomes.

Lesson Learnt 21: HSHAZ has shown how data driven decision making can unlock different impacts and changes. Historic England now has access to a wealth of data and information to shape activities. Data collection should come with a clear appraisal of what an intervention is seeking to impact.

Continue with data-driven decision-making: To shape more defined goals around communities to be impacted by interventions, Historic England may want to collect and analysing demographic and engagement data. This data can also inform more targeted strategies and outreach efforts, making initiatives more effective. Historic England were able to use collected data to tweak programme design and future approaches should tailor approaches based on data. Programmes can more effectively address the unique needs and characteristics of each community, ultimately leading to stronger, more inclusive outcomes.

Final Reflections:

The HSHAZ programme has demonstrated the transformative potential of heritage-led regeneration, engaging hundreds of individuals in delivering impactful works, activities, and projects. Through collaborative efforts with local partners, Historic England has fostered a sense of ownership and pride within communities, helping to revitalise high streets and preserve cultural heritage.

Both Historic England and partners have gained valuable insights from the programme, equipping them with the knowledge and experience to assess and implement future initiatives more effectively. The programme has highlighted the importance of responding to local needs, creating strong partnerships, and ensuring sustainable long-term benefits.

As one business owner in Tyldesley, a funding recipient in 2022, noted: *"This is definitely a story of where people have asked for something, and Historic England have said, 'Yeah, let's support it.'"*

This sentiment reflects the programme's success in empowering local voices and translating community aspirations into tangible outcomes, reinforcing the role of heritage-led regeneration in shaping high streets.

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