

# Wellbeing and Heritage



# Wellbeing and heritage: our impact 2022-2025

The first three years of our wellbeing and heritage strategy has seen a step change in Historic England and the heritage sector.

Wellbeing is now embedded into our corporate plan priority for Better Places and we're supporting staff to deliver through learning modules and bespoke resources.

This shows up in the passion the heritage sector and our staff have in making a difference to people's lives, our partnerships with others, grant giving and innovative research and development. In this short report we highlight the impact heritage and wellbeing has had.



Participants in the Shipley Glen Tramway project next to the bandstand in Roberts Park, Baildon

‘Love around  
the Corner’  
© Kejal Nemani



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**Your Historic England wellbeing and heritage strategy is widely respected and valued across the heritage sector.**

Anon heritage sector survey respondent

# Building capacity and empowering the heritage sector



Facilitators of "Flower Crown" workshop at the Happier Festival event at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. A day of creative activities, community connection, health and fitness

**Historic England works with partners, across the heritage and wellbeing sectors, to build understanding and capacity.**

We share best practice, understand new developments, create opportunities for collaboration, so we create the right conditions for wellbeing and heritage work to have a sustained impact.

Learning and listening are crucial to developing work in this space.



The "Orchard café" shop owners, staff and customers with the raised beds, planted as part of Greening the High Street project

As a result, we have worked to both present information we have gleaned and created opportunities where we can learn from others through the following and more

- A new sector-wide Heritage and Wellbeing Working Group, created and run with our partners the Council for British Archaeology.
- 1 national conference on wellbeing and heritage at Delapré Abbey.
- 7 formal presentations across 4 continents.
- A wellbeing and heritage policy group for Ireland, Scotland, Northern Ireland, England and Wales.
- 17 cross-sector webinars.
- 5 bespoke events showing how heritage works for heritage and health sectors, including working with vulnerable adults, and 'Prescribe Heritage' for link workers.
- 2 new Communities of Practice for the heritage sector (on research / evaluation and social prescribing), run with the Council for British Archaeology, for the heritage sector.

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# Wellbeing and Heritage Conference

We organised the first UK Wellbeing and Heritage conference with the Council for British Archaeology, Southampton Institute for Arts and Humanities and Delapré Abbey in 2024.

It brought together over 140 practitioners from heritage and VCFSE sectors and government to discuss policy, evaluation, social prescribing, mental health, equality and inclusion.

Almost 90% of participants said they would incorporate new approaches into their work as a result.

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**The benefits [of heritage social prescribing] have been amazing for those people, it's been more influential on improving their mental health than clinical processes are.**

Adrian Paul-Stott, Social Prescribing Link Worker for the Gorleston Primary Care Network

Wellbeing & Heritage Conference participants talking at Delapré Abbey, Northampton.  
© Linda Monckton



# Innovation, research and development

We test and pilot new ways of working so we can bring the wellbeing benefits of heritage to more people.

From youth engagement to tackling loneliness and isolation, we're creating grant funded programmes that work in partnership across youth, wellbeing, social care and education to reach people where they are.



Young people in Rotherham painting a mural to celebrate Slovak and Roma heritage as part of History in the Making 2024. © Ai Narapol

- 18 wellbeing and heritage pilots exploring what works for whom and how.



to bring together older people with a parish council in Swindon and Age UK in Bristol for reminiscence and social connection.

- Young offenders gained a more positive outlook on the future, achieved qualifications and skills through the 2-year Kent Rejuvenate programme, which was cited by case workers as the best reparation project they had ever seen.

- 99-97% of our Heritage Schools teachers agreed the programme has helped their students create a sense of place and increase their pride in the local area.

- 82 young people involved in History in the Making, building wellbeing, skills and sense of place with 83% agreeing they felt more confident and more positive; 95% agreeing they had developed new skills and 88% agreeing they learned something new about their local area.

- Over 70 local people with mental health challenges and isolation in Great Yarmouth, Gorleston, and Lowestoft benefitted from the Heritage Link Worker project with significant wellbeing improvements, and 28% reduced their medication usage and 26% reduced their use of GP services.

- More than 100 Buddies and Connectors were trained in partnership with Natural England and Frome Medical Practice to promote wellbeing through heritage and local opportunities increasing confidence and understanding.



celebrated local heroes through the national blue plaque scheme, building place attachment and belonging.

- 75% of participants in Greening the High Street had opportunities to improve their mental health and 58% improved their physical health.

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# Project Rejuvenate

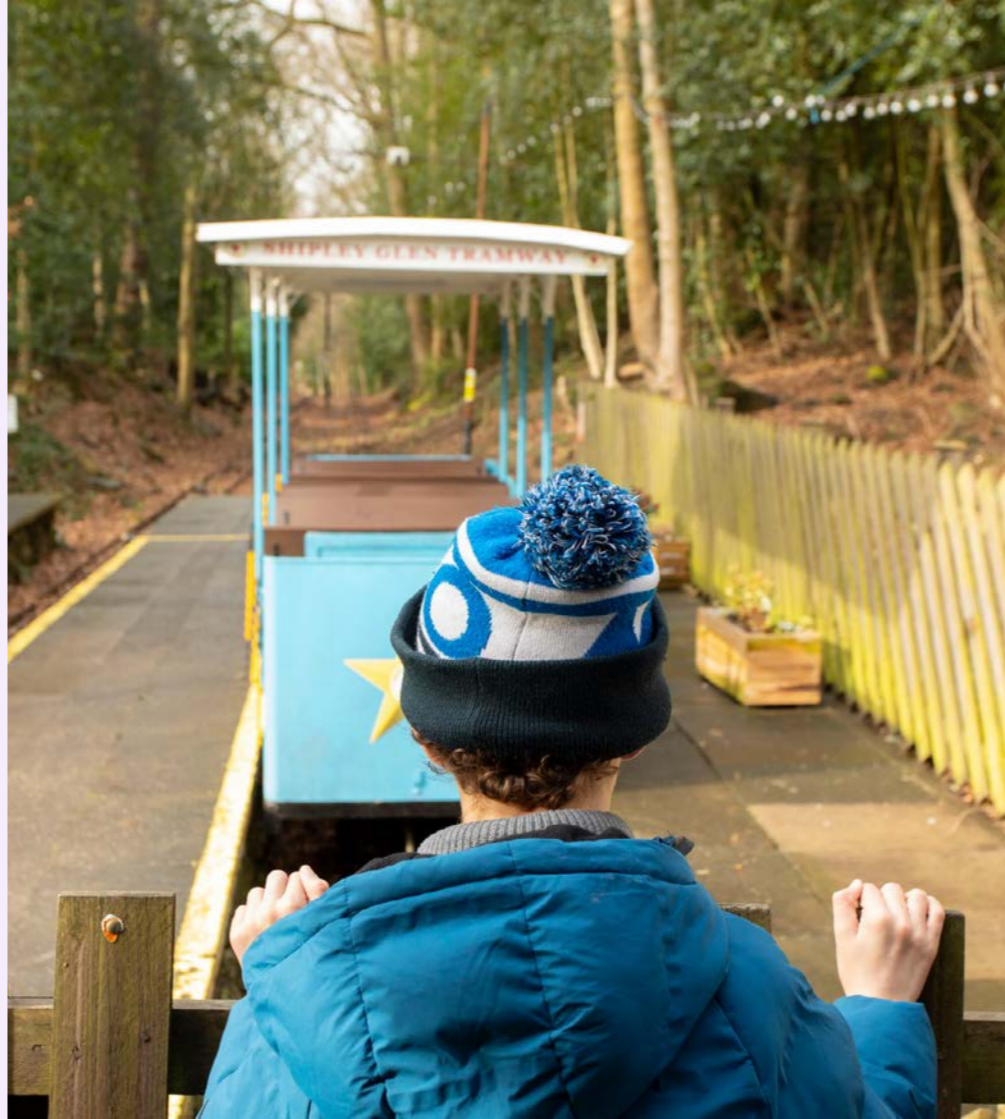


Young people examining the finds of a test pit.  
© Wessex Archaeology

**The school Rejuvenate project worked with children struggling to engage with and attend school - it resulted in 89% of children being more in control of their behaviour within school, with an increase in attendance of 6.9% compared to a control group.**

There was a 28% rise in their ability to feel heard and feel pride.

2 years after the programme, 100% of participants still had improved attendance, compared to 42% off the control group; attendance gains reached over 14% for some children (averaging 7%).



Disabled young people about to ride the historic Shipley Glen Tramway as part of their project to create a fully accessible interpretative marker for the site. Part of History in the Making 2025

# Partnerships to deliver at scale

**2 Million** people attended high street cultural programme events, with 87% of people reporting an increased pride in place as a result.

- From tackling loneliness and isolation to building pride in place, over 42 projects and programmes across Historic England had specific wellbeing outcomes, that reach an estimated 3.6 million people.
- Know Your Neighbourhood reducing loneliness and isolation created 159 volunteers and 4,983 event participants.

- An ongoing secondment with the National Academy of Social Prescribing (NASP) embedding the potential of heritage into social prescribing.
- New voluntary sector partners, such as Age UK and Churchworks as well as health partners including Frome Medical Practice, Queen Alexandra Hospital and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust.
- International engagement included advice to all the devolved states of the UK and 4 non-UK countries and joint working through our 'five nations' group (Ireland and whole of the UK).

- Over 10,000 volunteers participated in High Street Heritage Action Zone cultural programmes with a wellbeing benefit of £1.2 million.

**1.2 Million** school children working through heritage we build belonging and pride in place through 6,000 teachers trained in heritage schools.

- 255,857 people participated in cultural programme workshops building community cohesion, pride in place and wellbeing.



# The Kirkham Heritage, Health and Wellbeing Programme



The Cotton heritage dance performance by the About Time Dance Company in Kirkham October 2021. © Jenny Reeves (About Time Dance Company)

The Kirkham High Street Heritage Action Zone chose to embed wellbeing from the beginning by developing a Heritage, Health and Wellbeing programme - co-designed and co-produced with the local voluntary sector, local communities and local authorities.

The resulting benefits range from improved mental and physical health for the participants, increased life satisfaction and community wellbeing and deepened local pride and belonging.

# Evidence and insight

**We build a picture, underpinned by robust evidence and insight, of what works when it comes to heritage improving wellbeing.**

This evidence is for everyone to use and supports our overarching wellbeing and heritage strategy.

- Evidence on how heritage can be used for social prescribing and how it can contribute to improved mental health, social connectedness, and resilience, with potential to be used successfully in cross-sector initiatives to address health inequalities.
- Evidence review and pilots showing how heritage can be used to address loneliness through places, archives and objects being catalysts for shared experiences, bringing reductions in anxiety and social isolation.
- Evidence on how heritage helps with the wellbeing of older people through which we see how heritage is a highly effective mechanism for sharing, storytelling and creating safe places; supporting people with conditions from dementia to sight-loss.



A portrait taken as part of the Lens Lab Project in Chapeltown, Leeds  
© Solomon Charles-Kelly

- Life Satisfaction research, as part of the Cultural Heritage Capital programme, showed how the overall wellbeing value of residing in close proximity to heritage is estimated to be worth £29 billion per annum.
- 5 other research reports have been on topics including wellbeing and heritage research gaps; supporting young people through heritage and social prescribing, creating case studies and baseline evidence for others to use and develop.
- Evaluating older people's heritage and wellbeing project report and learnings with CADA and Age UK, where we learnt how participants are our greatest assets and feeling heard was a key factor in creating a successful community.
- Co-design with visually impaired communities through Unpath'd Waters and Banbury Heritage which leads towards best practice.
- We have developed and published a new Social Impacts Framework soon to be piloted.

Business residents greeting each other outside the South Street Kitchen, Park Hill, Sheffield



# Life Satisfaction Research



Cabmen's Shelter, Northumberland Avenue at the junction with Embankment Place, London. Grade II listed

The 'Heritage Capital and Wellbeing: Examining the Relationship Between Heritage Density and Life Satisfaction' report brought robust economic evidence that heritage makes a significant contribution to people's quality of life.

It shows that the overall wellbeing value for people's day-to-day encounters with heritage is estimated to be worth £29 billion every year – whether they participate in heritage activities or not.



Consortia Christmas Gathering participants in the Byram Arcade, Huddersfield

Heritage for Wellbeing  
participant drawing  
at a session outside  
Framlingham castle  
© Restoration Trust



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As a team we have definitely noticed [an increased knowledge about wellbeing effects of engaging in heritage]. We now know how to support it, some were a bit cynical about it to start with, but when we went along and saw how people can benefit from it and what is available it really changed our views about it.

Social Prescriber, Frome Medical Practice

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## Heritage Social Prescribing Advice Hub

As a result of all pilots, research and collaborative work undertaken in the last three years, we have gathered a plethora of resources, including case studies, evidence reports, films, webinars and toolkits that we are sharing with the heritage sector and wider partners through our Wellbeing and Heritage web pages.

In the area of social prescribing, we have built a separate Heritage and Social Prescribing Advice Hub, together with our partners The National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP), which offers two practical guides - for social prescribers and heritage professionals, more than 30 case studies, dozens of videos, articles and evidence reports.

The Advice Hub was built in collaboration with the sector-wide Heritage and Social Prescribing Community of Practice, and the Social Prescribing Link Workers Advisory Group, co-ordinated by NASP.

### Futher resources

[Heritage Social Prescribing Advice Hub](#)



Project participants in the award-winning heritage social prescribing project “Heritage Link Worker - Heritage for Wellbeing” during an archaeological dig visit at Arminghall Henge, Norfolk.  
© The Restoration Trust

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Front page image: Attendee of "Flower Crown" workshop at the Happier Festival event at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. A day of creative activities, community connection, health and fitness

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