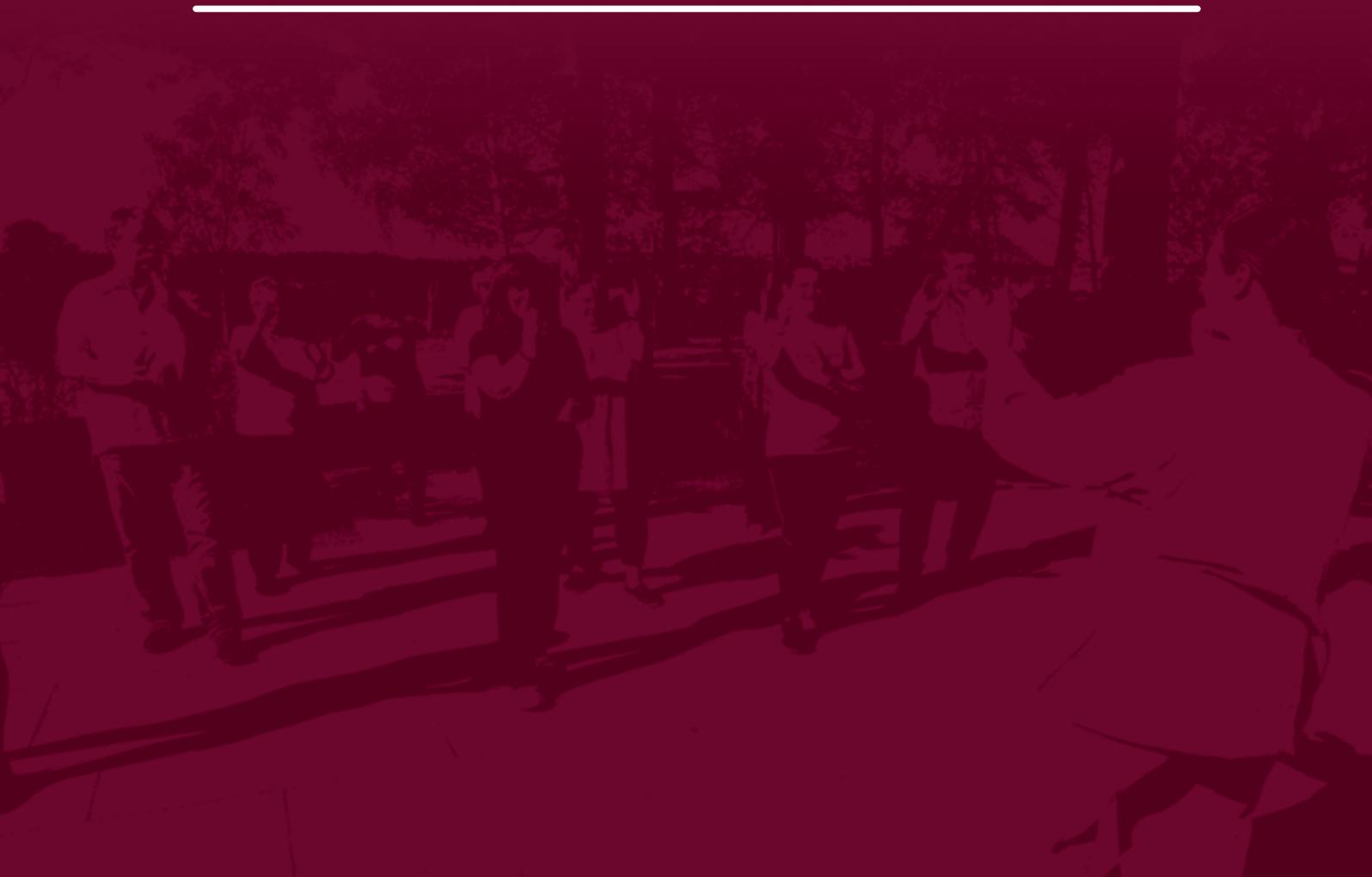


# The Heritage Alliance

## Heritage, Health and Wellbeing

A Heritage Alliance Report

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# Foreword

## Message from the Chair

Joy, happiness and thoughtfulness have rarely been more needed than now. We have all faced our own challenges this year. But our country's heritage has still provided much needed respite. Heritage is not just old stuff. It connects us, provides a sense of rootedness and place, and is vital to understanding who we are and what we would like to become. From historic landscapes, beautiful places and objects, to a wealth of online resources, our shared history has provided the backdrop to supporting our nation's wellbeing at a time of crisis.

This is not a new phenomenon. The Heritage Alliance's members have been supporting the wellbeing of their local communities since long before lockdown began. Often this contribution to national happiness, to connectedness, is overlooked.

This report aims to demonstrate the immense potential of our sector to make a positive impact on mental health and the pleasure of being together in places that encourage thought and reflection and activity and friendship.

Almost everyone knows that the current model of healthcare needs to be changed to involve preventative medicine, and to help people to live more fulfilled, healthier lives.

Our heritage organisations are facing many acute financial pressures. COVID-19's impact is likely to be felt for many years to come. But this is an opportunity to reflect on a different and deeper purpose and mission. We need to embed wellbeing at the very heart of what we do.

The case-studies contained within this report demonstrate the transformative power of heritage. What do an evening of Zen, bellringing, Stonehenge and digging the battlefield of Waterloo have in common? You'll find out here.

I hope that our recommendations will increase our sector's potential to help those who need help most.

**Peter Ainsworth**  
Chairman, The Heritage Alliance

# Foreword

## Message from the Minister for Sport, Heritage and Tourism

Heritage forms an essential part of Brand Britain. It is the envy of the world, with our outstanding built history and breath-taking landscapes. Heritage is also unique in its ability to combine the tangible with the creative, supporting both physical and mental wellbeing in a myriad of ways.

The last few months have made many of us reflect on our own wellbeing like never before. Many have turned to their local heritage sites for support. Where they have been able to remain open, urban parks and open spaces have provided a lifeline for communities. Our magnificent historic gardens have been the setting for reunions with families and friends, and virtual exhibits have provided imaginative resources for those of us who have been home-schooling our children. Digital courses and resources have entertained and inspired those unable to venture out.

As we move forward, heritage should remain instrumental to supporting our wellbeing and building a brighter future for our nation.

Heritage helps to strengthen our towns and cities, levelling up places across the country and fostering close community cohesion. This report demonstrates the fantastic work that is happening right across this country and highlights the huge potential benefits of effective partnerships.

Closer collaboration across the heritage and health sectors will be more important than ever before, and is something that I am passionate about supporting.

DCMS sectors, from Arts and Heritage to Tourism and Sport are often seen as 'nice to haves', but for many they are an essential part of what makes life worthwhile. As argued in DCMS' 2016 Culture White Paper, culture creates inspiration, enriches lives and improves our outlook on life. I hope that this report gives confidence to heritage organisations and health services alike that innovative partnerships can - and will - bear fruit.

**Nigel Huddleston MP**  
**Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage**

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**"It is too easy to take our heritage and its benefits for granted, what this report demonstrates is a proactive and creative sector that is relevant to the needs of our communities and actively contributing to society."**

**Louise Stewart,**  
**CEO, Alexandra Palace**

**"This report confirms what anyone working in heritage already knows: that places look after people as much as people look after places. Health and wellbeing are at the very top of public policy concerns right now, and the heritage sector has a huge amount to contribute given the significant levels of personal satisfaction that working in and with the past brings. By refocusing on personal health and wellbeing, heritage sites can explore new operational models that will help to make them more sustainable in the longer term."**

**Ben Cowell, Director**  
**General, Historic Houses**

# Introduction

Our heritage is our national story. And as we rebuild our society after the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, it has an integral role in the nation's future wellbeing. From the physical benefits of exploring heritage landscapes, to the positive impact historic sites can have on mental health, there is clearly a role for the past to play as we move into a healthier, happier future.

Our 2017 Heritage Debate - *Is Heritage Good For Your Health?* - explored the ways in which heritage can improve individual wellbeing.<sup>1</sup> This report builds on that work, and showcases some of the best practice and innovation by Alliance members across the country. Members engage with local communities in a variety of ways - through projects empowering disabled adults to put on a club night in Alexandra Palace, or Yoga classes in the historic Powderham Castle, and photography sessions to understand our historic environment.

Heritage has a unique role to play in promoting both societal and individual wellbeing. It offers the intangible: a sense of rootedness and identity, of place and understanding. It can also provide tangible benefits; volunteers at heritage sites feel more confident, and volunteering boosts their social skills. Providing spaces and activities which offer these benefits will be more important than ever as we move away from the immediate impact of COVID-19. We predict a concerted focus on health as we move out of the pandemic, and organisations that put wellbeing at the forefront of their future strategy are likely to thrive. Research commissioned by specialist insurer Ecclesiastical and The Heritage Alliance (carried out before lockdown) discovered two-thirds (69%) of heritage organisations that responded prioritise wellbeing as an outcome of their work, while two in five (40%) say wellbeing is 'extremely' or 'very' prioritised as the outcome of their work.

Despite this, there is more that can be done. Heritage organisations need to continue to consider wellbeing as fundamental in their future organisational strategies as the sector rebuilds after COVID-19. Equally, the health and care sector must harness the unique offer of heritage, and recognise the multiple benefits interacting with heritage can bring. True collaboration - a proper, joined up approach between the heritage and health sectors - is to the benefit of all. This report considers these challenges and proposes a number of recommendations to address them.

## This report includes three sections:

1. A brief overview of the intersection between heritage and wellbeing and the work that has been completed to date, and a summary of our findings.
2. A set of case studies to illustrate the huge amount of work taking place that promotes wellbeing across the heritage sector.
3. A series of recommendations for the heritage sector, the health and care sector, and government to properly celebrate and embrace the role heritage can play in boosting wellbeing.

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**"Our national heritage is our biggest attraction to overseas visitors. It is our calling card to the world, making an unmatched contribution to our quality of life, well-being, mental health and social cohesion."**

**Lord Kirkham,  
Lords Debate 21 May 2020**

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**"What the NHS does is life-saving. But what the arts and social activities do is life-enhancing."**

**Matt Hancock  
(Secretary of State for  
Health and Social Care),  
Speech 6 November 2018**

# What Do We Know?

## What do we mean by wellbeing?

Wellbeing is both an individual and a societal state. The World Health Organisation (WHO), in a statement which has not been altered since 1948, defines health as a *'state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'*.<sup>2</sup> In 2020, WHO added that health and wellbeing 'are influenced by a range of biomedical, psychosocial, social, economic and environmental factors that interconnect across people in differing ways and at different times across the life course'.<sup>3</sup>

Chiefly, according to the New Economics Foundation (NEF) definition, 'wellbeing comprises two main elements: feeling good and functioning well'.<sup>4</sup> These depend on mutually reinforcing factors such as personal security, employment, environment, community, and health. As a result, wellbeing is both a symptom and a cause of all-round optimal functioning at both individual and societal levels. The What Works Centre for Wellbeing states that, 'simply put, it's "how we're doing" as individuals, communities and as a nation, and how sustainable that is for the future'.<sup>5</sup>

In 2008, the UK Government commissioned NEF to develop accessible but evidence-based actions for wellbeing, comparable to the 'five-fruits-and-vegetables-a-day' campaign. NEF found that positive relationships, community interactions, movement, learning, and mindfulness promoted happiness, self-esteem, and life satisfaction, with enhanced individual and community wellbeing overall. NEF's report, *Five Ways to Wellbeing*, identified five key actions: '**connect; be active; take notice; keep learning; give**'.<sup>2</sup>

The case studies included in our report show that engagement with heritage can facilitate, often simultaneously, all five of these actions.

## What is the policy context?

Good health and wellbeing for all, at every stage of life, is Goal 3 of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, a set of 17 urgent global actions that was adopted by Member Nations in 2015.<sup>6</sup> In the last two decades, wellbeing has played an increasingly important role in policy formulation around the world.

In 2008-9, the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (also known as the Stiglitz-Sen-Fitoussi Commission) was created by the French Government to investigate alternative measures to GDP, which was felt to be inadequate in capturing all elements of living standards and inequalities.<sup>7</sup> Countries across the world and several international bodies have developed national strategies and alternative sets of indicators, intended to boost individual and societal wellbeing.<sup>8</sup> The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) *Better Life Initiative*, for example, developed in 2011, identifies 11 dimensions as being essential to people's lives "here and now", ranging from health status and education, to the quality of the local environment, and subjective well-being.<sup>9</sup>

In the UK, interest in wellbeing has taken a similar trajectory. In 2007, the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) was developed following an initiative from NHS Health Scotland. The 14-item and 7-item scales can be used in a variety of locations and contexts, and enable the measurement of general population wellbeing and the evaluation of individual policies and programmes.<sup>10</sup> In

2010, in an initiative from the UK government, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) was asked to lead the Measuring National Wellbeing project and develop measures of subjective wellbeing.<sup>11</sup> This project defined wellbeing by reference to 10 dimensions, which cover areas of life such as health, natural environment, personal finances, and crime, using both subjective and objective data. In 2018, the UK Government updated the Treasury's Green Book (the framework it uses to appraise policies, programmes and projects) to include specific reference to wellbeing.<sup>12</sup> The devolved governments have also developed their own specific frameworks which are used to incorporate wellbeing into policy outcomes: the Scottish National Performance Framework, and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015).<sup>13</sup>

Whilst wellbeing has been recognised as a key indicator of progress, this has not always translated into positive policy action. In a comprehensive overview of different countries' approaches, the OECD notes that 'there is currently no blueprint or "best practice" model for successful implementation of well-being policy', and that countries follow different paths for ensuring that wellbeing is integrated into government strategy.<sup>14</sup>

In the UK, the What Works Centre for Wellbeing (established in 2014) shares research with government, businesses, and third sector organisations to aid decision-making and provide support during programme formulation and evaluation phases. Its belief is that 'improving people's wellbeing is the ultimate goal of effective policy and community action'.<sup>15</sup>

## Why is wellbeing important?

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded years of health inequality in the UK and crises in the NHS. It has increased mental and physical ill-health across populations and caused delays to normal healthcare provision, with significant long-term impacts on both individuals and health and social care services.<sup>16</sup> Wellbeing has never been more important and must be part of the strategy for recovery. Later in this report, we show emerging evidence that heritage is playing a part in the recovery effort by providing a space for people to meet outdoors in a controlled environment.

In 2010, the Commission on the Social Determinants of Health published *Fair Society, Healthy Lives: The Marmot Review*, which demonstrated how people from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately affected by poor health.<sup>17</sup> Despite the review's recommendations, the 2020 follow-up, *The Marmot Review 10 Years On*, found that 'years in ill health have increased and inequalities in health have widened.'<sup>18</sup> This has been tragically shown by the disproportionate impact of the coronavirus upon disadvantaged communities, and on people from Black communities in particular.<sup>19</sup> Although the causes of these inequalities are systemic, *The Marmot Review 10 Years On* explores a 'health-in-all-policy' approach to addressing them, in which stakeholders at national and local level must all work towards wellbeing goals.<sup>20</sup> In order for the heritage sector to join these efforts, it must confront challenges to inclusivity and access. The DCMS Taking Part Survey has found that

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities and people from disadvantaged socio-economic groups are less likely to engage with heritage,<sup>21</sup> and this must be addressed as a priority if the sector is to support wellbeing and work towards social justice. Inclusivity will be considered in more detail as we consider the challenges facing heritage organisations later in this report.

Good physical and mental health are essential components of wellbeing. In the last few decades, chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer have increasingly impacted the population, accounting for an estimated 89% of deaths in the UK.<sup>22</sup> Meanwhile, 1 in 6 adults experiences at least one diagnosable mental health condition in any given year.<sup>23</sup> Although there are complex, systemic causes of these conditions, promoting wellbeing as a goal encourages people to engage in health-enhancing behaviours, and a high level of wellbeing in turn makes these behaviours more sustainable. According to the Public Health White Paper 2010, wellbeing brings 'reduced health risk behaviour (such as smoking), reduced mortality, improved educational outcomes and increased productivity at work.'<sup>24</sup>

In addition to the impact upon individuals and communities, the increasing incidence of chronic conditions, alongside an ageing population and funding pressures, have placed unprecedented financial strains on the NHS. 70% of total health and care expenditure in England is associated with the treatment of long-term health conditions;<sup>25</sup> obesity alone costs the overall economy £27bn,<sup>26</sup>

and mental health conditions have an overall economic cost of £105bn a year.<sup>27</sup> Pre-dating the COVID-19 pandemic, the House of Lords Select Committee on the Long-term Sustainability of the NHS reported that, 'Our NHS, our "national religion", is in crisis.'<sup>28</sup> The Committee noted that spending projections made by the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) were 'equivalent to a real increase in health spending of almost £100 billion over the next 15 years',<sup>29</sup> and as the OBR predicts a renewed 'pressure to devote a higher share of GDP to the NHS and wider care services' as a result of COVID-19, this will likely only increase.<sup>30</sup>

In order to address both ethical and financial considerations, the government and the NHS have committed to personalised, place-based, and preventative models of health and social care centred around wellbeing and the community.<sup>31</sup> These objectives have been established by several policy documents including the *NHS Five Year Forward View* (2014) and the *NHS Long Term Plan* (2019).<sup>32</sup> In 2018, DCMS launched *A Connected Society: strategies for tackling loneliness*, which highlights the links between people's social relationships and 'social wellbeing' to their overall health and wellbeing. The strategy aims to reduce the stigma around loneliness, support schemes to reduce loneliness at the local level, and expand social prescribing, a growing component of the shift to personalised care.<sup>33</sup>

Social prescribing is a means for healthcare professionals to refer patients to link workers, who can direct them to programmes such as arts activities, community gardening, or volunteering in social enterprises. One aim is to relieve pressure on GPs: up to a fifth of patients see their GP for non-medical issues, with an estimated total cost of £400 million per annum.<sup>34</sup> Although more evidence is needed on the effectiveness of social prescribing, the Social Prescribing Network (launched 2016) found a social return on investment (SROI) of £1.20 to £3.10 for every £1 invested within the first year.<sup>35</sup> While social prescribing could, in some cases, shift the financial burden of care from the NHS to organisations that cannot afford it, it can provide an opportunity for the heritage sector to demonstrate its capacity to support wellbeing. Indeed, much work is already taking place that could be "on prescription", but this has not been properly documented with outcomes. This may be facilitated in future by the National Academy for Social Prescribing, which was established in October 2019 to standardise the social prescribing practices available and promote partnership across the health, local government, and cultural sectors.<sup>36</sup>

**"Yet these places [museums, galleries, historic buildings] can help with recovery from the current crisis by bringing benefits to national mental wellbeing with relaxing, peaceful, unpressured but stimulating environments."**

**Baroness Altmann, Lords Debate 21 May 2020**

## How can heritage support wellbeing?

It is already recognised that culture can support wellbeing. In 2016, the DCMS Culture White Paper argued that culture ‘creates inspiration, enriches lives and improves our outlook on life’, fosters social cohesion, and contributes to the economy.<sup>37</sup> In 2017, the report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, *Creative Health*, found that, ‘engagement in the arts is consistently seen to enhance wellbeing and quality of life in people of all ages’, and that this is essential for the prevention and treatment of chronic health conditions.<sup>38</sup>

A growing body of evidence has demonstrated how heritage in particular is beneficial for wellbeing. *Heritage and Society* (2019), produced by Historic England on behalf of the Historic Environment Forum as part of their Heritage Counts series, found that engaging with or living near heritage is associated with higher life satisfaction and quality of life. The research highlighted the therapeutic effects of historic landscapes and ‘blue’ and ‘green’ spaces (such as canals, rivers, and historic parks), and the importance of shared identity and connection.<sup>39</sup> Increased wellbeing also benefits the NHS and the wider economy: a 2015 study led by Daniel Fujiwara estimated that visiting heritage sites saves the NHS over £193.2 million through reductions in GP and psychotherapy appointments, with a further contribution of £105.1 million from museums.<sup>40</sup>

Heritage’s offer is varied and provides opportunities for all five of NEF’s wellbeing actions – connection, mindfulness, activity, learning, and contributing to the community – and often several at once. This means that overall wellbeing returns may be greater than those for sport or arts alone, and Fujiwara et al have found that visiting heritage sites has a positive impact on wellbeing equal to or larger than doing other activities, such as playing sports or visiting libraries.<sup>41</sup> Visiting is only one way to access the wellbeing benefits – heritage offers opportunities for volunteering, involvement in community projects, and treatments for health conditions, and it forms an essential part of the built and natural environments.

Heritage volunteering, which accounts for 5.5% of all voluntary work undertaken in England, can have particular wellbeing benefits.<sup>42</sup> Interest in heritage unites people: an investigation of 32 East Anglian voluntary conservation groups found that interest in heritage was the common denominator that brought people together on projects.<sup>43</sup> Heritage sites offer volunteers opportunities to develop new skills, connect with new people and places, access enjoyable physical activity, and give back to the community. As showcased later in this report, the Inspiring Futures project, a training and volunteering programme which ran across ten heritage sites in Greater Manchester, calculated an SROI of £3.50 for every £1 invested.

75% of volunteers reported a significant increase in wellbeing after a year, and 60% reported sustained wellbeing for 2-3 years afterwards. 30% of volunteers soon found employment as a result of skills gained, which is itself a key determinant of wellbeing.<sup>44</sup>

Heritage can provide healing spaces and activities for people living with particular conditions, such as dementia and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This work has been spearheaded by Professor Helen Chatterjee and her colleagues at University College London and several partner organisations. They led the three-year *Museums on Prescription* project, which involved 86 social prescribing schemes in museums, outcomes of which included improved mental wellbeing and reductions in depression.<sup>45</sup> Further research has investigated the benefits of object-handling for people receiving care or medical treatment, including women undergoing treatment or screening for ovarian cancer,<sup>46</sup> mental health service and neurological rehabilitation clients,<sup>47</sup> inpatients in a large central London hospital,<sup>48</sup> dementia patients,<sup>49</sup> and socially isolated older adults.<sup>50</sup> The studies have demonstrated a statistically significant increase in participant wellbeing, and suggest that heritage can have a therapeutic impact in part through the opportunities for reminiscence and reflection that it provides.<sup>51</sup>

Museums are not the only heritage spaces to have offered wellbeing-focused programmes. This report showcases the benefits of archaeology for the mental health of former soldiers: ‘Operation Nightingale’, established in 2012 by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation in conjunction with the Rifles Regiment, and enabled by heritage organisations like Wessex Archaeology, is a programme of archaeological excavations intended to support the recovery of service personnel and veterans experiencing physical and mental trauma. The programme reduced symptoms of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, renewed skills, and gave participants a sense of self-purpose.<sup>52</sup>

Historic England, in a comprehensive overview of heritage and wellbeing research (2018), has suggested a mixture of ‘transactional’ and ‘emotional’ benefits at play in these projects. ‘Transactional’ benefits include social inclusion, new skills, exercise, a sense of purpose, career progression, intergenerational contact, and community development. The emotional, ‘intangible’ benefits range from connection to a place and feelings of stability or comfort, to a stronger sense of community identity, and perspective gained through exploring past narratives and lives.<sup>53</sup> The complexity of emotional experience means that causality is hard to measure, but both visiting statistics and studies suggest that these intangible properties give heritage its unique appeal and bring significant wellbeing benefits.

Heritage offers many opportunities for connection, activity, mindfulness, learning, and giving, in part because of its links to shared histories and identities, and its ability to connect places and people. Heritage makes an environment special to its community and pleasurable to experience, both of which are important for wellbeing. The National Trust’s *Places That Make Us* report (2017) showed that the amygdala (an area in the brain which processes emotion) was activated by any place deemed special by an individual, and their subsequent report, *Why places matter to people* (2019), found ‘a link between having a deep-rooted emotional connection to a place and having a better sense of wellbeing.’<sup>54</sup> Of people surveyed in the report, 58% were connected to aspects of natural heritage such as coastlines, farmland, and woodland, 36% to urban locations, towns, and villages, and 15% to a specific historic building or grounds. Over two thirds of the total said they would be negatively affected if their special place disappeared, which is higher (74%) among those connected to a historic site.<sup>55</sup>

As 99.3% of people in England live less than a mile from a listed heritage asset,<sup>56</sup> and the 2016/17 Taking Part survey showed that 94% of adults agreed or strongly agreed that “‘It is important to me that heritage buildings or places are well looked after,” heritage is clearly a vital and highly valued component of our towns and cities that should be considered when assessing building use and town planning.<sup>57</sup>

The 2019 Heritage Counts research from Historic England has shown that the re-use and retrofit of historic buildings can significantly reduce carbon emissions and support wellbeing. However, as ‘poor retrofit and poorly considered solutions [...] threaten the building and the wellbeing of its occupants’, responsible refurbishment and retrofitting should be a priority in the shaping of a healthier and more sustainable environment.<sup>58</sup>

The 2019 Taking Part survey highlighted that the key reasons people visit heritage sites are to spend time with family and friends (42.4%), and a general interest in heritage or history (41.6%). Taking part in sport and a desire for a second visit were also key factors (11.9% and 17.4%, respectively).<sup>59</sup> Simply put, the power of heritage lies in its ability to combine these interests: five ways to wellbeing, and all in one place.

# Our Findings

There is a huge amount of work already going on across the Alliance membership to boost wellbeing. As already discussed, the importance placed on measuring and improving wellbeing has only increased in the last decade, and in the face of COVID-19, this trend is likely to continue. This report contains over 30 case studies from across the sector, supporting wellbeing in a myriad of ways. Despite differing approaches and aims, many organisations have similar experiences.

**Heritage organisations are already supporting the nation's physical and mental wellbeing through a huge number of projects and schemes.** To take just one example, in Human Henge, walking with intent in ancient landscapes, people with mental health conditions living locally met over ten weeks at the historic sites of Stonehenge and Avebury. This creative exploration of the historic landscape provided significant improvements to the participants' mental health when examined one year later.

**For many, this is not an explicit goal - but the benefits are still there.** Work carried out by heritage organisations is not always done so with wellbeing in mind, but the positive impact is still apparent. For example, many historic houses across the country host parkruns, weekly 5km running events that are free to enter and run by volunteers. In 2018, one-hundred years after the end of WWI, Ringing Remembers brought together over 2,000 ringers to ring bells to mark the centenary of the Armistice.

This had obvious physical benefits - steep steps to climb to the top of bell towers, combined with the physical exertion of ringing heavy bells.

**Heritage is unique in providing a sense of community cohesion, an opportunity for reflection, and an understanding of place.** In Layers of History, Heritage Lincolnshire tapped into the role of heritage in understanding our place in the world by offering over 200 volunteers the opportunity to discover, understand, and investigate the less obvious historical features of Lincolnshire's Bardney Limewoods. This greatly benefitted the wellbeing of those who took part, with one participant calling it a 'very magic moment'. Historic places of worship, like Gloucester Cathedral, provide a backdrop to supporting individual and community wellbeing.

**The wellbeing benefits of heritage are amplified if participants are allowed the autonomy to guide their own learning.** In the Churches Conservation Trust's Quay Place, the Sporting Memories charity ran a weekly session for individuals living with dementia to reflect on their memories of playing or watching sport. The weekly activity was led by the membership - who resisted some initiatives and embraced others more willingly than expected. This demonstrates that by giving participants the space to shape their experiences, the potential increase in wellbeing is multiplied.

**Heritage helps individuals who would otherwise be at risk of exclusion from mainstream society by teaching them new skills. These skills stay with participants long into the future.** For example, the Inspiring Futures project, aimed at supporting volunteers into long-term jobs, provided ten weeks of training and a six-week placement at a partner organisation. The programme provided participants with high improvements in their self confidence, sense of purpose, and sense of belonging.<sup>60</sup>

**A focus on wellbeing can also improve the sustainability of heritage organisations.** For example, in the Seventeen Nineteen Craft Skills Programme, construction apprenticeships, practical learning sessions, and a programme of hard hat tours provided concrete skills for the individuals who took part, and also helped to protect Holy Trinity Church from falling into disrepair. By encouraging the development of new skills in a heritage context, the sector can boost its own sustainability, while at the same time supporting the future of the young people involved.

**Wellbeing should be at the heart of the strategy of heritage organisations as we rebuild the sector after COVID-19.** People are focused on their own physical and mental wellbeing, as well as that of their loved ones, after COVID-19, and will be seeking ways to improve it. By placing wellbeing at the centre of a future strategy, as venues such as Powderham Castle and Alexandra Palace have done, heritage organisations can thrive.

This report, and the case studies it contains, demonstrate the positive work Alliance members are carrying out to improve and support wellbeing in their communities. Many of the case studies in this report were made possible through effective collaboration between organisations. Working together, the heritage sector can support our nation's wellbeing, and indeed by focusing on wellbeing in their future strategies, heritage organisations can help to build their own resilience. Support from the government in recognising the role heritage can play would be welcome, as well as greater understanding in the medical community of the benefits of interaction with heritage.

**"The social benefits of heritage range from increased social cohesion and a greater sense of identity to improved wellbeing and better learning and skills outcomes."**

**DCMS Heritage Statement**

# "Going Viral"

COVID-19 lockdown digital health and wellbeing response



**Image: L-R** "Well City" Pilot - Drawing of a Anglo-Saxon Workbox by a participant with a vision impairment achieved by manipulating a Sketchfab rendering of the artefact. Bath Abbey colouring sheet. Lost & Found session participants. © Wessex Archaeology Ltd

**COVID-19 lockdown measures forced Wessex Archaeology to stop all public engagement events. In response, they had to rapidly find new ways to maintain their public benefit outputs by creating innovative digital solutions, and targeting those who could no longer access heritage and whose health and wellbeing was being affected by social isolation.**



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



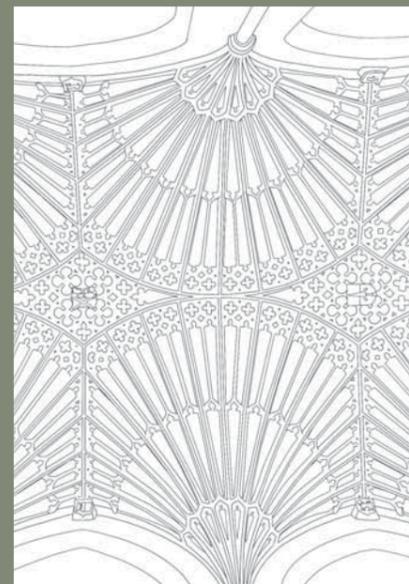
Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give



The online response was multi-faceted, and costs were absorbed as R&D time. One product was a 'Moment of Calm' series of 360-degree panoramic videos of heritage landscapes uploaded on their YouTube Channel and shared on social media. This simple mindful offering resonated with the public, significantly increasing digital engagement figures. Another was 'Drawing on Heritage': a creative offering on social media converting heritage sites and artefacts into line drawn versions for colouring, promoted with videos of their production and blogs. A series of webinars were held to deliver heritage talks to online audiences working with partners such as Bristol Libraries. This had the effect of supporting other organisations lacking the resources and increased audience numbers and geographical reach.

A "Well-City" digital pilot was created to see if Wessex Archaeology in partnership with Salisbury Museum could offer an online heritage engagement activity and help fill gaps in routine for individuals with mental health challenges stuck at home and unable to access local support services. For five participants, over the course of five facilitated 90-minute sessions, Wessex Archaeology shared heritage images, videos, participant's work and 360-degree Sketchfab objects, with optional tasks to do between sessions. Evaluation was conducted using the short WEMWBS tool and qualitative assessment forms via email before, after and between sessions. This allowed participants to respond to the session immediately thus enabling us to capture fresh and up to date feedback, all of which was informative and encouraging; the course was having the positive effects we set out to achieve in relation to wellbeing through participation in the programme.

A key insight was creating the psychological safety for this group to participate online via a pre-meet to familiarise participants with the platform. Feedback on access and inclusion informed the development of the Historic England Emergency Fund "Lost & Found" project enabling online participants to discover and learn about artefacts hidden in archives and then selecting objects to be curated via 3-D scanning as exhibits in a virtual museum gallery.

**"I like the virtual tour – it made me feel like I want to learn more. A real chance to see behind the scenes ..... One of the joys of this pilot is that there's things to do."**

**"Good to see everyone again .... That was therapeutic for my brain – thank you."**

# Alexandra Palace:

## Wild in the Park



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give



**Alexandra Park and Palace, located in North London, was created in the mid/late 1800s for the purposes of public entertainment, education and recreation. Following years of dereliction caused by fire and financial difficulties that left the Palace on the Heritage at Risk Register, 'Ally Pally' has been reinvigorated as a successful venue and cultural destination in the past two decades and restoration continues.**

Wild in the Park provides children and young people with opportunities to explore their own creativity and wellbeing through outdoor learning and environmental consciousness raising activities. The programme grew from a pilot project that sought to combine regular outdoor learning and ongoing therapeutic support for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties between the ages of five and sixteen years.

The programme was designed and is regularly reviewed through extensive consultation with local young people, Haringey Pupil Referral Unit, Forest and Family, and local stakeholders.

Participants on Wild in the Park programmes collaborate with a range of specialists from different fields including artists, art therapists, life coaches, forestry school educators and wildlife/conservation experts. Activities range from designing public art trails, creating sensory trails for people who live

with mental health issues and people with dementia and their careers, as well as conservation initiatives such as monitoring bird migration, building insect hotels, den-making, seed bombing, wildlife garden, growing fruit and vegetables. All activities are focused on enabling young people to bond through shared experiences, to develop resilience and make life-long friendships through accomplishing unique challenges.

As the programme continues to grow, participants can see that their work leaves a footprint on the park and a lasting legacy for future park users and communities to enjoy. This was seen as an essential feature of the programme design by tutors working with children with social, emotional behavioural needs.

Evaluating the impact of the programme is challenging, particularly measuring wellbeing over short timeframes. Attendance and retention is also challenging, as many young people with social, emotional and behavioural issues will experience difficulties in regularly committing to sessions. The observations of the tutors and support workers, and their knowledge about the young people's progress, has so far provided the best measure of the programme's impact. For example, one teacher in the Pupil Referral Unit said: 'we've seen a significant shift in the pupil's behaviour back at school'.

Images: L-R Creative Learning ©Lloyd Winters



# Alexandra Palace:

## Rhythm Stick



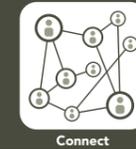
**Rhythm Stick is a club night run by and for people with disabilities. The project creates a regular social space for people with disabilities in Alexandra Palace's newly restored theatre.**

Rhythm Stick is designed to combat loneliness and isolation for adults in the disabled community, as well as provide opportunities for them to develop a greater sense of social independence by supporting the development of work-based skills, employment opportunities and improved social capital.

Leading up to each live event, 15 participants come together once a week over ten weeks to participate in a training programme in events management, including shadowing opportunities, placements, talks and visits. Alexandra Palace world-class events teams use their expertise, network and influence to develop and deliver the training programme, and support the participants to develop skills that will enhance their future employment opportunities, as well as make new friends by bonding over the unique experience of making Rhythm Stick.



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Keep Learning



Give



A steering group, made up of ambassadors from the local disabled community including local specialists working within this field, oversee the project. The steering group have helped design the training programme, and act as advocates for the event.

The Steering Group contributes and monitors project design, delivery and evaluation. The group has contributed to setting initial outcomes, targets, baselines and evaluation techniques for the programme. The steering group continually reviews and monitors success against agreed outcomes and targets.

The feedback of all those working on the event was overwhelmingly positive. One programme producer commented that the thing 'that stuck out for me is the ways in which inclusive spaces are positive and rewarding experiences for everyone (disability or not).' Similarly, one participant in the programme said

that "(The best thing about being involved in Rhythm Stick) was to get to know people with different learning difficulties. Making friends and enjoying the company. Make people feel they are welcome."

While the project has been an extremely positive experience for participants and people attending the event, the relationships they have built and the skills developed need longer term support. The programme is currently funded until November 2020, and there has been some interest in it from other trusts and foundations, but this has not yet led to additional funding beyond this year. Alexandra Palace has secured funding for portable winches and changing benches so that they can take Rhythm Stick on tour to venues with challenging access needs.

# Operation Nightingale:

the Rifles and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO)



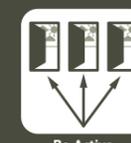
**The award-winning Operation Nightingale was established in 2011 by The Rifles, an Infantry Regiment, and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) to aid the recovery of wounded, injured and sick service personnel through engagement with archaeology. Serving personnel and veterans from all three services experiencing physical and mental trauma were invited to get involved with archaeological projects on Ministry of Defence (MOD) land.**



Defence  
Infrastructure  
Organisation

wessex  
archaeology

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



The upsurge in casualties arising from the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts prompted the establishment of Operation Nightingale as a non-medicalised, heritage-based response in supporting their recovery process. Eligibility soon extended to include veterans from as far back as the Falklands War.

Participants took part in archaeological excavations on sites run by professional archaeologists, like Wessex Archaeology, with logistical and pastoral support provided by the Army and subsequently charities such as Help for Heroes and Breaking Ground Heritage CIC (BGH). Camping has proved an important ingredient in boosting camaraderie and peer support. Feedback from early participants helped to develop the programme. DIO fund projects on the military training estate and public donations channelled through BGH have funded projects elsewhere.

Outcomes included improving the health and wellbeing of participants and finding routes into further education or employment. Research from two published evaluation studies has reported mental health and wellbeing benefits in participants; a qualitative study conducted in 2015 (Finnegan)<sup>61</sup> and a quantitative evaluation utilising recognised mental wellbeing scales in 2018 (Everill et al, 2020).<sup>62</sup>

The peer support and social aspects of the projects are a critical success factor as has been the selection of the volunteers and support staff who enable the archaeological work to accommodate the individual needs of the participants, be they emotional or physical. Overcoming dependency on Operation Nightingale has been a challenge and achieved by encouraging participants into supporting roles or signposting into employment or further education.

Individuals have shared experiences of military life, from a distinctive vocabulary to banter and black humour. As one project participant indicates, "it allows me to switch off from my own head, to talk to others going through similar experiences and generally be what I consider to be normal again". The tribal nature and alpha-based social structures of the military world carry with them their own risks, which might serve to exclude individuals or 'outside' groups. From personal observation, however, the mixed military and archaeological community participating on BGH projects seems to be inclusive and equal, regardless of time served, rank, arm of the service or disability. A recurring phrase, which underscores both the great strength of the project community and efficacy of the peer support it engenders, is "that was the first time I have told anyone that."

# Inspiring Futures:

## Volunteering for Wellbeing



Images L-R: Manchester Museum  
© Manchester Museum.  
Imperial War Museum North.  
© Imperial War Museum

### Heritage Lottery Fund Project delivered by IWM North and Manchester Museum 2013 - 2016

#### In partnership with:

- Museum of Science and Industry
- People's History Museum
- National Trust: Dunham Massey
- Manchester City Galleries
- Ordsall Hall
- Manchester Jewish Museum
- Whitworth Art Gallery
- National Football Museum

From October 2013 to December 2016, IWM North and Manchester Museum were successful in their application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to deliver a volunteering, training, and placement programme across 10 heritage venues in Greater Manchester. The project recruited over 260 people from local communities, who were either long-term unemployed, facing low-level mental wellbeing challenges or social isolation. This unique project was delivered across ten heritage venues to collectively achieve improvement, consistency and quality in volunteering practice as a key route to transforming wellbeing.

Many participants were referred to the project by community sector organisations, such as community health support services, Job Centre Plus and local volunteering organisations. The project provided accredited training, work experience, and structured placements to help people gain confidence and skills to re-engage with society. It also allowed the venues involved to collectively achieve improvement, consistency and quality in volunteering practice as a key route to transforming wellbeing.

Participants were offered 10 weeks of training at either IWM North, Manchester Museum or the Science and Industry Museum. Training sessions ran once a week alongside their front of house volunteer role. On completion of the course, participants were offered a six-week placement at partner organisations where they held a variety of roles.

This case study meets the following  
5 Ways to Wellbeing:



The project commissioned Social Return on Investment (SROI) consultants, Envoy Partnership, to find out exactly how the programme contributed to individual socioeconomic wellbeing. The final report demonstrates that museums and galleries can be highly effective settings for supporting local services to improve people's wellbeing, and improve pathways to meaningful life opportunities in the community. Over 60% of participants reported long term sustained wellbeing improvement over 2-3 years, with every £1 invested in this programme generating £3.50 in social and economic value.

The Inspiring Futures (*if*) model has been unique in providing both a stimulating and reflective environment in tackling social isolation and wellbeing inequalities. It helped people from disadvantaged or vulnerable backgrounds to believe in themselves. This project increased confidence and self-worth, and, most importantly, it helped

participants realise their full potential to take that next step in supporting their own wellbeing. For example, one participant commented that "For a long time before I started on the programme, I would often doubt myself, didn't have enough self-confidence to stand up for myself, and was unsure about everything. As a result of doing this, I now trust my own abilities, I'm more mature now, and can make my own decisions with less fear. The programme is transformational, to the point where I've gone forward to do a Masters in Humanities with Art History at Open University."

# Human Henge

walking with intent in ancient landscapes



Images: © Yvette Staelens

The Restoration Trust (RT) in partnership with English Heritage (EH), the National Trust (NT), Richmond Fellowship (RF) and Bournemouth University (BU). Funded by NLHF, Wiltshire County Council and English Heritage. Supported by Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust (AWP)

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give



Human Henge was an archaeology, mental health, and creativity project, where three groups of up to 12 local people living with mental health problems met over 10 weekly sessions for participant-led activities in the Stonehenge and Avebury World Heritage Sites. The project ran from 2016 – 2018, with post-project engagement continuing until Winter 2019. The Restoration Trust project managed, while English Heritage and the National Trust provided experts and site access. The Richmond Fellowship supported participants, and Bournemouth University led archaeology and mental health research.

Two groups at Stonehenge, and one at Avebury, were accompanied by curators, artists and archaeologists as they explored the monuments, features and layers of meaning in the ancient landscape. Their journeys ended with ceremonies inside the Stone Circles near the Spring Equinox and Winter Solstice.

Human Henge examined whether a creative exploration of historic landscapes could improve people's mental health. Research into health outcomes for participants, including one-year post intervention, suggested significant improvement to people's mental health as a result of taking part, but the numbers are too small for the evidence to be conclusive. A theme that emerged from focus group research was that people enjoyed simply 'being human'.

Human Henge's outreach and communications, including a Radio 4 Open Country programme on Stonehenge and Mental Health, contributed to growing realisation that historic landscapes have enormous potential for mental health and wellbeing.

As participant Ria Walton said:

**"Human Henge is a personal journey of healing for me. I live with emotional health issues, and I feel very comfortable and accepted with this group. It's meaningful to learn about our ancient cultures, it's exhilarating being in the open air, it blows away the cobwebs. It's rejuvenating and revitalising."**



**NHS**  
Avon and Wiltshire  
Mental Health Partnership  
NHS Trust



National  
Trust

**RICHMOND  
FELLOWSHIP**  
MAKING RECOVERY REALITY



Bournemouth  
University

**ENGLISH HERITAGE**

**Wiltshire Council**



**HERITAGE  
FUND**

# Ringling Remembers:

The positive effects of bell ringing



**Bell ringing is a British tradition, and the British Isles are home to a distinctive style of bell ringing called 'change ringing' which produces a peal of bells, part of our national soundscape. The act of bell ringing is both a social and physical activity, with health and wellbeing benefits for the participants.**

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



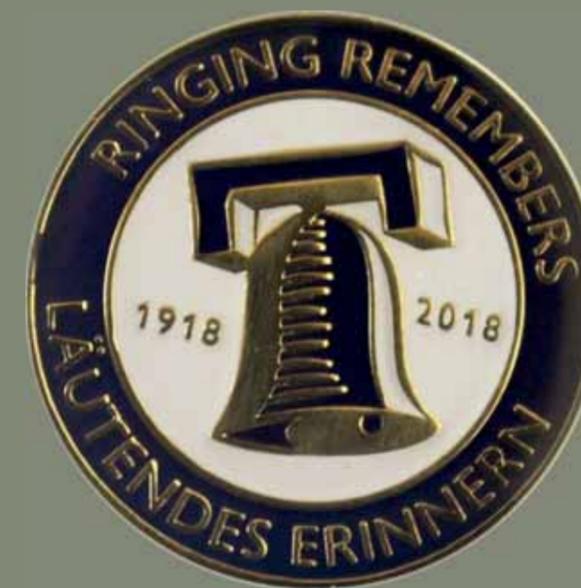
Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give



When the bells rang out on 11 November 1918 they announced the end of the most catastrophic war the world had yet seen. 1,400 bell ringers hailing from across the UK died during the First World War. Ringing Remembers sought to recruit 1,400 new bell ringers in their memory. All new ringers rang together across the country on 11 November 2018 as part of the national commemorations to mark the centenary of the Armistice.

2,792 ringers were eventually recruited to be part of this unique nationwide project, fostering a sense of community cohesion, galvanising local communities to acts of remembrance. For those individuals involved, there was also a clear benefit to their health and wellbeing. Firstly, the physical and mental benefits of bell ringing are obvious — there are often steep steps to climb, prolonged periods of standing and repetitive movement when ringing. Equally, this project provided an opportunity

for volunteers to learn something new and give themselves a full mental workout. Bell ringers of all capabilities and experience levels have to concentrate fully and listen carefully to what they are ringing. The impact on lonely or isolated ringers was also significant, with increased confidence and improved social skills. New ringers who were recently bereaved said that this project provided them with a new hobby. Similarly, ringing is an intergenerational activity, transcending age gaps and barriers with young people learning to ring alongside their parents and interacting with other older members of the team.

Nikki Thomas, Manager of the Mancroft Ringing Centre said:

**"They have made new friendships and that has been really important. I had somebody last night who apparently was a very quiet, shy person who didn't mix with people and yet last night she was there at the Mancroft Centre and she was ringing on her own, she was laughing, she was having a go at things, she's been successful and apparently her family are amazed at her improved confidence."**

# Layers of History – Reaching Out;

A special event for harder to reach audiences in Lincolnshire's Bardney Limewoods



Images: © Adam Winfield

**The Layers of History project (Layers) was created to give volunteers the opportunity to discover, understand and investigate those aspects of Lincolnshire's historic landscapes that are less obvious, perhaps only a few lumps or bumps in the ground, or an abandoned lump of concrete with mysterious metal protrusions.**



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give



Starting in 2017, and funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (and others), Layers set out to engage over 200 volunteers during a three-year period. The project aimed to show volunteers how to study and research the landscape using archaeological surveying techniques and other research tools, and it achieved this through online courses and local workshops.

The project also aimed to reach out to new target audiences. One of the project's match funders, Lincolnshire County Council, suggested collaboration with a charity called The People's Partnership, who specialise in enabling 'access and amplifying the voice of hidden and hard to reach people of Lincolnshire'; as a result, a special one-off event was held at Southrey Woods, one of Layers' existing study sites. The team (advised by The People's Partnership) worked hard to ensure the event enabled access for all, where possible.

Setting up a timetable for the event was a little bit of a leap of faith for the team as they did not know the exact target audience. They did know they needed vehicle access, disabled toilets, shelter, transport and as much access to the woods as physically possible. Flexibility was key and the ability to adapt sessions as different groups expressed an interest proved invaluable to the team. A variety of workshops were run including landscape photography, historic cookery, woodland craft reminiscence, coppicing and lantern making.

By making something accessible for as many harder to reach people as possible, the event becomes accessible to all. This requires a significant change of mindset in how you approach things and it is something Heritage Lincolnshire will take forward into the future.

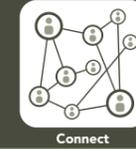
One participant commented "I would like to talk about my time I spent with [the Layers team]. I was in a women's refuge after 24 years of domestic violence. I was so lost inside and needed to find myself again and I've always been in tune with nature and I love history and love learning even now in my 50s, you're never too old to learn."

# Community Access Scheme

at Historic Royal Palaces (HRP)



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Keep Learning



**The Community Access Scheme (CAS) is a programme for community groups local to Kensington Palace, Tower of London and Hampton Court Palace. CAS aims to engage and empower local communities to access, interpret, and experience sites in ways that are relevant to them.**

The programme is for groups that experience a barrier to engagement. This could be financial, social, cultural, intellectual or physical. Group leaders are the gatekeepers to HRP's local communities and are integral to influencing the programme. This can range from participating in advisory groups, co-creating resources and content for exhibitions.

The Community Access Scheme engages participants in several ways that encourage, empower and enable group leaders and members to regularly, continuously and independently visit and access the palaces' historic spaces and their stories. Firstly, group leaders attend a training that includes historic and thematic overviews of the palace, hands-on activities to inspire creativity and skill-building, and practical guidance for planning and leading a visit to the palace. After the training, group leaders work with the communities team to plan and deliver group visits to the palace.



After the visit, each group member receives two £1 cards that allow them to return to the palace with a friend, sharing the experience with someone new, only paying £1 per person. Lastly, the communities team provides ongoing support for group leaders through networking events, special projects, newsletters, and one-to-one meetings so that they feel confident leading their visits.

CAS is core-funded and makes use of HRP's in-house evaluation methodology, the 'Learning Journey' framework. This provides quantitative and qualitative feedback to measure the levels of 'discovery, participation and transformation'. Self-completion surveys are completed as part of visits and training days.

One group leader, from the Terence Higgins Trust, commented

**"When I first joined the programme I wasn't in the right place mentally and physically. The training and group visits here at Kensington Palace and the people here made me feel so welcome. I felt that I could be part of society again."**

A challenge of the programme is to accept that group leaders may not share the histories and stories entirely accurately. HRP's role is to support their independence whilst still maintaining the integrity of their sites.

*Images:* © Community Access Scheme at Historic Royal Palaces



# Sensory Palaces

## at Historic Royal Palaces (HRP)



Images: © Sensory Palaces at Historic Royal Palaces

Sensory Palaces is a wellbeing programme for people living with dementia and their carers. This audience matters greatly to Historic Royal Palaces. HRP developed Sensory Palaces to respond to the participants' changing needs, recognising that it is their ethical responsibility to enable people to access and meaningfully engage with heritage. HRP delivers Dementia Friends training to staff and volunteers, especially those working on the programme. Sensory Palaces is mainly core-funded but they have also received funding from Stuart Law and the Wolfson Foundation. Sessions engage participants in sensory storytelling in the historic spaces of Hampton Court and Kew Palace and aim to enhance wellbeing and encourage new learning opportunities in a safe and welcoming environment. Since its inception in 2013, HRP have worked with people living with dementia, carers, and dementia experts to develop, deliver and evaluate the programme.

Research conducted by the University of Salford Institute for Dementia (2017/18) found that 'the impact on well-being for care supporters and the person living with dementia was considerable.' The research aimed to measure the programme's health and wellbeing impact on participants and to better understand the heritage setting's role on their experience. Data was collected using Dementia Care Mapping, pre and post-session questionnaires and interviews.



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



One person living with dementia commented

**"I'm coming [to sessions] because there's going to be something interesting, and it's nice to talk to people..."**

while a carer involved in the programme reflected that while the person they care for

**"might not remember it the next day, but at that time... he gets a great deal of pleasure of finding out information."**

The biggest challenge of Sensory Palaces is tailoring it to the individual's needs. Participants may be at different stages in their journey and/or experiencing varied symptoms. HRP's team remains flexible in the delivery approach, providing opportunities for people, however they are feeling in the moment, to be included.



# Burgh Castle Almanac



Burgh Castle Almanac (BCA) is an archaeology, creativity and wellbeing programme based at Burgh Castle Roman Fort. Once a month a group of local people with serious mental health challenges walk around the Fort with experts and artists, exploring the site's natural and historic environment. A fortnight later, they reflect on the experience at Time & Tide Museum in Great Yarmouth.

Funded by:



WATER, MILLS & MARSHES



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Sessions began in May 2018, and since then the group has met more than fifty times, sharing experiences on the website, [www.burghcastlealmanac.org](http://www.burghcastlealmanac.org). Sessions have continued on Zoom during COVID-19, and the final exhibition has been postponed. The programme is co-created with participants. RT manages the project, and participants are supported by ACT. NMS provides the space for creative work, NAT runs project administration.

BCA is part of the Broads Authority's Water Mills and Marshes Landscape Partnership project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The intended outcomes of the programme were to increase access to a heritage site by people with mental health issues, provide creative space for developing new skills and wellbeing, and develop, research, evaluate a model for Health and Wellbeing through heritage.

Mid-point qualitative evaluation by Willis Newson found that history and landscape were key themes emerging from participant and stakeholder focus groups. Running across these themes was that of friendship:

**"The important thing for me is that it runs all year, so you get to see the seasons change and you go from summer into autumn into winter and that gives me a sense of the landscape and appreciating the nature."**

# Connecting through Craft Skills

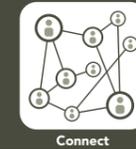
at Seventeen Nineteen



The All Churches Trust Craft Skills Programme is part of construction work at Holy Trinity, Sunderland and offers engagement activities for diverse audiences to enhance skills and understanding of traditional crafts. It includes construction apprenticeships, practical learning sessions, and a programme of hard-hat tours and tasters for local people. Hundreds of people have engaged, connecting with each other and craftspeople, discovering more about local heritage, and developing their skills in traditional making.

Images: © MV Photography

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give



The All Churches Trust Craft Skills Programme was developed in response to entrenched local issues of low skills. Teachers, tutors, local heritage organisations and craft skills specialists were consulted during development. Evidence is emerging that it is having a positive impact on the wellbeing of those involved, creating supportive opportunities for people to engage with their local environment, connect with others, and develop new skills.

This is particularly true for their two young apprentices, who are gaining confidence, work, and life skills. The nurturing relationships with older tradespeople, the sense of pride in their own work, and the feeling of being trusted with a special building is what makes the difference.

**“I’m not sure anyone else has noticed yet BUT my confidence has definitely improved...I was working with Shortie earlier (the stone mason) and watching him work whilst he fixed one of the columns – this afternoon he let me have a go, he trusts me to learn from him and this is giving me confidence too.”**

The project is enhancing the wellbeing of local people. Participants have tried their hand at making stained glass, carving stone, and caring for historic objects, gaining confidence as they master something new. It is perhaps Chris (micro-volunteer) who most eloquently expresses the impact of taking part:

**“We all have our good and bad days but being in this building just makes me feel good – gives me a little boost when I need it. If you’re having a dark day it gives you a lift.”**

**It’s a bit like CCT are nurturing the church and giving it a new life, at the same time there’s a calmness to the building that is nurturing me, making me more confident and happier, I’m much more chatty and I look people in the eye now.”**

Sunderland City Council



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# Heritage Open Days



Heritage Open Days is the UK's largest festival of history and culture, bringing together over 2,000 organisations, and 53,000 volunteers. Every September this network curates and hosts over 5,500 events, giving people the opportunity to discover some magic on their doorsteps through exploring hidden places and overlooked stories, trying new activities and meeting new people. The festival is coordinated by the National Trust, with support from players of People's Postcode Lottery, who provide local organisers with a supportive national framework and promotional platform.

From the beginning, Heritage Open Days was designed to foster community pride as well as increase access to heritage, and over 25 years it has proved to be a powerful gateway event for the sector with a positive impact on individual and community wellbeing. Evaluation is built into the DNA of the organisational cycle; detailed, multi-pronged reports are commissioned nationally each year, and the central team is constantly listening to and asking for feedback from all involved. As a free event offering unique opportunities enjoyment levels are high but as well as having fun and learning new things, visitors also report a stronger sense of belonging to their local community and pride in it.



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give



Rod, who helps the organising committee from Mole Valley Borough Council to develop a programme of events for their Heritage Open Day said that

**"It has definitely made a difference to the way I work because my own knowledge has increased but, more importantly, I get to know a greater range of people within the community and they get to know me. These relationships are important."**

A key part of the festival's success is being grass-roots led, powered by the hard work and goodwill of local people. More than an annual showcase of diverse heritage, it has become an extraordinary year-round community. Through an approachable communication style, regional taster days and an online portal the national team has increasingly fostered pan-network conversations to strengthen these bonds. This has become all the more important during the COVID-19 lockdown, enabling organisers to connect through online 'community cafes', to share ideas and concerns with people across the country giving a shared sense of purpose and hope at a challenging time.

*Images: L-R Celebrating 25 years of People Power © Phil Jackson  
Gothic Temple, Stowe © Chris Lacey*

# Fireside Yoga, Sensory Gardens and Inclusive Histories

at Powderham Castle, Member of Historic Houses



*Image: L-R Powderham Castle © The Curries. "Powderham castle, South West, England" by giborn\_134 is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0*

**Powderham Castle in Devon follows a broad and inclusive approach to health and wellbeing as part of their mission to embed Powderham at the heart of their community. Welcoming almost 40,000 visitors a year, Powderham works closely with local groups and partner charities to develop inclusive programmes that engage all sections of the community.**

The castle places a strong emphasis on educational partnerships, welcoming groups from near (local primary schools) and far (University of Pennsylvania post-graduates). They recently signed an exciting new Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Exeter, which will include further research into the untold LGBTQ histories of the Courtenay ancestors. Powderham is active in the LGBTQ community, regularly hosting local youth group X-Plore for their fundraising events, and supporting Pride events throughout rural Devon. Powderham also offers a Pride Tour of the castle, which helps visitors engage with historic sexuality conversations.

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Powderham has developed a programme of wellbeing-focused events at the castle, including 'An Evening of Zen' – a mindfulness inspired evening including meditation in the pleasure gardens and outdoor Tai Chi sessions. A new sensory garden installation, developed with Dr Diana Waters, will include a soundscape of audio triggers to help participants with memory engagement and meditation. This garden is also intended to provide an immersive experience for local dementia groups such as Mede Care Home, which Powderham hosts for regular social meetings.

Bringing a whole new meaning to 'hot yoga', Powderham offers popular weekly fireside yoga classes in its dining room. The 'hygge' inspired classes are lit by soft candlelight, often accompanied by live music from a local cellist, adding to the relaxation of body and mind. Feedback from the participants showed that the historic surroundings of the classes contributed to their wellbeing benefits. One participant said,

**"Where you practise makes a big difference - a bland leisure centre does not have the same effect as a panelled room full of beautiful paintings, or a breezy lakeside listening to the rustling of ancient trees. Yoga at Powderham is not just yoga, it's a spiritual journey into history. When the lesson starts, I forget where I have been and where I need to be, I feel safe and at peace."**



**POWDERHAM  
CASTLE**



**HISTORIC  
HOUSES**

# Holkham Hall Parkrun

Member of Historic Houses



Holkham Hall in Norfolk welcomes up to 300 people at its weekly parkrun, which has taken place every Saturday on the estate since 2015. The free event is open to everyone in the community and attracts a variety of people, from local running clubs to families to the Earl of Leicester (owner of Holkham Hall). It is just one of many parkruns taking place at Historic Houses member places across the UK, including at Mount Stuart on the Isle of Bute, and Castle Howard in North Yorkshire.

The Holkham parkrun is renowned as one of the most beautiful routes in the UK, following an undulating 5km course through historic parkland which is surrounded by wildlife, including the estate's herd of fallow deer. On the homeward straight, runners pass the magnificent 80ft obelisk at the highest point of the park, before enjoying sweeping views down to the Hall on the final stretch to the finish line.

The event is not a race but an opportunity to enjoy the landscape however participants please, whether as a leisurely walk, a training course, or a social activity. It is a chance for the local community to come together regularly to enjoy both physical activity and beautiful surroundings, and the organisers are keen to encourage people to participate irrespective of ability.

Every week runners are invited to socialise after the run at the Courtyard Cafe in the park, an important aspect of the running community that has sprung up around this event.

The Holkham parkrun is entirely run by volunteers, who have found the events beneficial for mental as well as physical health. In the words of one volunteer:

**"Volunteering at parkrun has had a hugely positive impact on my mental health. Living with bipolar disorder can be challenging, but parkrun is the perfect medication, as are the great friends I've made at Holkham parkrun. I love my home parkrun because of the people, the location, the atmosphere and the positivity that surrounds a happy parkrun event. I wouldn't be anywhere else on a Saturday morning."**



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Be Active

Take Notice

# Bell House, London

Member of Historic Houses



Alongside learning courses, Bell House is regularly involved in the annual Dulwich Festival, during which it offers up its gallery space for artists showing in the Open House exhibition.

The house is also a centre for educational needs such as dyslexia support with an aim to empower those with dyslexia, celebrate neurodiversity and equip dyslexic learners with useful tools. They work with schools, special educational needs teachers and dyslexia organisations to offer volunteer led and inclusive support programmes, including a regular adult literacy programme.

Since 2018, Bell House has also been running the Learning to Care project, which was launched to educate and support people who are caring for their older relatives, friends or neighbours. It addresses a wide range of topics surrounding caring, including dementia, safety in the home and financial support.

This beautiful place, largely run by volunteers, is a beacon for its local area – showing how historic houses continue to serve vital purposes for communities in the twenty-first century.



Bell House in Dulwich is an educational charity that offers lifelong learning courses, special educational needs programmes, exhibitions, talks and musical events. Amid the noise of south London, Bell House is a place of calm and inspiration, where members of the community can develop their interests and skills.

They run innovative heritage-led adult learning programmes on everything from quilting to beekeeping, and offer free or subsidised places on all the courses as part of their socially inclusive mission.

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect

Be Active

Take Notice

Keep Learning

Give

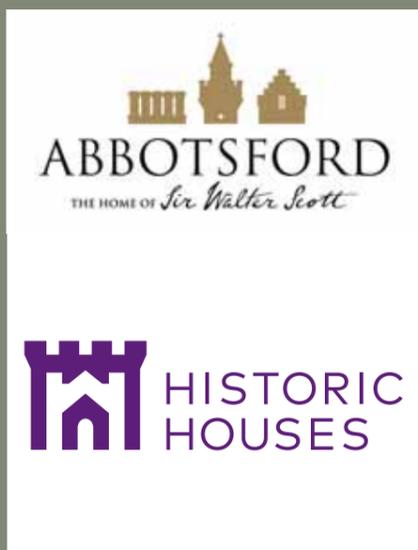
# The Abbotsford Trust

## Learning in a Heritage Landscape



### Scotts Abbotsford, Member of Historic Houses

The Abbotsford Trust's community engagement project, Learning in a Heritage Landscape, was inspired by Sir Walter Scott's passion for the outdoors. Not only the leading Scottish writer of his age, he was also a champion of health and wellbeing long before it was popular, and believed that fresh air, social interaction and physical activity had multiple health benefits.



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Take Notice

Keep Learning

The project drew upon this philosophy by encouraging participants to engage with their own health and wellbeing alongside Abbotsford's unique built and natural heritage. The project aimed to offer new skills and enhance employability for young job seekers and adults experiencing long-term unemployment. Through the project, 58 people from the local community engaged with a programme of horticultural and creative tasks that developed a range of life and work skills.

The wellbeing elements of the programme involved woodland art, poetry writing, tree planting, mindfulness sessions and sensory trails. On the skills side, participants gained practical experience of horticulture, forestry and estate management through hands-on tasks in the gardens and woodland. Numeracy skills were developed through practical activities such as calculating the height of trees and weighing the harvest, whilst personal journals filled with poetry, creative writing and reports helped to improve literacy skills. Feedback from participants and organisational partners consistently praised the project for developing confidence, communication skills and independence, and all participants reported a heightened knowledge of the natural world.



Mary Kenny, Heritage Engagement Officer, said

Images: © The Abbotsford Trust

**"This project reached out to groups who are used to barriers blocking their access to positive experiences. Here, each person was encouraged to immerse themselves in this beautiful local resource, and connect with a shared root of cultural heritage. In the process we saw some of those barriers fade away and, in their place, a growing confidence to believe they can belong, be part of such a historical place – and be part of the legacy."**

# Breaking Ground Heritage (BGH)



**Breaking Ground Heritage was founded by 'graduates' of Operation Nightingale, through the recognition that participants engaging in these archaeological excavations were achieving a more positive state of mind and seemed to be developing greater mental resilience. BGH's mission has since been to promote recovery through heritage-based projects, encourage the development of new skills and incite beneficiaries to retake control of their own futures. Initial funding was a personal war pension and the good will of experts.**

Campfire chats often included theories of the day's revelations and experiences of conflict. It was this latter conversational thread that got BGH's attention. It was usually qualified with "I've not told anyone that before" or "it sounds odd when I say it out loud"<sup>63</sup>. This posed the question; if projects like this can help to get individuals talking about previous traumatic experiences, is that a good thing? If so, how can this be developed and demonstrate the results?

After some preliminary research, BGH came across the work of Karen Burnell. Karen's work on veteran's mental health<sup>64</sup> enabled them to better understand the manifestation of the positive wellbeing outcomes that they were seeing.

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give

Developing a methodology for recording wellbeing outcomes under the guidance of psychologists, coupled with their ability to develop and deliver projects that incorporate all five of the NEF ways to wellbeing, enabled BGH to start evidencing the benefits of involvement.<sup>65</sup> BGH have recently expanded this data to incorporate the general population. This data has demonstrated that with the correct project considerations and staff selection, it is possible to replicate the successes of Operation Nightingale.

BGH's methodologies have been peer reviewed and published in the *Antiquity* journal as an open source paper.<sup>66</sup> They have also developed a 'Toolbox'<sup>67</sup> resource based upon their experiences in this field. One participant noted that "BGH has helped me to start getting on with my life again by offering me the chance to be useful and busy whilst partaking in something exciting and hugely rewarding. I always look forward to the coming projects and would strongly suggest that others at least give it a go to see what it's like. There's nothing to lose and everything to gain."



Images: © Harvey Mills

# The Prince's Foundation

## Dumfries House, Health and Wellbeing Centre



The Health and Wellbeing Centre at Dumfries House was created to support and complement existing NHS and statutory services in promoting personal wellbeing and healthier lifestyles. The centre offers holistic support, focusing on the mind, body and spirit, using the estate and complementary therapies to increase resilience, confidence, and feelings of self-esteem.

Dumfries House is situated in the South of East Ayrshire, a former proud mining community. There are now high levels of unemployment, with a population suffering with multiple physical and mental health problems. Change needs to focus around the person being in harmony, both physically and mentally, with themselves. Through nurturing self-compassion, health and wellbeing will improve.

The overall aims of the wellbeing centre are to offer a range of health and wellbeing services, and create a shift towards self-care and greater personal resilience. The centre aims to become a showcase for the benefits of an integrated approach between health and wellbeing, and to become a centre for training.

Working in conjunction with local GPs, the centre targets a specific list of conditions where the GPs indicated more support was needed. This includes weight management and pre-diabetes, women's health (e.g. menopause support), fertility wellbeing, chronic pain, and elderly isolation.

Adopting a holistic approach, group programmes aim to provide the opportunity to ensure that physical, mental, and spiritual elements are all working in harmony.

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Keep Learning



Delivered in partnership with NHS professionals, they provide a mix of health and wellbeing education, physical activity, and complementary therapies in order to develop self-management techniques. This aims to improve the participants' health and sustain behaviour change. Participants have the opportunity to experience a range of therapeutic techniques, and on completion of the programme they are reconnected to activities within their own communities.

For example, working in partnership with the Local Authority, every three weeks the centre offers "tea dances" for the elderly. 130 older people attend each session, which involves an afternoon tea followed by entertainment. The individuals that attend come from a mix of supported accommodation and care homes. 43 community groups are also on a rota to attend the sessions.

With the implementation of lockdown in March this year, it was felt that the need for the Health and Wellbeing Centre would increase as the physical and mental wellbeing impacts of these restrictions were felt, both on our communities and our staff. Programmes were moved to a virtual forum, group numbers were reduced to allow participation, activities were refined, and complementary therapies were modified to suit the new environment but the aims of the programmes continue to be met.

Quantitative outcome measures are currently used in all of the programmes, both before and after the programme. This includes the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, the Health and Wellbeing wheel, and the Pain Self Efficacy Questionnaire.

Funding comes from philanthropy and through applications to funding bodies, currently from the People's Postcode Lottery.

A local GP reported that

**"This has been an excellent opportunity for my patients to utilise, the education they received has had a huge impact on choices they have made for the better. They have all become more confident in themselves, they have broken barriers and broken down fears and explored."**

# Canal & River Trust:

## Grantham Canal Heritage Initiative Project



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Keep Learning



Give



The Grantham Canal Heritage Initiative involves the physical transformation of a section of the canal from a derelict to a living waterway by restoring valuable heritage assets. This project aims to restore and reopen Locks 15 and 14 of the Grantham Canal, and host a programme of events and activities to raise awareness and encourage more community involvement with the canal. The core rationale of the Grantham Canal Heritage Initiative is to complete the work with volunteers, not contractors. This project is the first volunteer-led major canal restoration project for the Canal & River Trust, and aims to create a long-lasting legacy with skills shared and enthusiastic volunteers committed to continuing the restoration into the future.

The project commenced in 2015 after a successful bid for £831k from National Lottery Heritage Fund and is scheduled to be completed in late 2020. Locks 15 and 14 were designed by the canal engineer William Jessop in the 1790s, and are unique because many of their original features remain. The canal was closed to navigation in 1929 and both locks had gradually fallen into dereliction with water levels maintained by concrete weirs.

Lock 15 was completed in 2018. The site work was completed by volunteers from partner organisations with site supervision, technical support (heritage, engineering, ecological) and project management by the Canal & River Trust. The Trust's Heritage Apprentices have also been involved, including two apprentices based on the site for a year.

Over 8,000 volunteer days have been worked on the project to date by more than 300 individuals. Many of the volunteers had never been on a construction site before and they have been trained in skills including bricklaying, lime mortar, health & safety, archaeology and plant operation.

Works have had a significant positive impact on volunteers, who have made friends, learnt new skills, and gone on to gain employment, all while getting physical exercise. Volunteer time is match-funding towards the National Lottery Heritage Fund grant with a target value of £495,000 across the 5.5 years of the project - this target was achieved in 2018 after just three years. Work now continues to restore Lock 14 to complete the project.

Images: © Canal & River Trust



# Canal & River Trust:

## Unlocking the Severn through photography



Images: © Canal & River Trust

Unlocking the Severn is a conservation and engagement project that aims to open up Britain's longest river, for both the rare fish that depend on it, and the communities who live alongside it. The project is being delivered by the Trust in partnership with the Severn Rivers Trust, Environment Agency and Natural England, with the belief that deepening people's connections with the River Severn can enrich lives, providing a unique environment to boost wellbeing, to gain new insights into the natural world and our relationship to it, and to feel inspired.

The Canal & River Trust launched the 'Unlocking the Severn' project in July 2018, with the Environment Agency and Severn Rivers Trust. It is a £20 million scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the EU 'Life' fund to install fish passes at four weirs to enable the protected twaite shad to return to the upper reaches of the river.

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



As part of the project, the Trust has been running wildlife photography sessions. These photography workshops have been 'on location' at the River Severn, with many sessions taking place on Diglis Island, Worcester – a beautiful tranquil space in the river, accessible by crossing river locks. There have been workshops targeted at families, adults, and school children.

The photography sessions were accessible to all as no expensive equipment or prior knowledge was required; many participants just made use of their smartphones. Following on from the sessions, an exhibition of the images that had been taken by the participants was held at the Hive Library in Worcester.



# Gloucester Cathedral:

## 'Creative Connections'

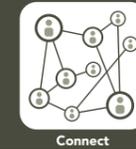


Images: L-R Creative Communities © Gloucester Cathedral. Art © Gloucester Cathedral. Building History Together; Our Story Isn't Over Yet © Gloucester Cathedral

**GLOUCESTER  
CATHEDRAL**

**Gloucester Cathedral worked with Gloucestershire County Council's Adult Education team to deliver a 12 week Art Course at the Cathedral for adults living with, and in recovery from, diagnosed mental health conditions. The Art Course responded to the Cathedral as creative inspiration for participants to express their mental health journey and recovery through art. The project culminated in a free exhibition of the participant's artwork at the Cathedral on World Suicide Prevention Day (WSPD) 2017.**

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Give



The project was enabled by NLHF funding for Project Pilgrim with contributions from Adult Education (Ad Ed) and the Public Health Commissioning team who are both Gloucestershire County Council local authority funded services.

They worked with 9 adults, referred by Ad Ed via the Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Recovery College. Ad Ed's project team used a co-produced approach to the course so, once registered, learners helped to plan, design and co-deliver the course.

Intended outcomes were to develop new skills, self-worth, and self-respect, develop relationships with individuals who may not normally visit the cathedral, and to build partnerships and share expertise. Ultimately, the project aimed to provide an accessible public exhibition to raise awareness and understanding of mental health conditions, breaking down associated stigma.

Using a mixed evaluation method, including one-to-one feedback sessions, group testimonial sessions, surveys, and reflection reports, they recorded outstanding outcomes for all aims. Learners progressed to become AIR (Artists in Recovery), a self-directed art group who continue to meet weekly and have started selling their artwork, cards and gifts at the Cathedral Christmas Craft fair.

Overall, they learnt the importance of consistency - any changes were problematic and hard for learners to manage. A tangible outcome - the exhibition - was a great focus, and helped the learners with something to aim towards. Further progression opportunities (e.g. volunteering, the development of a self-led group) are also essential.

One participant commented:

**"It got me through the week. Helps me with my depression. This is the best thing I have ever done in my life. It stopped me drinking and using alcohol to cope."**

# Prescribe Culture

University of Edinburgh Museums



**Prescribe Culture is an initiative run by the University of Edinburgh Museums, developed with and for the student community. It is a suite of three programmes: Programme 6, Take 30 and Take 30 Together Virtual (#T30TV), the latter of which was developed as an online offer in response to COVID-19.**

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Keep Learning



**Images:** *Left* Programme 6 sessions carried out with the University's Anatomical Museum under the inspiration of the Curator, Malcolm McCallum. *Right* Prescribe Culture Soap

Programme 6 is delivered as a series of ninety-minute small group workshops across six weeks with various activities, including creative writing, soap-carving, and scrap-booking, inspired by a heritage collection or building.

Take 30 is a booklet with a series of 'prompt and reflect' exercises for use across a range of Edinburgh's heritage sites and venues. This is an option for those students who may find small group participation stressful.

Prescribe Culture partners include St Giles Cathedral, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh Castle and the Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh, as well as a range of international heritage sites from the National Museum of Qatar to Sydney Living Museums.

T30TV is a new e-social prescribing programme offering twice weekly respite from the day-to-day anxiety and loneliness that lockdown has developed for some, by exploring international heritage sites and collections, with insights from a Guest Guide.

Evaluation of Prescribe Culture highlighted that all responding members believe it is of positive benefit to their mental wellbeing, it helps them feel connected to the world around them and they would recommend it to others. Feedback from participants includes

**"As someone who has ongoing mental health issues, Prescribe Culture helped me greatly."**

# University of Oxford

## Gardens Libraries and Museums (GLAM)



**The University of Oxford's Gardens, Libraries and Museums (GLAM) division represents six departments that together comprise over 21 million objects, specimens, and printed items: the Ashmolean, the History of Science Museum, the Museum of the Natural History, the Pitt Rivers Museum, the Bodleian Library, and the Botanic Garden.**<sup>68 69</sup>

Colleagues from the GLAM division have been working with researchers from the University's Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine (CEBM) to understand how these places and resources can support wellbeing and social prescribing initiatives.

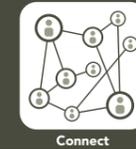
The 12-month project included two participatory workshops held in Oxford in July 2019, and culminated in a report, *Can gardens, libraries and museums improve wellbeing through social prescribing* which conducted a literature review, presented case studies of programmes across GLAM spaces, and discussed findings from the workshops.<sup>70</sup>

The report identified three key concepts which underpin garden, library, and museum interventions: 'Therapeutic landscapes', spaces which provide relaxing, stimulating, and healing environments; 'Creating a sense of "flow"', in which participants are entirely absorbed in their surroundings; and 'Drawing on social capital', where activities provide opportunities for connection and trust. Jean Gibbons, workshop participant and regular attendee of

**Gardens,  
Libraries  
& Museums**



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give

*Meet Me at the Museum* said: "Both gardens and museums help to keep me stimulated and sane and I want to continue nurturing both [until] the end of my life."

Both the review and the workshops identified common barriers to engagement, including limits to staff capacity, the need for regular sessions, accessibility, and awareness of GLAM activities. The second workshop emphasised the importance of inclusivity, sustainability, and a robust evidence base in social prescribing initiatives.

Despite challenges, however, the report shows how engagement with gardens, libraries, and museums can positively impact wellbeing. The case studies presented in the report, *Meet Me at the Museum*, *Story Makers*, and *Brain Diaries*, explore how both participants and organisers benefitted from these projects, gaining new skills, connecting, and developing shared interests.

The project has also supported knowledge exchange between stakeholders, and raised the awareness of social prescribing. The GLAM and CEBM teams have been developing the Social Prescribing Research Network to support the growth of an interdisciplinary evidence base, and welcome further involvement.



Images: L-R Botanic Gardens © Ian Wallman. Harcourt Arboretum © Ian Wallman

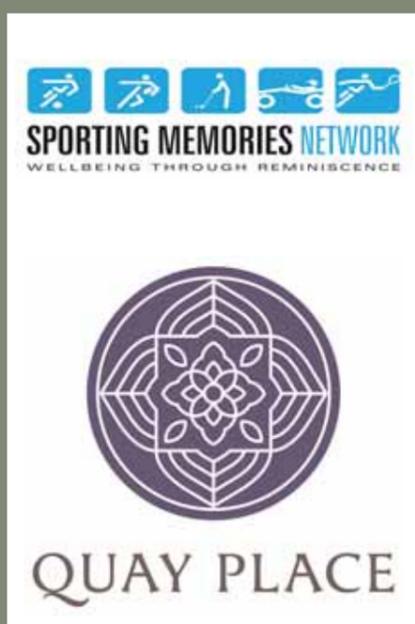
# Sporting Memories at Quay Place



In partnership with Suffolk Mind, the Churches Conservation Trust embarked on an ambitious project in 2008 to transform the 15th century St Mary at the Quay building into an award winning unique heritage and wellbeing centre: Quay Place. Completed in 2016, the project restored the historic fabric of the building. The stated aim of the project was to 'link the idea of wellbeing with our historic environment to create a long-term future for a building suffering the ravages of age'.

One group that used Quay Place, Sporting Memories, harnessed the rich history and heritage of sport to support people over the age of 50 who enjoy reminiscing about their experiences of watching or playing it. The clubs took place each week and provided a friendly, welcoming environment.

The initial aim of the project was to establish an active group that would become self-sufficient in terms of leadership, mature in numbers, and therefore succeed in its primary objective of promoting positive mental health in older members of our community. From October 2017 to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the group at Quay Place met on a weekly basis, with the objective of combating social isolation and related mental health conditions.



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Sporting Memories learned, through this group and others in the county, that there is no single "best way" of promoting and organising this activity. The format of the group is very much led by the membership – participants have resisted some initiatives but have embraced others more willingly than Sporting Memories expected.

The building itself, being a church, provides a sense of calm. The group was not visible to passers-by, only to other groups that might be using the premises. One member commented that:

**"Through this group, I have made many new friends, and our friendship goes way beyond Monday mornings now. During the COVID-19 lockdown, we are in touch with each other regularly by phone – it has made a real difference."**

There is a growing awareness of mental health needs across their local community. In recent years, the mayor launched the Ipswich Dementia Action Alliance (IDAA), to make Ipswich a dementia-friendly town. Membership included Ipswich Town Football Club, who committed to actions which included sporting reminiscence work with elderly people.

As a requirement of the Sport England funding, groups and group members are evaluated in terms of the effects of the project on wellbeing, physical activity and levels of loneliness. This research is being carried out over two years by Leeds Beckett University and will result in a comprehensive report in early 2021 of the efficacy of the sessions.

# Prescribing Peel Hill Motte, Thorne

Historic England



Image: Peel Hill cc-by-sa/2.0 - © Jonathan Thacker - [geograph.org.uk/p/2769410](http://geograph.org.uk/p/2769410)

Prescribing Peel Hill Motte was an archaeological project alongside the construction of extra care facilities in Thorne in 2017. It sought to integrate the motte into the development to increase health and wellbeing and give new residents a unique environment to live in, providing them direct access to the monument and using archaeology as a catalyst for social engagement and communication. The project has been supported by Historic England and the Local Authority's Housing department and was conducted in partnership with Housing & Care 21 and Doncaster Council.

Thorne is a town in South Yorkshire which has faced economic decline and increased social deprivation because of the declining coal-mining industry. Land near the town's medieval castle where the motte is located had been designated for redevelopment and when the Local Authority proposed building extra care housing, Historic England saw an opportunity to make the motte a focal point of the wellbeing agenda of the new development.

Residents began moving into the facilities in August 2019. The motte became a 'prescribed' attraction – residents were able to take walks with accessible paths created during the project to increase their health and wellbeing. Meanwhile local archaeologists have had the chance to learn more about the monument and its history. Findings from archaeological fieldwork were later used in school workshops as well as activities designed for residents. Teaching collections were created for the primary and secondary schools in the areas, as well as a dementia collection for the care facility.

Throughout the project, various outreach goals were set and monitored to ensure that the town's community could interact with their historic environment. A team of community archaeologists set up a Facebook group joined by over 600 people during the project and delivered an open day attended by the local community and healthcare providers.



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



# Food for Thought:

Community Involvement in a Research Strategy for the Yorkshire Wolds<sup>71</sup>



Image: Yorkshire Wolds © Ian Wallman. Yorkshire Wolds by Keith Laverack is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0.

In 2018, Historic England commissioned York Archaeological Trust to research and create a new heritage research strategy for the Yorkshire Wolds that would help "unlock its potential" for the economy of the area. *Food for Thought* aimed to involve the local community as well as specialist archaeologists to make an accessible project that would develop the heritage of the Wolds.

The project involved local communities through public consultations.

Here local communities and groups such as the Thixendale Art Group and the High Wolds Heritage Group at Hanging Grimston were introduced to the wider project and hoped to deliver workshops and a pop-up museum as part of 'Food for Thought'.

The project looked to facilitate discussions amongst the local community about the archaeology and heritage of the Wolds, combining the innovative work of archaeologists with the wellbeing needs and opportunities in the area. This was inspired in part by the volunteers participating in an excavation at Hanging Grimston, led by the High Wolds Heritage Group and Thixendale Art Group, used materials from the site to create tile art and a quilt inspired by the archaeological findings.

The approach of the project has been to both learn from the local community as well as increase awareness of the links with the region's past histories, especially as the farms in the area are home to many unseen archaeological sites. Although *Food for Thought* has been placed on hold as a result of COVID-19, it hopes to recommence as soon as possible.



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Keep Learning

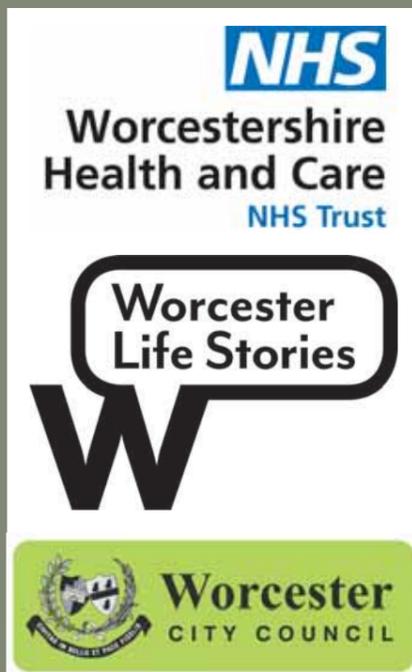


# Worcester Life Stories

Bringing local people together through shared stories of the City of Worcester



Worcester Life Stories is a collaborative project between Worcester City Council's Historic Environment Record (HER) and Worcestershire Health & Care NHS Trust, bringing together archived heritage, digital technology and community events to promote public health and wellbeing. National Lottery Heritage funding of £79,400 and match and in-kind contributions via a range of partnerships and volunteer-based initiatives will see the HERs collection of 35,000 historic photos available online for the first time, via a bespoke platform called Know Your Place (KYP) Worcester. This represents a long-awaited hub for capturing local knowledge, bringing together 'official' datasets with community expertise and memory. The project is co-led by Sheena Payne-Lunn, Historic Environment Record Officer, and Dr Natasha Lord, Clinical Psychologist and lead for Older Adult Mental Health.



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



*Images: L-R* Afternoon tea before the launch © Worcester City Historic Environment Record. Photos on washing line © Worcester City Historic Environment Record

The project's integrated approach will provide a dynamic, ever-growing online resource, published book, and fully accessible, sensory-audited museum exhibition. Importantly, development of this platform will facilitate the second phase – full co-production of the Worcester Life Stories platform. This NHS-hosted portal will draw material from the KYP resource, facilitating digital Life Story work for people living with dementia, carers, mental health service users or those socially isolated. Supported by events, skills workshops, arts and social media initiatives across the city, Worcester Life Stories uniquely brings together health and heritage to enable reminiscence, communication and connectivity.

While the project is a great opportunity to make the wealth of historic images available, it also acts as a catalyst to unlocking the wealth of knowledge embedded within the community to whom it relates. Providing both the key to stimulating this knowledge and the mechanism for recording it, will ensure that the heritage value within this collection is enriched immeasurably for generations to come and together with the many community and health based partners, will maximise the impact that this collection can have on the wellbeing of local people through the Worcester Life Stories platform.

Collaboration with Historic England and the University of Worcester Association for Dementia Studies, will support research into the impact of the project on the wellbeing of local people. Further collaboration with community hospitals and social housing providers will identify issues of digital exclusion and provide both access to technology and to the support and training to make use of it.

# George III: The Man Behind the Myth

at Historic Royal Palaces (HRP)



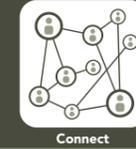
*Image:* George III, Kew Palace © Historic Royal Palaces

**To mark the 200th anniversary of George III's death, popularly known as the 'mad King', HRP created an exhibition to change perceptions of him and, through the inclusion of contemporary voices, create a forum for discussing and de-stigmatising mental ill health.**

With one in four people in the UK affected by mental ill health, HRP hopes that this historic exploration will contribute to a national conversation aimed at destigmatising mental health.



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



They worked collaboratively with local audiences to explore mental health journeys. This included:

- Object Interpretations – men with lived experience of mental ill health interpreted historic objects, reflecting on how what we know about George's ill health speaks to their experiences in the 21st century. This was delivered through a series of workshops, led by practitioner Daniel Regan and experts from HRP over 7 months. HRP worked in partnership with local community groups Richmond Mind, The Dalgarno Trust, River House and SMART London to co-create content for the exhibition.

- Personal Objects Exhibition – A London-wide call out was carried out to receive object contributions that share individuals' mental health journeys. This resulted in 10 objects being chosen for display that included stories of breaking, coping, healing and moving on.

The exhibition at Kew Palace has been postponed until Summer 2021. The project was core-funded and made use of HRP's evaluation methodology, the 'Learning Journey' framework. Baseline data was collected at the start of the project, and reflective data will be compiled once the exhibition opens.

# Youth Wellbeing Programme

at Historic Royal Palaces (HRP)



Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) and Action for Carers Surrey (AFCS) worked in partnership to create a programme to support the emotional wellbeing of local young carers. The pilot programme took place at Hampton Court Palace in autumn 2019.

HRP aimed, through the project, to develop new ways for people to access and engage with the Palaces which support mental health. AFCS' aim was to create new channels to meet the needs of their young carers in the context of funding cuts.

AFCS recruited participants and both organisations worked together to develop content and co-deliver 6 sessions for the group of young carers. It was funded by HRP.



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Keep Learning



*Images: L-R* Girls splashing in the Magic Garden, Hampton Court Palace © Youth Health and Wellbeing Programme, Historic Royal Palaces. Young carers enjoying the Magic Garden, Hampton Court Palace © Youth Health and Wellbeing Programme, Historic Royal Palaces

## The intended outcomes of the project were to:

- Deliver a high-quality experience resulting in an increased sense of wellbeing for young carers.
- Provide a programme that meets the needs of AFCS and results in young people wanting to visit HRP again.
- Design a sustainable, high-quality wellbeing programme for HRP.

The project was evaluated through anonymous participant surveys at beginning and end of the programme. The Project Manager kept reflective records and held reflective meetings with youth workers at the end of the project.

## Challenges and insights

In running the programme again, provision would be made for increased discussion of the youth leader role at the sessions. Different youth leaders attended each session and inevitably understood their role differently. This meant opportunities to strengthen the impact of sessions were missed.

The evaluation highlighted that links between the activities and wellbeing/mental health needed to be more explicit. Participants did not always pick up on that being the overall purpose. Overall, 84% of participants said they developed social connections, and 89% felt welcome at Hampton Court Palace.

One ACFS Youth Worker commented:

**"I have received very positive feedback from the parents...and the young people themselves. They all loved their time at Hampton Court ... Friendships were made and trust was built between the young people, our organisation and the palace, which is vital when it comes to ensuring engagement at future events."**

# Waterloo Uncovered



*Images: L-R* Veteran with musket ball © Chris van Houts. French howitzer shell © Chris van Houts. Veterans tour the battlefield © Deborah M Bernstein

This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give



## WATERLOO UNCOVERED

**Waterloo Uncovered (WU) is an award-winning archaeology charity focused on improving wellbeing for Veteran and Serving Military Personnel (VSMP). Founded in 2014, WU brings together an international team of archaeologists, specialist wellbeing and support staff, academics, students, volunteers and VSMP to excavate the Waterloo battlefield.**

WU operates a year-round goal-orientated, personalised support programme for VSMP, around an annual two-week excavation and addressing five areas: health and wellbeing, recovery (mental and physical), education, employment and vocation, and transition into civilian life. WU collaborates with veterans' charities to support participants from many countries, the majority from the UK. Furthermore, wellbeing support is extended to all participants on the dig.

WU works closely with organisations in the heritage sector including the British Museum, the National Army Museum and the Royal Armouries, the University of Glasgow and other universities in Belgium and the Netherlands. An important mission is to communicate an understanding of the archaeological heritage of Waterloo, and change attitudes about the physical and mental impact of military service on individuals.

Involvement in heritage and archaeology can be a life-changing experience:

**"I was handed a lifeline. From day one, I felt myself again. I was smiling and laughing with the feeling of being part of a team. The archaeology reignited my interest in history, and I found a new love of model making and poetry. I've also been metal detecting and have attended some excavations since returning. All in all, the experience was invaluable in helping in my recovery."**

WU Participant, 2019

WU took pains to develop robust measures to evaluate their work. WU uses qualitative interviews and respected external methodologies to measure improvements in wellbeing: in 2019 81% of VSMP personal goals were achieved "in full or mostly"; mental wellbeing improved 29% at the end of the excavation with a 20% uplift sustained nine months later. Feedback from VSMP is used to inform the development of the programme.

**"As part of a rehabilitation or transition pathway, archaeology with WU is a holistic experience that can act as a vehicle or catalyst in promoting change in wellbeing."**

David Ulke, Retired RAF Senior Mental Health Nursing Officer.

# Local History Cafes

(Crafting Relationships)



Local History Cafes are heritage and wellbeing 'get-togethers' at museums, libraries, and heritage sites for people over 50 who are at risk of, experiencing, or looking to keep at bay, social isolation and loneliness. There have been over 650 individual attendances. Cafes are run by Crafting Relationships, a non-profit social enterprise, in partnership with organisations across the East Midlands. Co-production is central to the programme's design, both with participants and the host organisation, to ensure that everybody's interests are met.



This case study meets the following 5 Ways to Wellbeing:



Connect



Be Active



Take Notice



Keep Learning



Give



Images: L-R © Local History Cafe

Cafes run over a five-month period, and each monthly two-hour session involves a heritage presentation, tea and socialising, and sometimes an activity such as object handling. Topics covered have included Roman archaeology, mining, and local involvement in the First and Second World Wars. Participants have gone on to volunteer with the host site, connect with other local initiatives, and continue to meet socially. Since the coronavirus pandemic, the programme has moved online to Facebook. One participant commented that:

**"I was really hooked, if you like, having lived here a long time, you realise there's a lot you don't know about a place..."**

A report of the cafes, *Local History Cafes: An Evaluation of the Initial Programme*, has been produced in partnership with De Montfort University in Leicester.<sup>72</sup> The evaluation took place between 2017 and 2019 using 40 pre and post surveys, ten interviews, and a focus group with participants, and four interviews with Cafe organisers.

Findings suggest that 'Cafes can be an effective way to engage older people in social and educational activities which encourage agency and can help with loneliness'. Sessions are welcoming and safe and 'helped those anxious about attending a "social group" for the first time'. The talks enabled participants to contribute and learn, and the documenting of local history enabled 'a recognition of the importance of "passing on" their memories and stories.'<sup>73</sup>

Challenges found by the evaluation include the limited number and infrequency of sessions, and the importance of ensuring accessibility and safeguarding for participants. The need to shape Local History Cafes to suit different cohorts and reach a wider array of people was also noted. However, the report found that challenges could and can be overcome with committed volunteers, good planning, and support from the host organisation.

Crafting Relationships is now interested in developing practicable actions from the findings, in partnership with Cafes, participants, and wider stakeholders. These will include further training, evaluation, knowledge exchange, and the use of Cafes in social prescribing.

# Places of Joy:

## The Role of Heritage After Lockdown



The  
Heritage  
Alliance

UNIVERSITY OF  
Southampton



**As lockdown is gradually eased, people have been using heritage locations as places of reunion, sociality, and escape, but also potentially to satisfy deeper psychological and socio-cultural needs. A collaboration between researchers at University of Southampton, University of Cambridge and University of Surrey, and supported by Historic England and The Heritage Alliance, Places of Joy: The Role of Heritage After Lockdown investigates whether and why heritage appears as a joyful space at a time of national crisis, and thus to understand the specific characteristics of heritage sites that may contribute to wellbeing.**

The research uses the unique period following the release of nationwide lockdown, when access to heritage is regained after a period of deprivation, to explore the potential of heritage by examining: i) What motivates people to visit heritage spaces after lockdown, including what needs are being satisfied by access to heritage spaces. ii) The role of heritage in wellbeing and how heritage might be used to develop resilience during the pandemic. iii) Whether visits to heritage locations at a time of heightened emotion are creating new forms of emotional resonance and perceptions of heritage, and how these may affect attitudes and visits to heritage sites going forward.

The research has been co-designed with the heritage sector in England and is being carried out at a series of different heritage sites, including both free and pay-to-enter. It takes a longitudinal approach, tracing responses to heritage from June to October 2020, to link

visitor responses to key dates in the process of lifting lockdown in England, as well as to examine shifts in expressions of the valorisation of heritage as society gradually reopens.

At the time of going to press, the project is ongoing, but preliminary findings provide strong positive evidence for the role of heritage in wellbeing after lockdown. Similarly, initial results show a strong demand for heritage – many of those surveyed have visited heritage sites as many times in the first month since reopening as they would normally in a year, or report increased frequency of visits. For some visitors, heritage sites have provided a safe, transitional space between an enforced period at home and gradually re-entering society. Others highlight how visits to heritage sites are important in regaining a sense of “normality”. Work will continue over the 2020 summer season, and a report on the findings will be released thereafter.

**Images: L-R** Stansted Park © Stansted Park Foundation. Stansted Park © Stansted Park Foundation

# Challenges

## Inclusivity and access

Heritage can be hugely beneficial for people's wellbeing, but inclusivity should be a priority if the sector wants to achieve these benefits and work towards a more equal society. Health inequality is worsening, and despite the over-representation of people from socio-economically disadvantaged groups and from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities in healthcare services,<sup>74</sup> evidence shows that these people tend to be under-represented in cultural activities.

DCMS' Taking Part survey has repeatedly found that visitors to museums and galleries are disproportionately made up of well-educated professionals aged 55 to 75, who also visited museums and galleries in their youth.<sup>75</sup> The Understanding Society Survey has found that 'adults were less likely to visit heritage sites [...] if they were aged 16 to 24 years, of Asian and Black ethnic origin, or in poorer financial circumstances', and if they had a long standing limiting disability or illness.<sup>76</sup> This has an impact on the next generation: young people's engagement is higher where there is also adult encouragement or participation.<sup>77</sup> This starts with making heritage sites welcoming to adults with young children. Research commissioned by specialist heritage insurer Ecclesiastical, in conjunction with the Heritage Alliance, found that a lack of child-friendly activities, cost, and a perception that heritage organisations are not child friendly are the top three reasons that prevent parents from taking their children to heritage attractions.<sup>78</sup> If this connection with heritage is not fostered from a young age, the

perceived barriers to heritage can remain in place, which limits youth interaction with heritage and impacts the next generation.

There are a variety of other barriers to access. At the 2018 Heritage Alliance debate, 'Diversifying Heritage in the 21st Century', the UK Government Disability Champion for Arts and Culture, Andrew Miller, expressed that heritage organisations must support "equality of experience" for all visitors, and promote equality in the workforce.<sup>79</sup> Despite efforts from many organisations to promote inclusivity,<sup>80</sup> these can be compromised by issues including the physical accessibility of properties, material barriers such as the cost of transport or tickets, and a lack of representation and training in the workforce. Moreover, although it is a misconception that heritage is predominantly palaces and castles, heritage can often embody historical power structures, and so any repurposing or adaptation of heritage sites for general or wellbeing use must be sensitive to this.

Heritage can, however, have significant benefits for wellbeing, and particularly for people who are less well-represented. The What Works Centre for Wellbeing has found that in places of high wellbeing inequality, 'even if those with lower life satisfaction are less likely to engage in these activities, they yield greater wellbeing returns when they do.'<sup>81</sup> While the value of heritage is subjective, heritage encompasses everything from the 'everyday' built environment to places of worship to gardens. Responses to The Heritage Alliance's heritage and health questionnaire

showed that 'Local Heritage is the common theme linking diverse communities with any area [...] regardless of their own individual heritage, since it is the heritage of where they live', and that protecting it can foster community cohesion.<sup>82</sup>

Heritage organisations should focus on the overall social impact of their projects and engage with the intended beneficiaries from the outset. Ongoing consultation with community stakeholders and relevant partners from the health and third sectors is critical, and organisations should invest time in developing these relationships. Accessibility should be a core aim during programme design and organisations should consider what aspects of heritage are hard to access and what they can do to improve equality of experience.

## Research challenges

The APPG on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (APPGAHW) has acknowledged the difficulties involved in undertaking research in the cultural sector. Randomised control trials (RCTs), which gather typically quantitative evidence using randomly selected groups and a control group, are often considered the 'gold standard' in the medical and scientific professions. The cultural sector, however, generally uses smaller sample sizes and qualitative evidence, meaning that credibility and impact can be harder to prove to the health sector and to funding bodies.<sup>83</sup>

Several national bodies have reviewed the evidence base for heritage and wellbeing. Historic England (2018) found limitations including the lack of longitudinal study, small sample sizes, uncertainty around the relationship between participant and facilitator, and the need to understand causation.<sup>84</sup> The What Works Centre for Wellbeing (2019) also found that evidence is of mixed quality, with a range of methodologies used and under-representation of heritage sites in regional, rural, and coastal regions.<sup>85</sup> The National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing (NAMHW) has identified challenges including participants' own responses to observation, the definition of wellbeing, and the difficulty of building evaluation into the start of a programme.<sup>86</sup>

Solutions proposed by all three bodies include a focus on qualitative evidence using a combination of semi-structured interviews or focus groups, and participant observation and retrospective assessment.<sup>87</sup>

However, there is no one-size-fits-all, and organisations should explore the existing resources and guidance and consider what fits their project.

Critically, this should be accompanied by partnerships across sectors and with universities to share resources and expertise.<sup>88</sup> The case studies in this report show how partnership is key to developing and evaluating heritage and wellbeing programmes. Establishing credibility is important when approaching potential partners or funders in the first place, but heritage organisations should be clear about the overall impact of their intended project and confident in the value of testimonials of lived experience. Equally, commissioners and funders should be aware of the challenges facing heritage organisations when considering evaluation, and provide guidance where possible.

## Capacity

The culture and health sphere has grown in prominence since the APPGAHW Inquiry in 2017, which recommended a 'cross-governmental strategy to support the delivery of health and wellbeing through the arts and culture.'<sup>89</sup> Progress is currently led by the Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance, which shares research and best practice with arts organisations and encourages partnerships across sectors and with local government.<sup>90</sup>

However, these developments are in their early stages and capacity-building remains a challenge. The sustainability of wellbeing interventions depends on structural and financial support from both internal and external sources, and short-term interventions have been shown to have a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of the most vulnerable participants in particular.<sup>91</sup> Partnerships are key to success, but the NAMHW has observed that respondents 'found it difficult to navigate or build partnerships with the health sector.' Similarly, organisations have experienced trouble attracting funding or interest from social prescribing commissioners, and needed to find alternative sources.<sup>92</sup> Both the heritage and health sectors often speak in remote terms, and operate in different networks, which can make them inaccessible to one another.

These processes may become easier with the implementation of the reforms laid out in the NHS Long Term Plan (2019), which aim towards a transition to fully integrated and community-based health care over the next few years. Integrated Care

Systems (ICSs) will bring together local providers of primary and specialist care, physical and mental health services, and social care, with links to independent and third sector organisations.<sup>93</sup> At the local level, Primary Care Networks (PCNs) within ICSs will bring general practices together with other local providers, and support social prescribing.

As these are regional and local structures, organisations should reach out to their Primary Care Networks, to link workers if they want to be involved in social prescribing, and to local government and commissioners. It is important to approach management levels rather than individuals, as this is more likely to produce sustainable partnerships. Heritage organisations should establish and promote credible wellbeing programmes that will be recognised by health and social care providers, being clear about the unique attributes of heritage, and emphasising the overall impact and benefits of their programmes.

This in itself requires consultation with community stakeholders and evaluation incorporated from the start. This may be easier to achieve if wellbeing is embedded organisationally, and factored into recruitment, training, and support for staff at all levels. A survey conducted by the NAMHW, however, found a 'slow rate of organisational change', and a 'low visibility of health and wellbeing' across the heritage sector.<sup>94</sup> As the importance of wellbeing has been made clearer than ever by COVID-19, this may be a time for organisations to take stock and integrate wellbeing into their core aims.

## COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges for the sector as well as the whole of society. Where the wellbeing benefits of heritage are concerned, continued social distancing will present a particular challenge in the longer term. This is especially true for vulnerable and older adults, who may have to continue to rigorously socially distance even after restrictions are lifted.

The impact on older adults will also challenge the volunteering base of the sector. The Heritage Volunteering Survey for 2019 found that the average value of volunteering for an organisation is £61,903 per year (£246,000 for over a quarter of organisations) and 58% of those volunteers are over 55.<sup>95</sup> Expanding and diversifying the volunteering base will be key for heritage organisations moving forward, and so organisations should emphasise the wellbeing benefits of heritage and heritage volunteering.

Loneliness and isolation were already key social issues before the pandemic, as shown by the DCMS loneliness strategy, *A Connected Society*,<sup>96</sup> and *Loneliness Annual Report* (January 2020), which acknowledged that 'A whole society approach is essential' to addressing the issue.<sup>97</sup> Loneliness for some groups has increased since the start of the lockdown, however, and may continue to do so. The Office for National Statistics has found that 30.9% of people surveyed reported that their wellbeing had been affected through being lonely in the seven days beforehand,<sup>98</sup> and the Mental Health Foundation has found that as social distancing

and increased loneliness becomes long-term, the risk of mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression increases.<sup>99</sup>

A key benefit of engagement with heritage is social connection and there are pre-2020 examples of remote-access heritage work for those who cannot visit heritage sites themselves. The Wallace Collection, for example, loans themed resource boxes to care homes and day centres, which are specially designed so that staff and volunteers can deliver museum sessions.<sup>100</sup> Since the start of the pandemic, the sector has displayed tremendous resilience and innovation, particularly in the digital space, with a range of online and offline resources. Immersive technology agency Arcade, for example, has created a digital gallery for National Historic Ships UK, enabling pupils from a local primary school to go on virtual school trips together, using only their web browsers.<sup>101</sup> Efforts have been made across the whole country: the Culture, Health, and Wellbeing Alliance has produced a report of how arts and heritage organisations have supported 100,000 shielding and vulnerable people during the pandemic.<sup>102</sup> The challenge will be for organisations to continue to reach those people and places with fewer technological capabilities, whilst they themselves have been destabilised by the pandemic.

Heritage should be seen as an important part of the COVID-19 recovery and as key to the creation of community resilience. The sector will need continued investment and support in order for it to maintain its organisational and programming abilities. If it does not, it will struggle to deliver wellbeing outcomes, and

this will impact the people who can most benefit from all that heritage has to offer.

# Recommendations

## For the heritage sector

- Embed wellbeing into your organisation.** By placing wellbeing at the centre of future organisational strategies, heritage organisations can become more resilient into the future, by being more relevant and attuned to societal need. A focus on wellbeing provides opportunities for groups not otherwise engaged in heritage to understand the benefits it can provide, and can be a key part of a business case to funding bodies. Recognise that this change will not happen overnight, and will take an investment in organisational effort to achieve. This is likely to be most effective when considered at all levels - including in training and recruitment.
- Build in evaluation from the start.** Invest time in considering the aims of your programme to determine the right evaluation methodology. Selecting the right evaluation methodology will help make a more robust case to Clinical Commissioning Groups and others in the health and care sector, and grant making bodies. Explore the use of existing tools - and use the one that fits best to your project. It is not always necessary to reinvent the wheel - incorporating an existing evaluation method into the cycle of a programme will ensure measurable outcomes that can support heritage's case for wellbeing.
- Understand the power of partnerships.** This report demonstrates that projects completed with a series of partner organisations often have a greater impact. Consider organisations that could work with you to drive change. Consider partnerships with non-heritage organisations or groups to leverage different areas of expertise, skills, and understanding. Focusing on senior-level buy-in will ensure your project can develop with cross-sector support.
- Work with the local community.** Working with local third-sector and voluntary organisations can be a route to engaging with people who would benefit from heritage based interventions. Similarly, getting to know the health networks and systems in your local area will help you to build more effective partnerships. Even small partnerships can snowball into larger projects down the line.
- Engage with the intended audience from the outset to shape the project.** Your target audience is likely to know what will work for them. By engaging with them from the very beginning, you can shape your project to suit their needs most appropriately. This can also amplify the wellbeing benefit of your project - as individuals feel empowered in its delivery and maintenance. In addition, constant reflection, evaluation, and consultation with relevant stakeholders during proposal development are key criteria for funding bodies.
- Accessibility is paramount.** Projects should be designed with accessibility in mind, and should aim to tackle inequity and social injustice. Prioritise groups that may not be heritage's natural audience. This includes demonstrating the breadth and variety of the heritage sector. It is more than just old stuff. But this is not always well known.
- Ensure that your project is sustainable.** Recognise that the focus should be on initiatives that are able to provide a sustained, i.e. enduring and repeatable, service to a community or constituent group locally, regionally or nationally in accordance with the size and reach of the heritage organisation. A 'shot in the arm' fix of heritage is unlikely to achieve lasting health and wellbeing benefits for participants. A recurring criticism of research in this field has been the lack of longitudinal analysis, which is critical for establishing causality.<sup>103</sup>
- Build a compelling narrative.** There is so much fantastic work already taking place in the heritage sector to boost wellbeing, but this isn't widely known. Heritage organisations need to work to celebrate their successes more vocally, sharing best practice with others and boosting the impact of the sector. Clear marketing into health organisations, academia, and other potential cross-sector partners, setting out the clear positive benefits of interaction with heritage is vital to gaining support.
- Share existing expertise through training.** Heritage professionals with relevant work experience should share their best practice through targeted training for other practitioners wishing to work in this space. The perceived barriers to entry in delivering wellbeing programmes can often be too high for many organisations, but this can be remedied through continuing professional training.

## For the health and care sector

### For social prescribing services

- **Recognise heritage's positive contribution to wellbeing.** This report shows the work that heritage organisations in our membership have conducted to boost the wellbeing of their communities. Recognise this opportunity when planning and delivering social prescribing services to meet the needs of local populations.
- **Build sustainable partnerships.** Reach out to and work with local heritage organisations to better understand what their offer is, and how this can help those who would benefit from non-clinical interventions. Stronger links between the heritage sector, Link Workers, and Primary Care Networks will guide the development of future offers.

### For commissioners

- **Integrate heritage approaches into strategy.** Clear ambition to enhance the role of the historic environment as a critical determinant in population health and wellbeing should be reflected in personalised care strategy and commissioning intentions.
- **Incorporate heritage approaches into training for healthcare professionals.** This is currently a priority in the Culture and Health field; the unique attributes of heritage engagement (combining the historic environment with place making activities and creative tasks) should be highlighted in training and its value understood by staff and students.
- **Support heritage organisations to obtain the evaluation data you need.** Be clear on the data needed to make the case for heritage. By working with heritage organisations to properly design evaluation, effective data is more easily gathered and used. But also recognise that lived experience is an important indicator of wellbeing, and qualitative reporting should not be discounted.

### For the UK government:

- **Prioritise wellbeing as a policy outcome.** The integration of wellbeing into a range of explicit outcomes as well as its use as a measure of progress has become a core priority for many governments including those of Scotland, Wales, and New Zealand. The UK Government in Westminster should also follow suit. Wellbeing-focused policy promotes commitment, accountability, and consistency across government, and exemplifies how wellbeing can be incorporated into programme formulation and evaluation. Adopting such a strategy will help to galvanise other sectors and bodies to align to support this aim.

- **Promote the power of heritage in policy making.** Recognise that the heritage sector has a significant role to play in promoting health and wellbeing in society. We welcome the development of the National Centre for Creative Health, but heritage must also play a part. The government should work with the sector to develop a joint strategy to promote heritage, culture and the arts as significant non-clinical contributors to the health and wellbeing of the nation.
- **Ensure the right tools are in place for effective delivery.** Social prescriptions are a great way of engaging hard-to-reach audiences with heritage, but the proper funding must be in place for this to work effectively. The government cannot simply pass on the cost of health provision to already struggling heritage organisations.

### Wider policy considerations

- **Heritage should be considered in the planning system.** Good design, quality local environments, and vibrant green spaces all help to support local wellbeing. The same can be said for the historic environment. Heritage can and must be central to planning proposals, to ensure that it is easily accessible to as wide an audience as possible - boosting wellbeing for all.
- **Heritage should be central to our post-COVID renewal.** The heritage sector is ready and willing to support the nation's post-COVID recovery in a myriad of ways. As discussed, this can be through support for wellbeing, but also through capital heritage projects, and boosting digital skills for an increasingly online future. This report has demonstrated that the value of heritage goes beyond just "old stuff" - it can support society in many different ways. This needs to be supported by sustained investment to ensure that the sector is able to continue to deliver programming and support into the future.

# Further Resources

## **Culture, Health and Wellbeing Alliance**

<https://www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk>

## **Historic England, Heritage Counts (Heritage and Society, 2019)**

<https://historicengland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2019/heritage-and-society-2019/>

## **National Academy for Social Prescribing**

<https://www.socialprescribingacademy.org.uk>

## **National Alliance for Museums, Health and Wellbeing**

<https://museumsandwellbeingalliance.wordpress.com>

## **National Lottery Heritage Fund (Wellbeing Guidance)**

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/publications/wellbeing-guidance>

## **Social Prescribing Network**

<https://www.socialprescribingnetwork.com>

## **University College London: Culture, Health and Wellbeing**

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/short-courses/search-courses/culture-health-and-wellbeing-introduction>

## **What Works Centre for Wellbeing**

<https://whatworkswellbeing.org>

## **Full Bibliography**

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**“Our cultural institutions, large and small, have played a critical part in conservation, education... and, crucially, the well-being of our citizens”**

**Baroness Barrann DCMS  
PUSS, Lords Debate  
21 May 2020**

# Thanks

We are very grateful to Wessex Archaeology, who have donated their time and expertise in delivering this report. The production of this report would not be possible without their generosity and belief in our aims for this project from the outset. We'd also like to thank all the Heritage Alliance members who have provided case studies and general advice in the production of this report.

## About the Report

This report was first conceived after the Heritage Alliance's 2017 Heritage Debate - Is Heritage Good for Your Health? which was generously sponsored by Ecclesiastical Insurance. Many members of the Alliance's team have worked on this report in its various forms, including (then) interns Katie Ramsey, Achim Schroer, and Francesca Benetti. Initial work was completed over 2018, but work intensified over the last six months. Case studies have been gathered from across the Alliance membership (and beyond), and we have worked with interested stakeholders from across the heritage and health sectors in considering our recommendations. Two well-attended round tables were particularly useful in testing our initial draft. The publication of this report - although a long time coming - is not the end of the process, but the start. We hope to continue to make the case for heritage's impact on wellbeing far into the future and to have given organisations the inspiration to be creative in this space.

## About the Authors

This report has been worked on by various members of the Heritage Alliance team over the last three years. Most recently, this has been brought to fruition by **Max Price**, a civil servant on secondment to the Alliance, and **Sophie Keynes**, who has volunteered at the Alliance since January 2020. **Max** has gained experience of policy making in various roles across government. **Sophie** graduated in 2019 from the University of Oxford, where she is now due to begin a Masters in History. She is interested in the impact of Victorian culture on modern health and care, and how history and heritage can support public health. **Giles Woodhouse**, Chief Strategy Officer at Wessex Archeology, has also provided wise counsel and guidance throughout the drafting of this report, especially when considering the recommendations. **Giles** is undertaking a part time professional doctorate in policy research and practice at Bath University and has a research interest in the role of heritage in promoting health and wellbeing arising from his involvement in Operation Nightingale and former employment at Help for Heroes.

## About The Heritage Alliance

The Heritage Alliance is England's largest coalition of heritage interests. It brings together over 150 independent heritage organisations ranging from English Heritage, the National Trust, The Canal & River Trust and Historic Houses, to specialist bodies representing visitors, owners, volunteers, professional practitioners, museums, mobile heritage, funders and academics. Between them, over 7 million volunteers, trustees, members and staff demonstrate the strength and commitment of the independent heritage movement. Join us here.

## Heritage Alliance Members Involved

Alexandra Palace  
Allchurches Trust  
Breaking Ground Heritage  
Canal and River Trust  
Churches Conservation Trust  
Council for British Archeology  
Heritage Lincolnshire  
Historic Houses  
Historic Royal Palaces  
National Trust  
National Lottery Heritage Fund  
Norfolk Archaeological Trust  
Prince's Foundation  
Restoration Trust  
University of Oxford  
University of Southampton  
Waterloo Uncovered  
Wessex Archeology



## Notes

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