

HERITAGE AND SOCIETY 2020



HERITAGE COUNTS

Introduction

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Heritage plays a significant role in society, enhancing our wellbeing and quality of life, improving the way places are perceived, and engaging the general public.

Picturing Lockdown. Stroud, Gloucestershire. A Lego Duplo rainbow to honour NHS staff during the Covid-19 pandemic
DP263445 © Historic England Archive



Historic places convey a sense of uniqueness and awe and are strong emotional pillars for common values, connecting communities across England. Cultural heritage as a physical resource can play a critical role for community cohesion, collective action and in shaping human health and societal wellbeing. Heritage can also improve personal wellbeing, by helping us understand our past, our individual and communal identity and help us connect with the places where we live.

Heritage and Society 2020 presents evidence about the value of heritage to society, individuals and community groups across England. The evidence is gathered from a wide range of reliable sources including major household panel surveys, systematic literature reviews, bespoke evaluation studies and public opinion surveys. This year, exceptionally, the report includes a section presenting evidence about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our social lives including our engagement with heritage and access to our precious heritage.

This report is structured around the following themes:

1. **COVID-19 , heritage and society**
2. **Heritage enriches our lives and is enjoyed by millions**
3. **Members of the public care for and want to secure the future of our heritage**
4. **Heritage shapes the perception and quality of place**
5. **Heritage fosters a strong sense of belonging and attachment to place**
6. **Heritage has an important role in shaping our personal, social identity and sense of belonging**
7. **Heritage supports social cohesion and strengthens social networks**
8. **Heritage volunteering increases levels of social support and develops active and skilled citizens**
9. **Visiting and engaging with heritage enhances our mental health and wellbeing**
10. **The historic environment offers outdoor experiences that can improve our mental health**
11. **Engaging with heritage can improve our physical health and support public health goals**
12. **Experiencing heritage stimulates our minds and helps older members of society**
13. **Heritage supports and empowers younger audiences**

All the evidence is offered here as brief, bite-sized, statements with links to the detailed evidence sources for more technical readers or those with specific evidence needs.

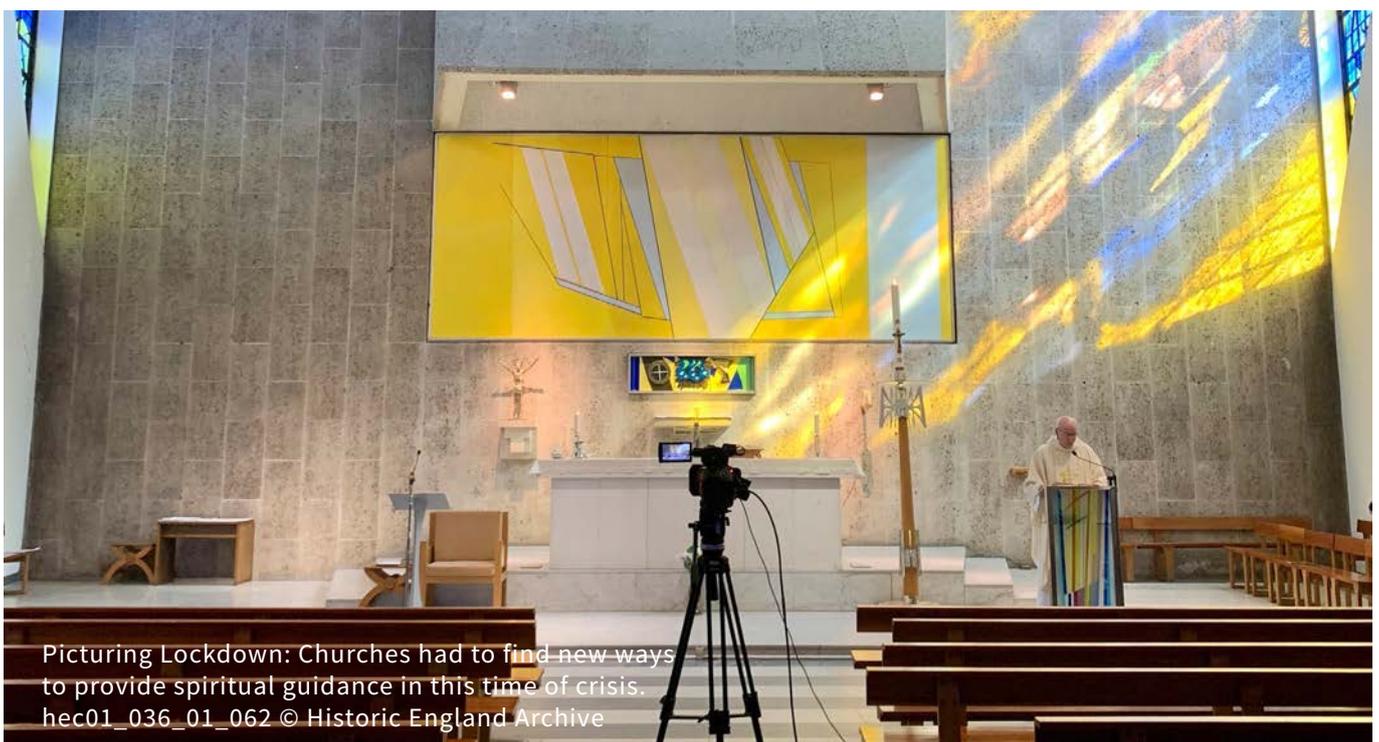
Together with **Heritage and the Economy** and **Heritage and the Environment**, *Heritage and Society* can be used by anyone to make the case for heritage.

1. COVID-19, heritage and society

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The COVID-19 pandemic led to the unprecedented lockdown of the UK's society and economy. In March 2020 all non-essential businesses were closed and members of the public were urged to remain at home. COVID-19 has changed our world as we know it. At the time of this publication, the most severe restrictions on people's movements have eased, however the pandemic has ushered in a period of significant change and uncertainty about all aspects of how we live, work and socialise.

- **COVID-19 has had an enormous impact on the heritage sector.** Heritage attractions shut down completely during lockdown, heritage investments have been postponed, heritage businesses have faltered and members of the public remain cautious about returning to public spaces and historic attractions. Overall, **COVID-19 has had a significant impact on society and people's mental health.** In March 2020, almost half (49.6%) of people in Great Britain reported "high" levels of anxiety (rating 6 to 10); which is a sharp increase from 2019 when 21% reported similar levels of anxiety ([ONS, 2020](#)).
- **Our local neighbourhood resources and physical infrastructure, including the historic environment, have demonstrated their importance and value as people have turned to local parks, gardens and open spaces to help cope with the disruptions to our daily lives.** Local heritage forms an important part of our local neighbourhoods, with 99.3% of people in England living less than a mile from a listed heritage asset, see opposite page ([Historic England, 2015](#)).



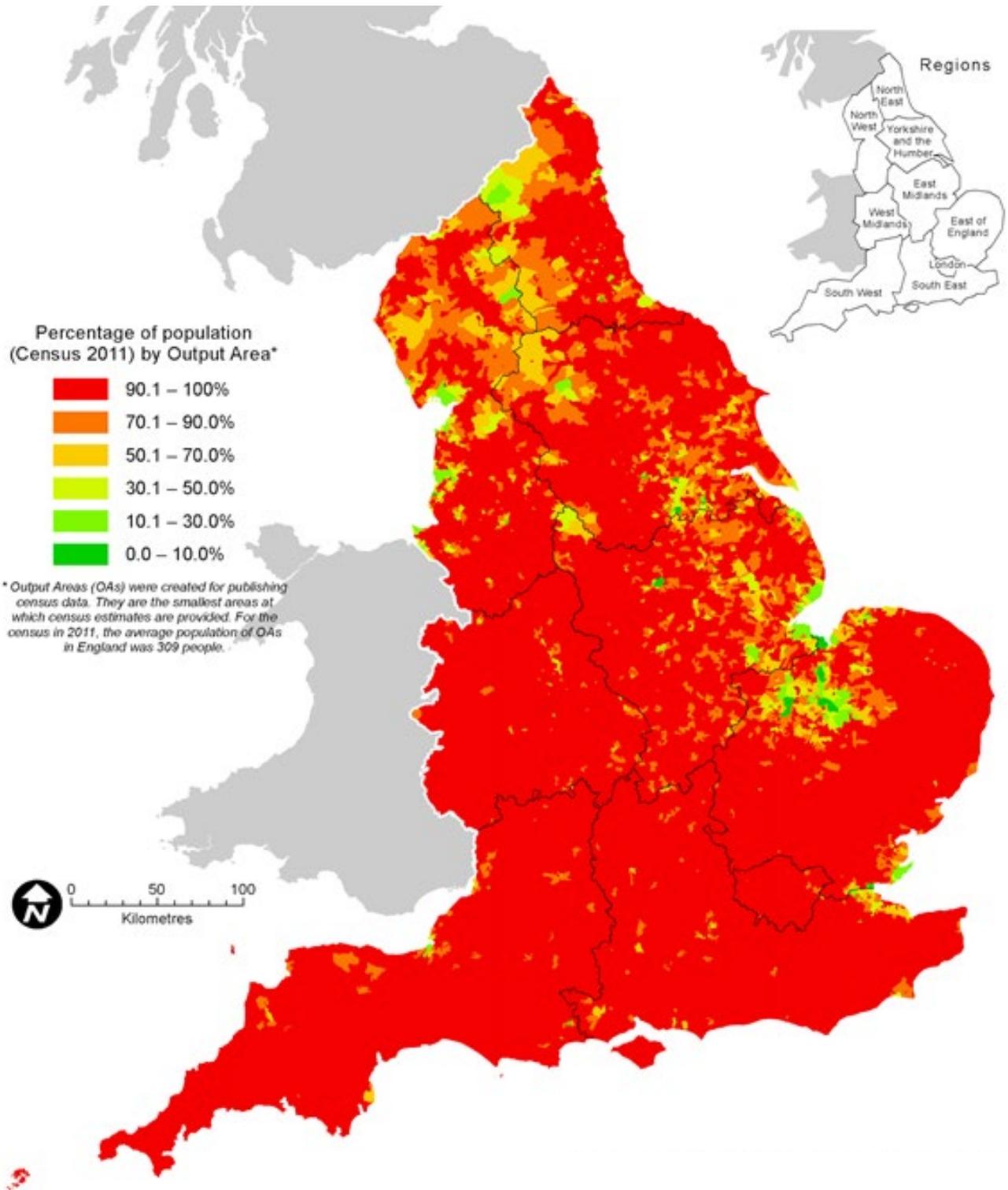


Figure 1: Percentage of population living within a mile of one or more designated assets 'based on Census 2011 data. 99.3% of people in England are living less than a mile from a listed heritage asset. Source: Historic England 2015. Contains National Statistics data © Crown Copyright and database right 2015. All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100024900.

- To understand the impact of COVID-19 on cultural and heritage engagement, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (2020) undertook a bespoke web panel survey on COVID-19. The web survey asked a sample of 1,052 respondents from the annual Taking Part Survey sample about activities and engagement across DCMS sectors during the pandemic. The first wave of the survey covered responses from the beginning to the end of May 2020; the second wave covers June 2020 and the third wave covers the period to mid- July 2020. Some of the key results of the surveys are presented below.
- **Lockdown rules have restricted the freedoms of existing heritage visitors.** Around half (between 51% and 58% depending on type of heritage site) of existing heritage visitors found themselves visiting less during the last four weeks of May 2020 as expected due to lockdown restrictions. (DCMS, 2020).
- **There has been a gradual increase in visits to heritage sites as lockdown measures have eased.** In July 2020, 31% of survey respondents reported having visited a heritage site physically or digitally in the previous month. This is a significant increase since May 2020 (21% visited) and an increase since June 2020 (27% visited).

In the last 4 weeks, web panel respondent has...	Wave 1 (1,052 responses)	Wave 2 (1,035 responses)	Change from May-June	Wave 3 (976 responses)	Change from May-July
Engaged in heritage (any of all options physical or digital)	21%	27%	↑	31%	↑
Engaged in digital heritage (any of the two options below)	13%	13%	-	13%	-
Taken a virtual walking tour of a historic town or city, heritage site, castle or monument	4%	3%	-	3%	-
Researched local history online	10%	11%	-	11%	-
Visited a place of interest to walk or exercise (any of the below)	10%	18%	↑	22%	↑
A historic park or garden to walk or exercise	4%	8%	↑	11%	↑
A site of archaeological interest to walk or exercise e.g., Roman villa or ancient burial site	1%	1%	-	3%	-
A National Park, Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or ancient woodland to walk or exercise	7%	12%	↑	1%	↑

Table 1: Engagement in heritage (physical or digital) during the pandemic. Data from the latest DCMS, Taking part, bespoke web panel survey on COVID-19. Source: DCMS, 2020.

↑ indicates a significant increase (statistically).

- There is some regional variation, but across the majority of regions, **visits to heritage sites (physical and digital) have been increasing monthly, since May 2020.**

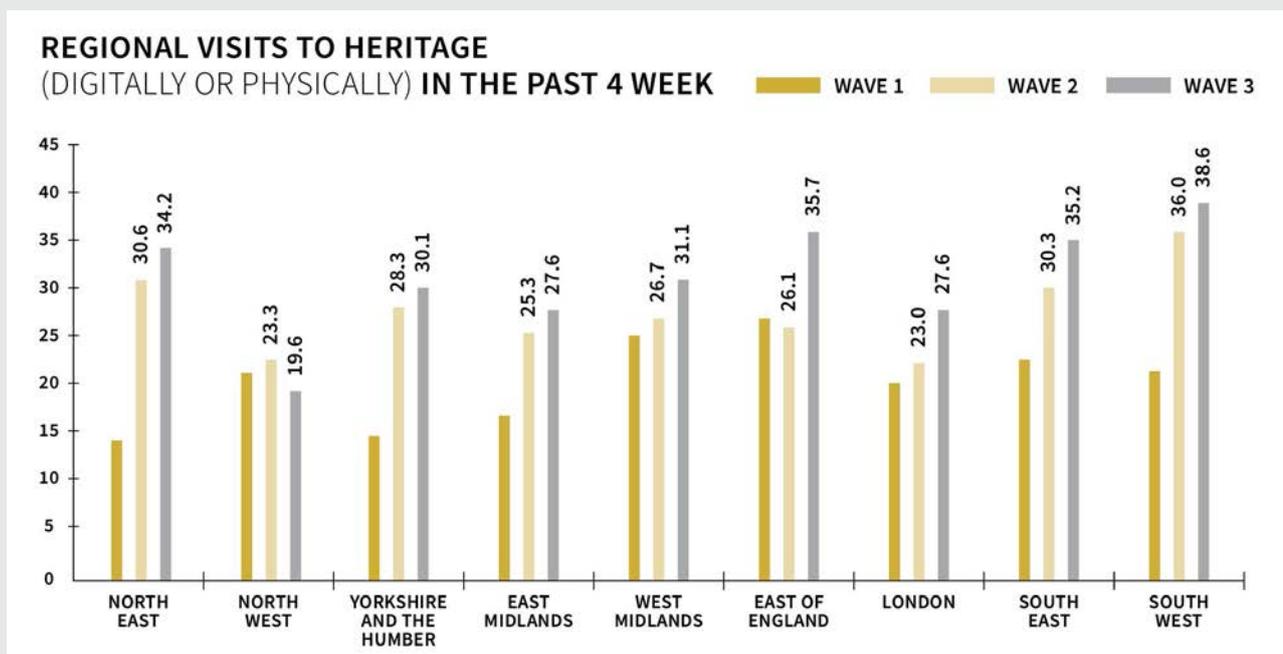


Figure 2: Regional visits to heritage (physical or digital) in the past four weeks, across the 3 waves of the bespoke Taking part web panel survey. The graph shows us that visitor numbers are on the increase between May and August 2020. Source: [DCMS, 2020](#)

- People feel most comfortable visiting outdoor heritage sites**, compared to all other types of visitor attraction. The DCMS surveys compare feelings of comfort around visiting, asking respondents about their intentions to visit cultural attractions within the next 30 days. 78% of respondents feel comfortable visiting an outdoor heritage site within the next 30 days. This is the highest proportion of all types of surveyed visitor attractions. Visiting a historic building is rated second with 53% of respondents would feel comfortable visiting a historic building ([DCMS, 2020](#)).

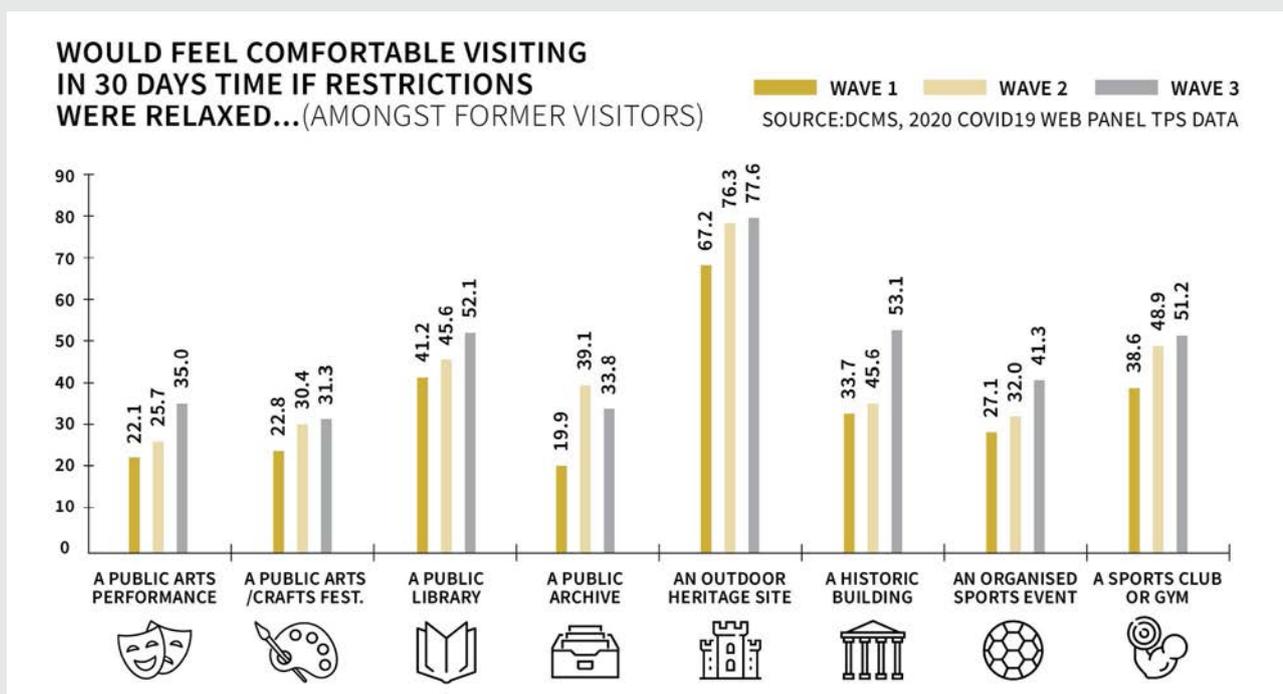


Figure 3: Responses to the question 'which of the following places would you feel comfortable visiting in 30 days time if restrictions were relaxed...?' show us that more former heritage visitors were feeling comfortable to returning to sites or historic buildings as time passed (May to August 2020) - 77.6% and 53.1% in Wave 3 Source: [DCMS, 2020](#)

- **Confidence in visiting heritage sites in the near future**, has grown monthly since May 2020.
- **People who visited heritage sites previously are more comfortable visiting heritage in the future** compared to people who did not previously visit heritage. In the May 2020, the 1st wave of the DCMS COVID-19 survey, 67% of former visitors (those who had visited at least once during that last 12 months), felt comfortable visiting an outdoor heritage site in the future, compared with the average of 54%. Similarly 34% of previous visitors to historic buildings felt comfortable visiting in future compared to a 24% average (DCMS, 2020).

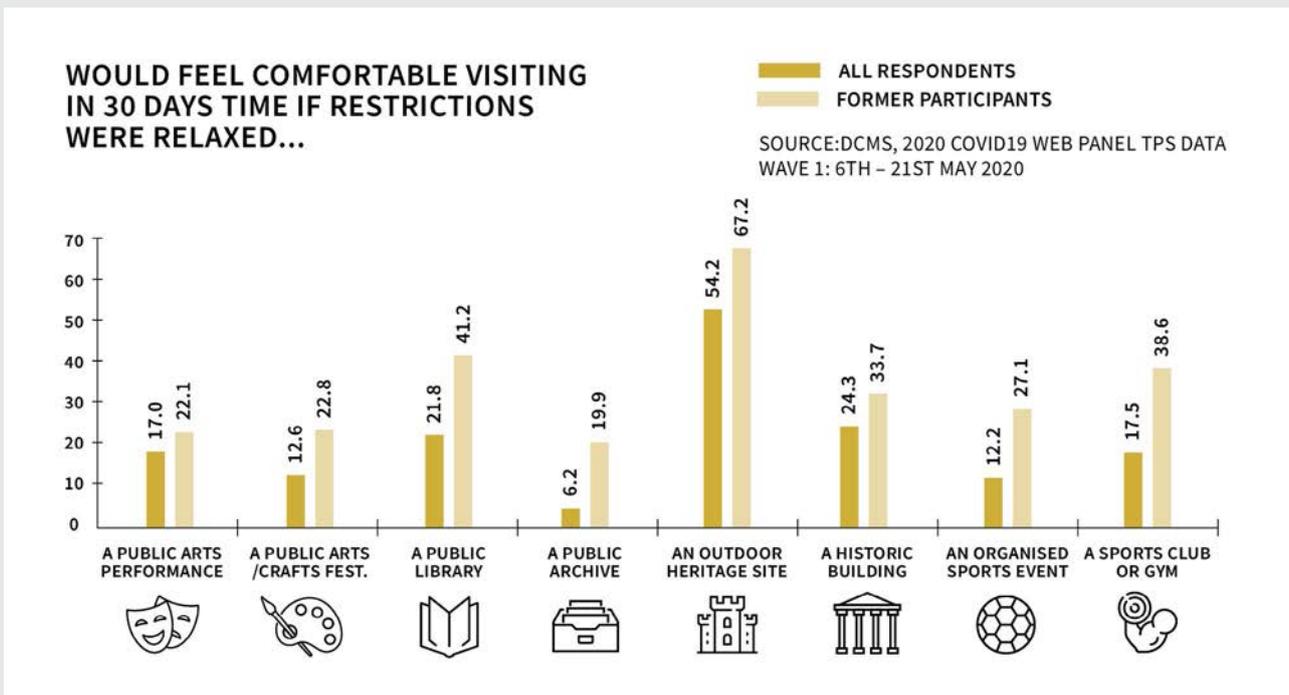


Figure 4: Responses to the question 'would you feel comfortable visiting in 30 days time if restrictions are relaxed...?' show us how new respondents compare to former participants - overall they are generally less comfortable. Source: DCMS, 2020

- **Digital engagement with heritage has increased.** Digital engagement has been part of a range of helpful coping mechanism during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Remote engagement with heritage has allowed people to discover, through their screens, new places they could not visit, and to learn about their history.

- The ONS Opinion and Lifestyles Survey showed that **taking virtual tours of cultural or historic sites is amongst the range of activities that helped people cope during the lockdown**, with 3.9% of all adults agreeing on this being part of their coping strategy. This percentage is almost doubled amongst elderly people (70+) with 7.4% amongst this group declaring that digital engagement helps them cope (ONS, 14 to 17 May 2020). This is a notable shift as previous Taking Part surveys has shown that the 70+ age group typically has the lowest levels of digital engagement with heritage (14.7% compared with younger age groups ranging from 29.5% to 34.6% in 2017-18).(DCMS, 2018)
- 46% of survey respondents had volunteered in the last four weeks to mid-June 2020 (DCMS, 2020b). While this survey did not specifically identify heritage volunteering, previous surveys have shown that 5.5% of all volunteers, volunteered in the heritage sector (DCMS, 2019e).

- The long-term effects of the COVID 19 pandemic remain unclear. While it is clear the future is going to be challenging there are some silver linings; with community spirit remaining strong during this time and the **level of perceived social support amongst community members across the country enhanced**. The Office for National Statistics reports that adults in the UK think that people help others more since the outbreak of the pandemic. 88% of people agreed that people do more to help each other during the outbreak. 71% agreed that if they needed help, other local community members would support them ([ONS, 14 to 17 May 2020](#)).
- Initiatives such as the NHS rainbow support campaign or the increase in volunteers to help those most in need; have shown that in emergencies, communities' band together to help one another and support those on the front line. As heritage sites gradually reopen their doors to the public, and as society and the economy begin the route to recovery **heritage offers opportunities to reconnect our families, friends and communities to build a new and better future**.



Picturing Lockdown: Households were asked to stick together and avoid contact with others. Many households took full advantage of their gardens.hec01_036_01_059.jpg © Antonia Hinds - Historic England Archive

2. Heritage enriches our lives and is enjoyed by millions

Heritage is all around us. All thriving places have a unique and distinctive history at their core. Heritage is part of the fabric of our everyday lives, providing opportunities for unique experiences both physically and digitally, engaging people all year round.

- **Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, visits to England's heritage were enjoyed by millions.** 75.8 million visits to 725 historic visitor attractions were recorded in 2018-19. The most popular types of historic attractions according to the Visit England survey are historic houses (39% of all heritage visits) and historic gardens (14% of all heritage visits). Of all visitors to historic attractions, 27% are from overseas, 49% are local/day trips and 25% are from other UK visitors. (BDRC, 2019).
- **Visits to heritage attractions increased by 49% between 1989 and 2018 (BDRC, 2019)**, however the COVID-19 is expected to create at least a short to medium-term fall in visitor numbers as multiple historic visitor attractions closed their doors in March 2020. In the second week of June, 9% of the c.600 people asked about their expectations by the Visit England COVID19 Consumer Sentiment Tracker (2020) stated that they anticipate to first visit an attraction as part of a day out in the month of July, followed by 17% in August and 12% in September. Out of those, 33% had visited an attraction between January and March as part of a day out.
- According to the Taking Part survey, **73% of all members of the public engaged with heritage** by visiting a heritage site at least once during 2019/20, same as two previous years (DCMS, 2020b).
- **UK citizens visited heritage sites more frequently than European counterparts** - 20% visited frequently (more than five times in 12 months) compared to a 10% EU average according to the Eurobarometer survey (2017) of 27,900 EU citizens.
- **The majority of the public who visit heritage sites do so consistently, visiting heritage sites every year.** The Taking Part Survey provides evidence from a sample of people who have been revisited each year since 2011/12 (a longitudinal sample). This evidence shows 61% of the visitors had visited heritage consistently every year over the reviewed three years (DCMS, 2016). Former visitors (people who seem to have ceased visiting) and New visitors have a similar socio-demographic profile – they are more likely to be young, more likely to report a disability, more likely to come from urban areas and less likely to be white. This suggests a different pattern of heritage engagement amongst different socio-demographic groups (DCMS, 2016).
- **Cities and towns with historic character are the most frequented heritage sites** (visited by c.59% of respondents to the Taking Part Survey in 2017/18 and 2018/19). Historic parks and gardens open to the public and monuments such as castles, forts or ruins were also popular destinations, visited by a respective 45% and 40% of the public at least once in the year 2018-19 (DCMS, 2019).

The Taking Part Survey is a national survey of over 8,000 UK citizens that records participation and engagement in heritage through visits to a city or town with historic character; a monument such as a castle, fort or ruin; a historic park or garden open to the public. The face-to-face survey has been running since 2005/6 and provides us with up to date information on heritage engagement, frequency and reasons for visiting. (DCMS, 2019)

■ The **top three barriers** to visiting places of historic interest cited by non-visitors are lack of time (36.6%), lack of interest (36%) and a health problem or disability (17%) (DCMS, 2020b). A significant gap exists between the participation rates of people with ethnicities described as White (75.3% participation), Asian (59.5%) and Black (41.1%), compared with an overall average of 73%. (DCMS, 2020b).

■ **The gap between those visiting heritage with a long-term illness or disability and those without has shrunk in the last ten years**, from 8.4% to only 3.2%. This suggests that the accessibility of heritage sites is improving. This is important as long-term health problems or disability was found to be the third most common barrier to visiting a heritage site (DCMS, 2020b). In the light of the effects of COVID-19, this is increasingly important as the sector can help support those that face exacerbated inequalities and additional challenges.



3. Members of the public care for and want to secure the future of our heritage

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Our heritage tells the story of how societies have evolved and formed, and caring for it inspires the lives of future generations through learning from the achievements of past generations. A majority of adults across England visit heritage regularly and their support demonstrates the need for regular maintenance to protect its future.

■ **People want to secure the future of heritage:**

87% of adults agree that ‘finding new uses for historic buildings rather than demolishing them’ is important. A national survey of 1,731 adults in England on behalf of Historic England shows that the conservation of heritage assets is important to the majority of the public ([YouGovb, 2018](#)).

■ **Members of the public are more inclined to prioritise maintaining and repairing existing infrastructure**

in Britain before spending on new infrastructure, chosen by 56% of respondents in a recent survey. ([Ipsos MORI, 2020](#)). This is more than three times the 16% tending towards the opposite view.

Preference for maintain/repair rather than new

Below are some pairs of statements about Britain’s infrastructure. By infrastructure we mean things we rely on like road, rail and air network, utilities such as energy and water, broadband and other communications. For each pair of statements, please choose which statement you prefer.

% STRONGLY/TEND TO PREFER EACH STATEMENT

A. “We should priorities maintaining and repairing existing infrastructure in Britain before spending on new infrastructure.”

B. “We need to spend money on new infrastructure in Britain even if it means having less to spend less on maintaining and repairing existing infrastructure.”



Figure 5: Preference for maintain or repair Britain's infrastructure: a poll, found that 56% preferred prioritisation of repairing versus spending on new physical infrastructure Source: [Ipsos Mori](#)



RHS Garden, Wisley, Woking, Surrey. General view of spring daffodils and people enjoying the gardens
DP218435 © Historic England Archive

- **Finding new uses for industrial sites matters to people as this allows us to celebrate England's rich heritage.** A YouGov survey of 2,028 adults (of which 1,742 were in England), focusing on mills and industrial buildings, found that 91% of the respondents supported the reuse of mills for cultural, residential, commercial, retail or manufacturing purposes. Respondents felt that our industrial heritage is an important part of England's heritage, with 85% stating they do not want to see historic mills demolished and replaced ([Historic England, 2017b](#)).
- **A great majority of people across the UK care about heritage being protected and conserved.** According to the Taking Part Survey, 94% of people agree or strongly agree with the statement 'it is important to me that heritage buildings or places are well looked after'. Between 93% and 95% of respondents have answered positively to the question since 2010/11 ([DCMS, 2017](#)).
- **Local heritage is an important source of pride amongst two-thirds of adults in England.** A YouGov survey of 1,731 adults found that 66% agree with the statement that 'Historic buildings are a source of pride in the local area where I live' ([YouGov b, 2018](#)).
- **Caring for listed buildings is driven by a strong sense of pride and custodianship.** A survey of c.1,000 respondents found that listed building owners describe themselves as custodians who are proud of and enjoy contributing to a part of history. 93% of listed building owners considered their property important to the character of the local area; and 67% thought the property important in terms of 'national history' ([Historic England, 2015](#)).
- **People expect public authorities to lead the protection of our heritage:** 66% of UK citizens agree that public authorities should allocate more resources to cultural heritage. According to a

European Commission 'Public Opinion' survey of 1,368 UK residents, 39% believe national authorities should do the most to protect heritage. This is followed by 34% who believe it is the responsibility of local and regional authorities, while 33% suggest it is the responsibility of citizens ([European Commission, 2018](#)).

- **Planning controls are seen as an effective way of protecting heritage.** 88% of Conservation Area residents surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that 'conservation area designation is effective in protecting the character and appearance of my area'. A survey of Conservation Area residential property owners (292 respondents) found that the majority of respondents were positive about the benefits of Conservation Area designation ([Ecorys et al., 2017](#))
- **The public sees investing in local heritage as a good use of public money.** Survey evidence of 4,200 residents from 12 research locations across the UK which had received National Lottery Heritage Funding (previously HLF) shows wide public acceptance of the value of the investments:
 - 81% said heritage is important to 'me personally'
 - 76% rated the NLHF-funded projects in their area as good or excellent value for money ([NLHF, 2015](#))

- **Membership of heritage organisations has grown dramatically over the past decade.**

The National Trust reports a 50% increase in members since 2006/7; English Heritage a 71% increase since 2007/8; while membership of Historic Houses has risen by 112% since 2007. In 2019, the National Trust had 5.3 million members (an increase of 9% on 2018) while membership of the English Heritage Trust exceeded 1.1 million in 2019. ([Heritage indicators, 2019](#))

- **Heritage encourages active citizenship with more than a third of adults in England saying they have taken action to protect a historic place.**

A survey of more than 5,000 adults in England found almost 38% of the public have taken action to protect a local historic building or local place from damaging change, or from becoming derelict or disused. Actions included signing a petition, joining a membership group, fundraising/donating for local heritage and attending a public meeting about local heritage ([Historic England, 2015](#)).

- **Living in a historic environment is linked to greater community engagement in local decision making.**

People living in a Conservation Area are twice as likely to engage in development or planning decisions in their local area compared with the general population: 24% and 13% respectively. This is based survey evidence of over 2,400 adults residing in England, including 597 adults who were identified as living within a Conservation Area. ([YouGov, 2017](#)) .



4. Heritage shapes the perception and quality of place

The quality of our historic built environment has a direct impact on our levels of satisfaction – as quality increases so too does the feeling of safety, walkability and aesthetic quality.

- **Historic buildings affect the way we perceive and value our surroundings.** Survey evidence of 1,713 adult respondents (including 597 residents in conservation areas), in UK, shows that
 - Over two-thirds (68%) agreed with the statement ‘historic buildings were generally built to a high standard’.
 - In comparison, only 26% of the sample agreed with the statement ‘new buildings are generally built to a high standard’
 - 58% agreed that ‘the age of a building makes a difference to the way I perceive its quality and design’. ([YouGov b, 2018](#)).
- **80% of people stated that local heritage makes their area a better place to live.** Evidence from a survey of c.4,300 people, across twelve National Lottery Heritage Fund investment locations with more than 10,000 inhabitants showed that investments realised during the last 20 years had an impact on perceptions of local place, supported local pride, and promoted social cohesion ([Britain thinks and NHLF, 2015](#)).
- **Beauty and aesthetics of neighbourhood buildings and public spaces have been found to increase levels of community satisfaction.** ([Florida, Mellander, and Stolarick, 2010](#)).
- **Heritage spaces that enable socialising in public spaces can enhance urban quality of life.** An ethnographic study found that public spaces act as sites of increased socialising and face-to-face interaction. Public spaces support social wellbeing as they are shared places that connect people. The quality of public spaces is important as this impacts the quality of life in urban centres ([Cattell et al., 2008](#)).
- **The condition of our public high streets impacts anti-social behaviour.** Historic town centre revitalisation has been found to reduce anti-social behaviour and increase feelings of safety amongst residents ([Venerandi et al., 2016a](#)). Heritage capital investments have the potential to alleviate negative spill over community effects of crime – and knock-on effects of social fragmentation, and deprivation – all of which eventually impact negatively on our individual wellbeing as research has shown ([WWcFW, 2019](#)).
- **Well-designed and well-connected urban areas with predominantly historic properties promote high vitality and liveability standards.** Venerandi et al. ([2016a](#)) found that well-connected and easily accessible urban areas, characterised by green areas and a predominance of historic properties, are associated with high levels of wellbeing, walking, sociability, less pollution and stress, feelings of safety and even better eating habits.

Picturing Lockdown: An (almost) empty Trafalgar Square during lockdown. Visitors and residents of London were all told to stay at home leaving central London deserted
HEC01_036_02_08_03 © Historic England Archive



5. Heritage fosters a strong sense of belonging and attachment to place

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The links that people develop with places that matter to them, like historic places, reinforces their sense of belonging. Higher sense of belonging is linked to better self and community identification, higher community cohesion, and satisfaction with the place one lives.

■ **Heritage contributes to how we perceive the authenticity of places that surround us.** Authenticity contributes to the development of emotional attachment to, and further care for, those places. Historic visitor attractions in particular contribute to the perceived authenticity of tourism destinations (Jiang et al., 2017; Ram et al., 2016), while authenticity has a significant positive impact on one's levels of satisfaction with a place (Wu et al., 2019).

■ **People are emotionally connected to places and want to share their meaning with others.** Research by the National Trust combined Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) scanning, qualitative interviews and a survey of over 2,000 people to understand the emotional connections with our special places and respective functions of the brain (National Trust, 2017). The research found that key areas of emotional processing in the brain are activated by 'a place deemed to be special'

by an individual, supporting the feelings of a deep connection. 75% of members of the public want to pass on their love of a place to significant others while 92% agree that they would be upset if their meaningful place was lost (National Trust, 2017).

■ **In places with larger numbers of heritage assets, people have a stronger sense of place.** Living in 'more historic' built environments (assessed in terms of density of listed buildings present in the area of residence) is correlated to a stronger sense of place even after factoring in socio-economic factors that impact on sense of place (CURDS, 2009).

■ **Heritage evokes memories of place and recognition of cultural distinctiveness of places.** An academic study found that natural and built heritage, like Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, found that heritage contributes to sense of place, as it provided a network of references that help individuals place themselves in the past and the present (Hawke, 2010).

Keeping memories alive and sharing memories of places where people live in has a strong relationship with developing strong place identity and place attachment (Lewicka, 2005). Research based on a sample of 1,328 people across regions with different history confirmed that people had stronger attachment with place and were more engaged in civic activity when local neighbourhood ties are stronger, and when those individuals were more interested in their own roots.

Investment in place-making and place identity through maintaining historic neighbourhoods can support a common sense of identity and local pride.

- **Being attached to a place is associated with being an active, protective steward of the natural and cultural resources of that place.**

Multiple academic studies that use structural equation models show links between place attachment and environmentally responsible behaviours across age groups ([Vaske and Kobrin, 2010](#); [Ramkissoon et al., 2013 and 2012](#)).

- **Place attachment has been linked with stronger behaviours of stewardship, conservation and protection of natural resources,** like landscapes

([Lee, 2011](#); [Raymond et al., 2011](#); [Scannell and Gifford, 2010a](#); [2010b](#)). Historic places provide distinct character and increase place attachment to their locality ([Milligan, 1998](#)). Place attachment refers to the bonding we share with places that are significant to us. It emerges as people get to know a place and endow it with value.

- **Heritage stewardship matters; the most beautiful neighbourhood can swiftly be damaged if they are uncared for and unmaintained.**

Respublica's research in collaboration with Ipsos MORI ([2015](#)) found that the three things that British people considered to be most important in making a local area beautiful are: less litter, less vandalism, graffiti and crime, and fewer run-down buildings. Properly resourced heritage protection bodies can support the maintenance of public spaces and the overall appearance of neighbourhoods ([BBBCC, 2020](#)).

- **Stronger levels of place attachment were associated with higher quality of life** ([Harris et al 1995](#)). Place attachment is also linked to higher life satisfaction and considered an important predictor of wellbeing ([Rollero and DePiccoli, 2010a](#)), ([Wu et al., 2019](#)).



Picturing Lockdown: Some socially distanced water play during the Covid-19 pandemic
hec01_036_01_032 © Ali Hood - Historic England Archive

6. Heritage has an important role in shaping our personal, social Identity and sense of belonging

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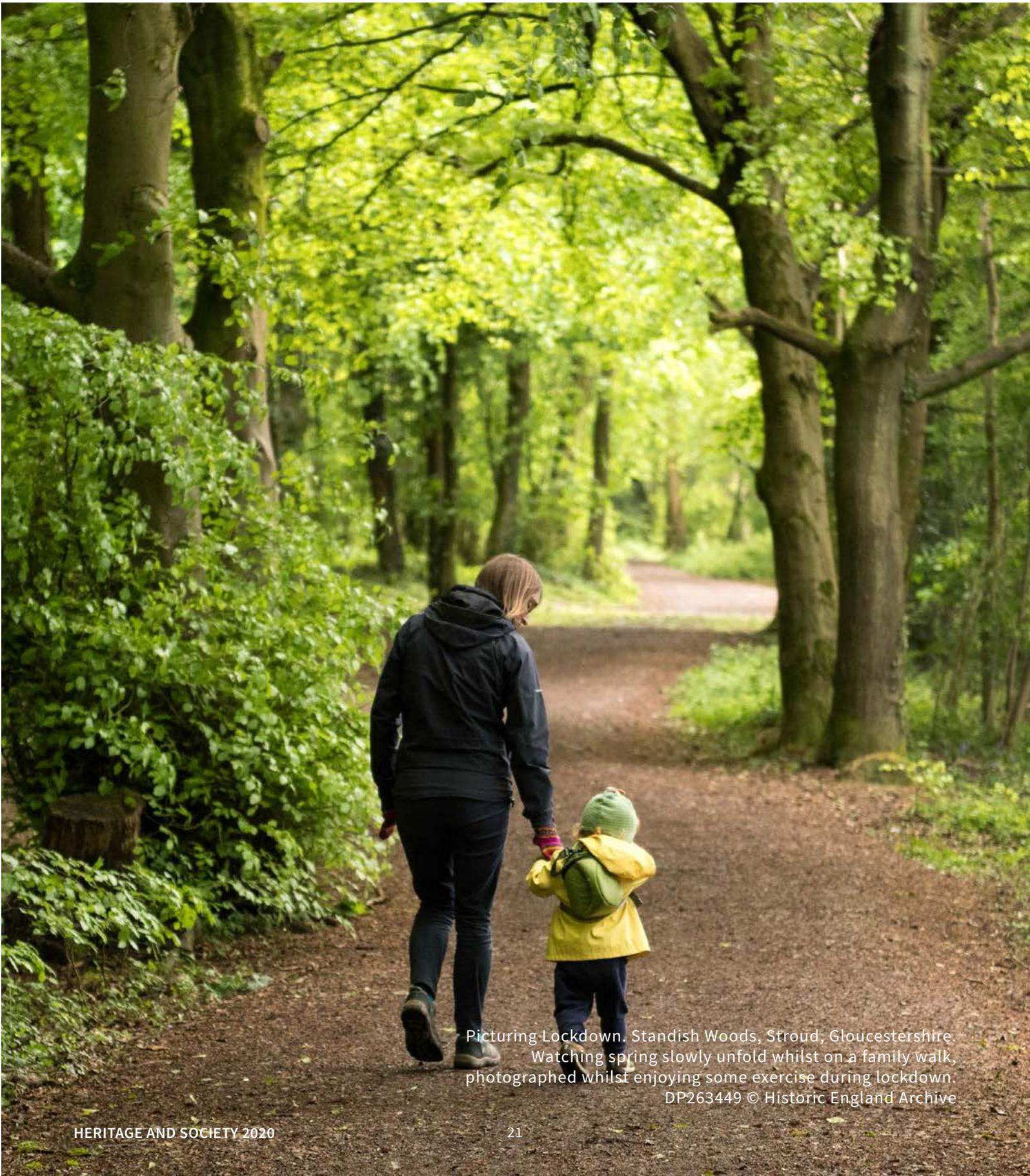
Heritage and history form key aspects of national pride. Heritage shapes who we are and our collective identities. Heritage conveys a sense of belonging to our communities which is an important element of the wider cohesion of our society. Our heritage allows us to reflect on the authenticity of places around us, to learn the history of places where we live, while connecting us with our local communities.

- **History is the third most quoted factor that makes people most proud of Britain** – 35% of nearly 8,000 surveyed adults felt proud of our history. According to the Taking Part Survey, ‘the British countryside and scenery’ (53%) was the top factor that makes people proud of Britain, followed closely by the British health system (52%), then history (35%). 15% agreed that architecture and historic buildings make them proud of Britain ([DCMS, 2019a](#)).
- **Engaging in heritage activities can enhance our sense of identity.** An academic research study actively engaging young people and elderly individuals with local history, found that the young participants especially experienced an enhanced sense of sense of identity, increased ‘social connectedness’, as well as a greater attachment to place. Amongst elderly participants, personal memories and recollections created the stronger link to aspects of identity ([Johnston and Marwood, 2017](#)).
- **Heritage led initiatives improve self-esteem and sense of belonging.** A qualitative evaluation of the ‘young musicians for heritage’ project based in Manchester and South Cheshire, reported improvements in participants’ emotional awareness, self-esteem and perceived sense of belonging within a group ([Clennon and Boehm 2014](#)).
- **Tangible connections with a place support higher sense of belonging and emotional resilience.** A study with 133 research participants aged 19-34 found increased levels of self-esteem, meaning, and belonging amongst participants, when asked to provide visualisations of places they were attached to ([Scannel and Guiford, 2017](#)).
- **Heritage can be a vehicle for successful place-based wellbeing policies in deprived and socially fragmented areas shaping a common sense of belonging and collective identity.** Studies on the effect of attachment (with the local neighbourhood and wider place of residence) on health, showed it has important implications for psychological health. It supports identity reinforcement, which is particularly important for newcomers, migrants and young individuals in terms of emotional security ([Bonaiuto et al., 2002, 2006](#)).
- **Being historic was the single most cited reason for young adults deciding that a building, monument or space is distinctive or special to them** ([Bradley et al. CURDS, 2011](#)). A study surveyed 950 young people aged 13-14 in the Newcastle area to understand the factors affecting their sense of place. A follow-up study found that over two fifths of young children (43%) cited a listed heritage asset among the five local buildings, monuments and places they liked ([Bradley et al. CURDS, 2013](#)). They also found that the reasons

given by young children for liking buildings or spaces were overwhelmingly due to them having derived personal enjoyment there.

- **Living in a place for a long time reinforces our bonds with the place and how we identify with the communities within it.** Rollero and

De Piccoli (2010) found that the values people attribute to a place, and level of bonding with both physical and social aspects, are affected by the time one resides in a place. The study focused on the mechanisms of attachment with a sample of 500 students in Italy.



Picturing Lockdown. Standish Woods, Stroud, Gloucestershire. Watching spring slowly unfold whilst on a family walk, photographed whilst enjoying some exercise during lockdown. DP263449 © Historic England Archive

7. Heritage supports social cohesion and strengthens social networks

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Historic assets lie at the heart of our towns and cities, and is a provider of key social functions to our communities. Historic assets serve as meeting places and enable bonding and common activities between social groups, supporting cohesive communities.

- **Historic town centres are anchors for community life and support daily socioeconomic exchanges** (e.g. market places, high streets, etc.). Research supports that sociability is increased in places like historic streets, as they ‘enable easier interactions at street level’ and are associated with an increase in people’s social networks ([Izenberg et al., 2018](#)).
- **Local heritage conveys a sense of attachment to one’s locality, and increased levels of attachment to a place and its community are associated with higher wellbeing** ([Curtis et al., 2019, for WWCfW](#)). Higher appreciation and connection with local heritage can influence the level of wellbeing experienced by individuals in their place of residence. Researchers, looking at data from the Understanding Society study, found that the perception of social cohesion and sense of attachment to one’s neighbourhood were positively associated with self-reported wellbeing. ([Curtis et al., 2019](#))
- **Historic spaces like markets and historic streets that act as social hubs are valued by individuals for their social functions.** Research on the value of place to individuals shows that a place can be valued by an individual because it facilitates interpersonal relationships ([Hammitt, 2000; Scannell and Gifford, 2010a; 2010b](#)) and fosters a sense of belonging to a group ([Hammitt et al., 2009](#)).
- **Historic parks and gardens act as key social infrastructure facilitating social mixing in diverse communities.** In a UK study, Neal et al. ([2015](#)) highlight the importance of urban green spaces in facilitating chance encounters and social mixing in super-diverse communities.
- **Historic urban green spaces enable collective activities at the neighbourhood level, constructing a sense of belonging between participating individuals.** Research with refugees and migrants shows the positive links between activities such as urban gardening and food sharing in natural environments, exploring woodlands, and establishing a sense of belonging ([Eggert et al., 2015; Jay and Schraml, 2009](#)). Involvement with urban green spaces, such as community gardens, fosters social inclusion by helping migrants and refugees to build connections in their local community (e.g. [Harris et al., 2014; Beckie and Bogdan, 2010](#)), while also providing space to maintain their cultural identity ([Agustina and Beilin, 2012](#)).
- **Antisocial behaviour tends to be a particular problem when parks are underfunded or neglected** ([Richardson et al., 2012](#)). If groups feel unsafe (for example, when a space is poorly maintained or attracts antisocial behaviour) they tend to reduce engagement. Investing on maintenance of urban green spaces is key to securing further social cohesion benefits.



- **Historic public spaces like markets and town squares can bring different social groups together, supporting social cohesion.** An ethnographic study employing qualitative research methods including discussion groups with local residents of multiple ethnic backgrounds and observation of historic public spaces in London, found that such spaces convey feelings of safety and belonging (Cattell et al., 2008).
- **Heritage can constitute a tool, medium or space for enhancing and developing ‘social capital’.** Cultural heritage contributes to various aspects of social capital. Based on a review of evaluation studies from cultural heritage programmes in Poland and the UK, researchers found that heritage activities create

opportunities for individuals to encounter other social groups who they would not normally meet and develop new social networks (Murzyn Kupisz and Dzialek, 2013).

- **Engaging in community archaeology projects supports skill and social connections amongst participants.** More than 80% of local residents who took part in the ‘Middlefield Dig’ project felt the experience had helped them to develop or improve transferable skills including team working, verbal communication, working persistently, working to set standards and interpreting evidence. (CAER, 2017).



Anti-racism demonstrations and Contested Heritage: commitments for improving inclusion across the sector and relevant initiatives

The Black Lives Matter movement and the simultaneous demonstrations around **Contested heritage** have provoked responses and statements from across the heritage sector, in most cases reaffirming commitments to inclusion and diversity.

Historic England's position on heritage which is contested is that that the heritage should not be removed but owners should provide thoughtful, long-lasting and powerful reinterpretation, which keeps the structure's physical context but can add new layers of meaning, allowing us all to develop

a deeper understanding of our often difficult past. This recognises that further work needs to be done on recognising past events and histories of places and increasing representation. Heritage visiting data shows a significant gap between the participation (visiting) rates of people described as White (75.4% participation), compared with Asian (56.3%) and Black (42.3%) (DCMS, 2019). By engaging widely with the public and ensuring inclusive approaches are adopted, the sector can help address this significant challenge and become more representative.

Our buildings, monuments and places sometimes bring us face to face with parts of our history that are painful, or shameful by today's standards. Some historical statues and sites may have become symbols of injustice and a source of great pain

Colston statue plinth after the statue was pulled down during a Black Lives Matter campaign march
DP249972 © Historic England Archive



for many people ([Historic England, 2020](#)). The sector is working towards improving understanding and recognition of England's diverse heritage.

Historic England's [Inclusive Heritage research](#) is contributing to increasing diversity of histories through initiatives like [Another England](#), [Immortalised](#) (which address the under representation of different stories in contemporary narratives around heritage) and [Legacies of Slavery and Abolition in Listed Places](#) (which highlighted the lives of a number of Black people, living in England in a wide range of circumstances, whose histories now have a presence on the national heritage List for England). [Enrich the List](#) invites community groups to contribute pictures,

local information and family history to inform the records of historic places. The latest piece of relevant research adding to the transparency of evidencing the past of our places focuses on the [Transatlantic Slave Economy and England's Built Environment: A Research Audit \(2020\)](#).

Wider [commitments of leading membership bodies](#) representing the UK museums, heritage and archives towards the campaign and the wider issue of race equality across the sector, stated that their responsibilities for ending racism in the heritage sector.

Heritage as driver for inclusive growth opportunities: Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust

The **Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust** is a charity whose aim is to protect, preserve and promote Great Yarmouth's heritage and culture. To support this aim the Trust has developed approaches to enable the community to get involved in its conservation work, supporting local training opportunities for young people from multiple backgrounds and developing their skills.

In 2012-14, the Trust created a volunteer conservation programme for Yarmouth's 40 acre cemetery. In the first round of the programme, trainees and volunteers cleared invasive and damaging growth, surveyed 3,000 tombstones, grave markers and monuments within the cemetery area and comprehensively restored 102 of these. The trainees included individuals

who had been particularly vulnerable like those out of work since leaving school, young people experiencing mental health issues, and those recovering from addiction. On completion of the programme six of the trainees were employed by the Trust; others went on to further education, apprenticeships with local contractors and into employment. The programme provided a lasting legacy of repaired heritage, ownership, pride and increased skills.

The success of the project acted as a springboard allowing the Trust to place training and engagement as fundamental to all its work, and subsequent projects have acted as vehicles to deliver inclusive growth.

"The community took complete ownership of the project, of their heritage and shaped the project. So much so that the Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust took a role as facilitator. The outcomes from the cemetery project were remarkable." Darren Barker, Project Director





The Trust's model has been so successful a social enterprise company was set up to continue the programme and is run by six of the original cohort of volunteers. From 2007-2017, the Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust generated £8,400,000 of work for the local economy, removed eight buildings from the Buildings at Risk Register, created 25 residential units, delivered over 40,000 hours of training, and engaged 644 volunteers. Since some of its trainees are of Eastern

European heritage, the Trust has also built exchange links with Bulgaria and beyond. It has received further funding from various sources, including the Architectural Heritage Fund, as well as in-kind support from local businesses.

The case study evidence was collated as part of research funded by Historic England and the British Council on **Cultural heritage for Inclusive growth.**

8. Heritage volunteering increases levels of social support and develops active and skilled citizens

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The heritage sector has a tradition of working with and supporting volunteers. 5.5% of the adult population that volunteer in England have undertaken some volunteering activity in heritage, from formal roles in heritage trusts and boards, to informal support promoting and sharing local history and heritage. Heritage volunteering can improve quality of life by offering social and economic benefits for participants, and can also support wider social cohesion.

- **The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly reduced opportunities for volunteering.** A [heritage volunteering survey](#) conducted during July 2020, found that 58% of volunteers planned to immediately return to their heritage volunteering post when their role restarts. Out of the 131 respondents, only 27% were not concerned about returning to their posts ([Remobilisation, 2020](#)).
- **The number of people volunteering has halved during the COVID 19 pandemic.** This is because volunteers may be in at risk groups, or their activities have been halted, potentially putting five million people – often older or vulnerable – at additional mental health risk.’ ([The Health Foundation, 2020](#))
- **Volunteers are vital for the future of our heritage.** The Taking Part Survey estimates that 5.5% of the adult population, who volunteered last year, did so in the heritage sector. The survey also identifies activities undertaken by those who volunteer in any sector. In 2018/19:
 - 33.5% (of those who volunteered in any sector) helped to organise or run an activity or event.
 - 6.6% acted as trustees (up from 5.1% last year)
 - 5.8% engaged with conservation or restoration
 - 1.8% of volunteers acted as stewards at a heritage site/museum or gallery. ([DCMS, 2019e](#)).
- **People engage in heritage by volunteering and offering their time.** Over 6,000 volunteers representing an in-kind contribution of over 137,000 hours, were engaged in the [14-18 Now programme](#) - the UK’s arts programme for the First World War centenary. The programme ran over the course of five years, in 220 locations across the UK working with multiple arts and heritage partners all across the UK. The participant profile suggests that the programme bridged generational and cultural divides. ([14-18 Now](#))
- **Prior to the COVID 19 outbreak, heritage volunteering numbers increased significantly over the past decade.** The number of English Heritage volunteers increased remarkably from 650 in 2010/11 to 3,562 in 2018/19. ([Heritage indicators, 2019](#)). In 2018, 49,000 people volunteered for the Heritage Open Days – an annual heritage festival occurring every September.
- **Heritage volunteering is a social activity that supports the development of new networks and friendships** ([BOP Consulting, 2011 for NLHF](#)) and through this supports longer term health. Holt-Lunstad et al. ([2010](#)) were one of the earliest research groups to publish a large-scale study establishing that poor social support is a major contributor to morbidity (rate of disease). They found that people who have most social support have a 50% lower risk of early



death, compared to those who have few social connections. From a public health perspective, their work supports the proposition that volunteering opportunities, as sources of social connections, are crucial in supporting the long term health of our communities.

■ **Heritage volunteering can improve wider quality of life, offering social and economic benefits for participants.** An evaluation of the Inspiring Futures project – a training and volunteering programme across ten heritage venues in greater Manchester that trained and supported 231 participants – found that:

- 75% of volunteers reported a significant increase in wellbeing after a year
- 60% reported sustained wellbeing over 2-3 years
- 30% of volunteers found employment or other opportunities for getting into work
- For every £1 invested, approximately £3.50 of social and economic return was generated ([Envoy Partnership, 2017](#))

■ **The positive benefits of volunteering experiences are visible in the long-run.** The evaluation of the Inspiring Futures project, followed up some of the participants three years later and found that they were encouraging others to volunteer or to visit museums and heritage sites. Former participants believed more in the ability of the experience to foster intercultural understanding. The programme evaluation found that heritage activities are particularly effective for those facing disadvantage or with poor mental health and wellbeing ([Envoy Partnership, 2017](#)).

■ **Volunteering increases social connections and develops friendships.** A study that included a survey of 725 heritage volunteers, found that over 90% of volunteers across 134 projects reported benefits from socialising with others, while 35% sustained friendships outside of the project ([BOP Consulting, 2011 for NLHF](#)).

■ **The positive impact of heritage volunteering on social contacts is experienced more by older adults and the elderly.** 76% of the respondents of a survey of volunteers reported that their contact with adults aged 45-64 had either ‘Increased’

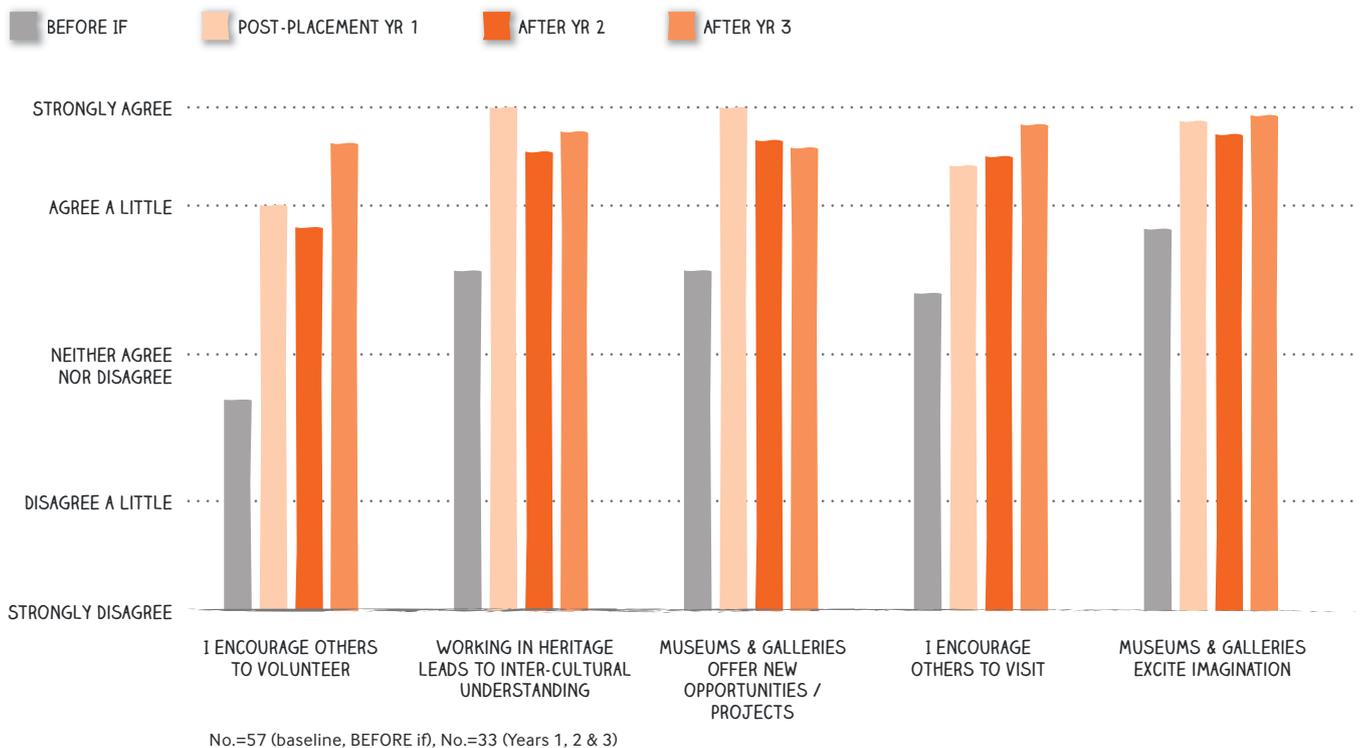


Figure 6: Change in volunteers’ perceptions across time (three years) showing positive attitude formation towards wider cultural engagement and encouraging others to visit heritage too. Source: If: volunteering for wellbeing [Envoy Partnership, 2017](#)

or 'significantly increased' as a result of their participation in an National Lottery Heritage Fund funded project (NLHF 2009). 72% stated that their volunteering had contributed to increased contact with older people aged 65 and above.

■ **Heritage volunteering improves social connectivity.** 81% of long term heritage volunteers (with 4 to 10 years of experience on average) who took part in a cross-cultural museum sector study, reported improvements in social connectivity (Christidou and Hansen, 2015). The most important benefits quoted included participating in useful work, helping people in one's own community, giving something back to the community, society or museum. The study used qualitative evidence from a sample of 481 volunteers at five museums across three countries (Norway, Denmark and Sweden) in 2015.

■ **Heritage volunteering supports socialising, skills development and personal growth (BOP Consulting, 2011 for NLHF).** People with a wider social circle of support are considered 50% less prone to physical health risks associated with loneliness (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010). Heritage volunteering leads to the development of key skills and confidence, thereby enabling volunteers to access quality jobs and working environments that are crucial for equalising opportunities for young people and those new to the job market. 32.7% of respondents to the NLHF survey agreed that the volunteering helped their career development while 33.2% associated the experience with skills upgrade and their wider self-esteem.



Picturing Lockdown: All Hallow Church in Leeds, cooking to help those who needed it
HEC01_036_02_04_04 © Historic England Archive

9. Visiting and engaging with heritage enhances our mental health and wellbeing

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Heritage spaces have the power to enhance our wellbeing in general, but can have an especially powerful effect on our mental health. Statistics regarding the prevalence of mental ill health in the UK highlights it as a major public health issue. The COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdown restrictions only put this issue under the microscope further.

- **COVID -19 has had an enormous impact on people's mental health.** A recent study found that mental health has worsened substantially by 8.1% on average as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. Young adults and women – groups with worse mental health pre-pandemic – have been hit hardest (IFS, 2020).
- **The prevalence of mental health issues is increasing, making this a priority area for public policy action, in which the heritage sector has a role to play.** The Health Evidence Network (HEN) states that "mental disorders are responsible for about 12-15% of the world's total disability – more than cardiovascular diseases, and twice as much as cancer. Their impact on daily life is even more extensive, accounting for more than 30% of all years lived with disability" (HEN, 2003). Demographic trends show that the number of over 50s suffering from loneliness is set to reach two million by 2025/6 (Age UK, 2020). The charity also notes that over-50s are over five times more likely to be 'often lonely' (if they are widowed) and five times more if they have other health problems (Age UK, 2020).
- **Green and blue urban historic places support our mental health.** Harmonious urban environments, like historic landscapes, forests and coastlines, are key resources that support our mental health offering space for relaxation and social gatherings. Spending time around historic canals and rivers in our cities is associated with higher levels of happiness and greater life satisfaction (Simetrica, 2018). Local urban parks, including historic parks, have acted as vital community resources amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, as have historic town centres and neighbourhoods.
- **People who cease visiting heritage sites report significant declines in physical health, mental health and life satisfaction.** A study by Lakey et al. (2017a) found that adults who reported a lapse in visits to heritage sites over time also reported the greatest declines in health, significantly so for mental health and life satisfaction.
- **Visiting heritage sites is associated with increased rates in adults' subjective wellbeing.** The Taking Part Survey, a household survey of over 8,000 adults, shows that visiting heritage can make a difference in subjective wellbeing, assessed through the ONS four evaluative questions on happiness, anxiety, life satisfaction and worthwhileness. Individuals who engage with heritage had an 8.1 average in life satisfaction compared to a lower average of 7.8 amongst non-heritage participants. Engagement is considered as visiting a heritage site at least once in the past 12 months (DCMS, 2017). People who visited heritage sites once a year or more reported happiness scores 1.6% greater than those who did not visit (DCMS, 2015a).

■ **Visiting heritage with others makes engagement more enjoyable, supporting healthy social life goals.** The most common reason given for visiting heritage sites in the Taking Part Survey was to spend time with friends and family (42.4%) (DCMS, 2019).

■ **Living close to historic places is associated with higher levels of health.** Living in close proximity to historic places and assets is associated with higher levels of self-reported health (Fujiwara 2013), higher levels of happiness and is also associated with higher life satisfaction (Fujiwara et al., 2014).

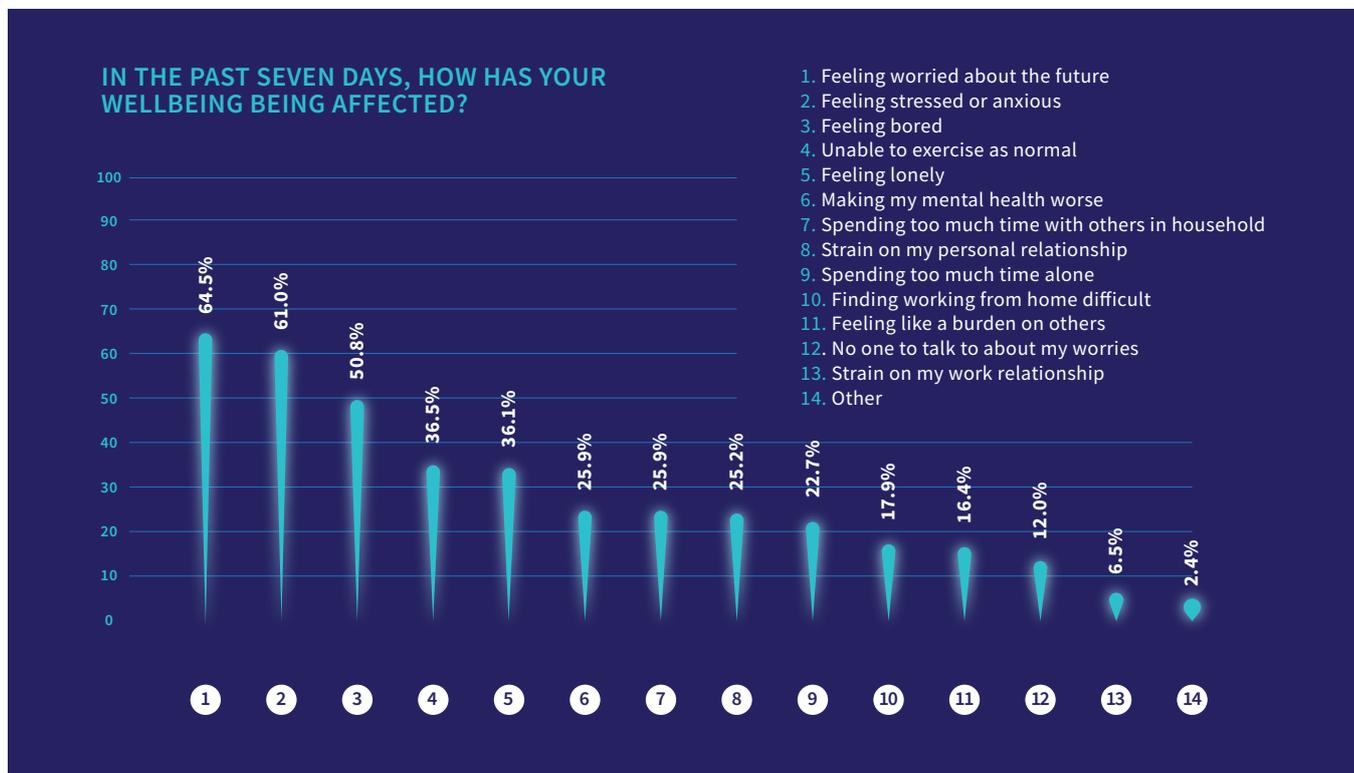


Figure 7: Experienced negative impacts on wellbeing during lockdown amongst adults. Source: ONS (COVID-19 module), 14-17 May 2020.

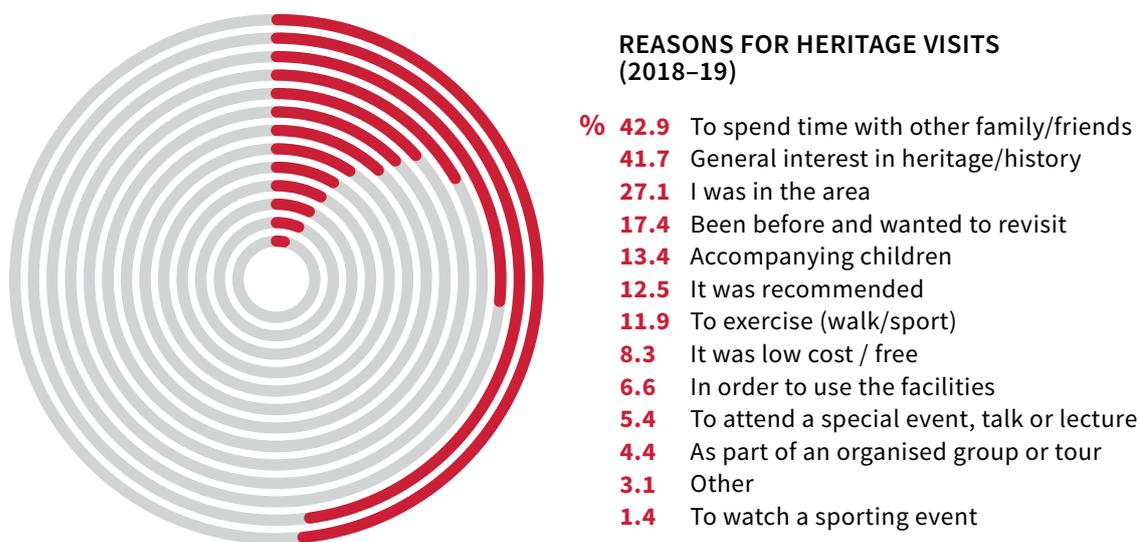


Figure 8: Reasons for visiting heritage (2018-19). Spending time with others (43%) and general interest in history or heritage (42%) are the most popular ones. Source: DCMS, 2019.

10. The historic environment offers outdoor experiences that can improve our mental health

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Experiencing outdoor historic places improves our mental health, reduces anxiety and increases our levels of happiness. Research supports the role of historic landscapes as ‘extraordinary places of healing’, confirming their beneficial effects on our mental health.

- **During the COVID-19 lockdown, people have missed visiting outdoor historic spaces for exercise or recreation.** The Taking Part Survey, COVID-19 module, Wave 1 found that amongst people who previously visited heritage, 72% plan to continue visiting for historic parks and gardens in urban settings and 83% plan to visit historic landscapes like National Parks, ancient woodlands or forests in the next four weeks. ([DCMS, 2020](#))
- **The historic environment in our towns and cities, including ‘blue spaces’ like canals and rivers, contribute to increased life satisfaction.** Spending time by ‘blue space’, including historic canals and rivers in our cities, is associated with higher levels of happiness and greater life satisfaction. Frequent users of ‘blue spaces’ (those who visit at least once a week) reported higher average life satisfaction compared with rare users (those who visit at least once every six months). The research was based on the Waterway Engagement Monitor (WEM), an online survey with a nationally representative sample of 11,500 adults from England and Wales, and the Towpath face-to-face Survey of 2,781 users. ([Simetrica, 2018](#)).
- **Historic parks and gardens are a fragile resource that needs our protection as their quality affects the benefits that they can offer.** A Dutch study found that the quality of green spaces had a stronger bearing on health outcomes than the quantity of green spaces ([De Vries et al., 2013](#)). Whether in town or country, historic parks and gardens are an important, distinctive, and much cherished part of our inheritance and we have a duty to care for them ([Historic England, 2020](#)).
- **Our existing historic green spaces should be protected as they support recreation and time for reflection.** Across England there are there are 363,677 hectares of ancient woodland (land continuously wooded since AD 1600), and 164,310 hectares of heritage coast which are non-statutory (undesignated e.g. AONB) landscape definitions of our most beautiful, undeveloped coastline. These places contribute to our wellbeing: previous studies have associated wellbeing benefits with parks and gardens ([Hartig and Marcus, 2006](#)), forests ([NHS, 2016b](#)), coastlines ([Bell et al., 2015a](#)), good views ([Ulrich et al., 1991](#)), or simply being outside ([Cleary et al., 2017; Doughty, 2013; Edensor, 2000](#)).
- **Engagement with archaeology and excavations is shown to improve mental health.** Research supports both the physical and psychological wellbeing benefits of engagement with archaeology ([Everyvill et al., 2020; Evans et al., 2020; Finnegan, 2016; and Nevell and Redhead, 2015](#)). A programme of archaeological excavations including hands-on conservation work with veterans and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) sufferers can have important wellbeing benefits as evidenced by the evaluation of Operation Nightingale by [Wessex Archaeology, 2019](#).
- **Community archaeological excavation projects have been found to significantly increase participants’ levels of happiness,** satisfaction, interest, social connectivity, and their perception of being a ‘strong person’ ([Sayer, 2015](#)).

Picturing Lockdown. Victory Park, Stroud, Gloucestershire.
The local football field makes for easy social distancing whilst
getting some exercise during lockdown.
DP263444 © Historic England Archive



The therapeutic effects of historic landscapes can support mental health interventions. The Human Henge project aims to enhance the mental wellbeing of participants through activity and exploration in the prehistoric landscapes of Stonehenge and Avebury. It was delivered by the Restoration Trust in partnership with Richmond Fellowship, English Heritage, the National Trust and Bournemouth University and supported by Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust.

Wider wellbeing benefits were measured through use of tools like the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, collecting evidence at three phases throughout the programme. 20 sessions were held, delivered weekly and for free as the project had secured access to the Stonehenge Education Room and to the Stonehenge landscapes. At the start, 43.5% of participants said they never or rarely felt optimistic. This reduced to 30.4% by the end of the programme (Drysdale, 2018) (in Darvill et al, 2019).

"Human Henge allowed [participants] the space to use their imaginations and expand their minds." L. Drysdale, Director of Restoration Trust

11. Engaging with heritage can improve our physical health and support public health goals

Activities like visiting historic sites, conservation and heritage volunteering have been found to support physical health, with significant potential to reduce long term health costs.

■ **Arts and heritage social prescribing has a demonstrated high return on public investment through health benefits.** 600 museums and galleries out of 2,500 in the UK have programmes targeting health and wellbeing. A museum directory of social prescribing and wellbeing activity in North-West England has been published by Health Education England, showing a £3 return on every £1 invested ([Health Education England, 2016](#)). Social Prescribing is defined by the NHS as an approach (or range of approaches) for connecting people with non-medical sources of support or resources within the community which are likely to help with the health problems they are experiencing ([NHS, 2020](#)).

■ **Case study evidence on social prescribing shows that arts and heritage interventions have positive health outcomes.** For example, Halton Clinical Commissioning Group is increasingly using social prescribing as a means of enabling GPs, nurses and other primary care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services. The Group has identified heritage as a ‘crucial context in which people live their lives’ and that heritage supports a ‘powerful sense of place, of being and purpose’. The group recommends heritage based activities for social prescribing ([Halton NHS Clinical Commissioning Group 2017](#)). Work by Loftus et al ([2017](#)) reported that social prescribing was linked with better patient outcomes.

■ **The restorative role of heritage and its therapeutic effects can support healthcare cost reduction when offered widely to people living with mental health issues and those in long-term care.** In 2017, the UK spent £2,989

per person on healthcare and the equivalent of £560 per person on health-related long-term care ([ONS, 2019](#)). Curative and rehabilitative care made up 65% of government-financed healthcare expenditure ([ONS, 2019b](#)).

■ **Cultural heritage visiting is linked with increased self-perceived health.** Research using UK data from the Understanding Society Survey, and performing regression analysis, found that increased health and life satisfaction is associated with more frequent visits to historical sites (Wheatley and Bickerton, 2016).

People who are in good health are 25.4% less likely to visit GPs six or more times per year and are less likely to use psychotherapy services by 8.4% ([Fujiwara et al., 2015](#)).

Those who visit heritage sites are 2.76% more likely to report good health than those who do not.

It is estimated that visiting heritage results in annual NHS cost savings of £82m due to predicted reductions in GP visits while reductions in the use of mental health services saves £111m.

NHS cost savings represent the predicted annual reduction in costs due to reductions in GP visit frequency per person that partakes in the cultural activity. ([Fujiwara et al., 2015](#)).



Picturing Lockdown. A (almost) deserted Piccadilly Circus during the UK lockdown
hec01_036_01_004 © Alla Bogdanovic - Historic England Archive

■ **Visitors to heritage sites, libraries or museums are more likely to report good mental and physical health than non-visitors.** Visiting heritage sites is estimated to save over £193.2m to NHS from reduction in GP visits and use of mental health services (Fujiwara et al., 2015). Mental ill health represented 23% of all ill health in the UK - the largest single cause of disability (Department of Health England, 2014). More recent data from the Mental Health Foundation (2017) show that 4 in 10 people have experienced depression in the UK. Physical and mental health are closely linked – people with severe and prolonged mental illness are at risk of dying on average 15 to 20 years earlier than other people – one of the greatest health inequalities in England (Mental Health Taskforce, 2016).

■ **Visiting heritage has a positive impact on wellbeing.** A study commissioned for Heritage Counts 2014 reports the measured wellbeing value in monetary terms of visiting eight different types of heritage, from historic towns to industrial sites, places of worship and archaeological sites. The study, using a wellbeing valuation approach, found a positive effect on wellbeing equal to or larger than doing other activities, including sports. The monetary value of this positive impact on wellbeing is calculated as £1,646 per person per year for the average heritage goer (Fujiwara et al., 2014).

■ **People who visit heritage were estimated to have a 0.23% lower probability of visiting psychotherapy services.** The predicted reduction in the use of mental health services as a result of good health associated with heritage participation has a value to society in that it leads to costs savings for the NHS of £3.50 per person per annum. (Fujiwara et al., 2015).



The Conservation Volunteers' Camden Green Gym as part of NHLF's Future Accelerator Parks Programme © London Borough of Camden

Heritage based social prescribing amidst COVID-19

A programme, that uses cultural heritage as the basis for prevention and early intervention of mental health and wellbeing difficulties, is Prescribe Culture.

Prescribe Culture is an initiative run by the University of Edinburgh which aims to help students tackle low level mental health problems, social isolation and loneliness through referrals to targeted cultural programmes both within the University and with cultural partners across the city. Prescribe Culture has a suite of three programmes: Programme 6, Take 30 and Take 30 Together Virtual (#T30TV).

T30TV is an online social prescribing programme developed in response to COVID-19. It offers twice weekly respite from the day-to-day anxiety and loneliness, by virtually exploring international museums and heritage sites, with insights from a guide who has extensive knowledge of the heritage site, collection or exhibition. The experiences offered by T30TV take place every Wednesday and Friday, between 12-1pm, to purposely provide structure and encourage students to build a weekly routine during lockdown.

Programme 6 is an 'in person, on-site' offer delivered as a series, across six weeks, of ninety minute, small group workshops with various activities, such as creative writing, soap-carving or scrap-booking, inspired by a heritage collection or a historic building.

Take 30 is a hard-copy resource for use by students to support self-led wellbeing visits to a wide range of heritage sites across Edinburgh. Both of the above are delivered with partners such as St Giles Cathedral, National Library of Scotland, Trinity House Maritime Museum (HES) and the Royal Botanic Gardens of Edinburgh.



Soap carving by a student as inspired by Trinity House Maritime Museum in Leith (Historic Environment Scotland site) @Hanna Ayre, Illuminate UK for Prescribe Culture programme.

Evaluation of the Prescribe Culture programme to-date highlights positive benefits to beneficiaries' mental wellbeing, it helps them feel connected to the world around them and they would recommend it to others. Feedback comments include:

"As someone who has on-going mental health issues, Prescribe Culture helped me greatly"

"It gave me calming activities, a much more productive and helpful way to distract myself and relax than I had before. It is a useful addition to other forms of support"

"It has limited the negative change. I think I would have been a fair bit worse without Prescribe Culture to look forward to each week"

12. Experiencing heritage stimulates our minds and helps older members of society

Heritage engagement can offer valuable health benefits linked with the stimulation of memory and our wider cognitive reserve. Studies show that heritage engagement can promote quality of life for those living with dementia.

- More people aged 50+ volunteered within the heritage sector compared to other age groups according to the Taking Part survey.** 8% of volunteers in heritage were aged 50+, compared to 2% of people aged 35-49 and 5% of people aged 25-34. (DCMS, 2018b).
- More frequent cultural engagement is linked to better memory and ability to perform cognitive tasks.** Research by Fancourt and Steptoe (2018) and Stern (2012) supported the observation that memory and 'semantic fluency' (Semantic fluency is one key area linked with tests for dementia; it relates to the ability to recite words and categorise them into concepts.) are positively associated with frequent cultural visits. The research used data from 3,445 participants, aged over 52 drawn from the

English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, assessed in 2004-5 and 2014-15.

- Physical experiences in historic places or archival collections can support people living with dementia.** Places have the power to evoke memories and experiences (National Trust, 2017). Emotional (affective) and cognitive associations with places support memory sustenance (positive functioning). The prevalence of dementia in the older English population aged 60–89 is around 9%. The lack of social connections is one of the risk factors for general cognitive deficits such as dementia (Tampudolon et al., 2017).
- Visiting museums frequently is associated with lower risks of suffering from dementia**

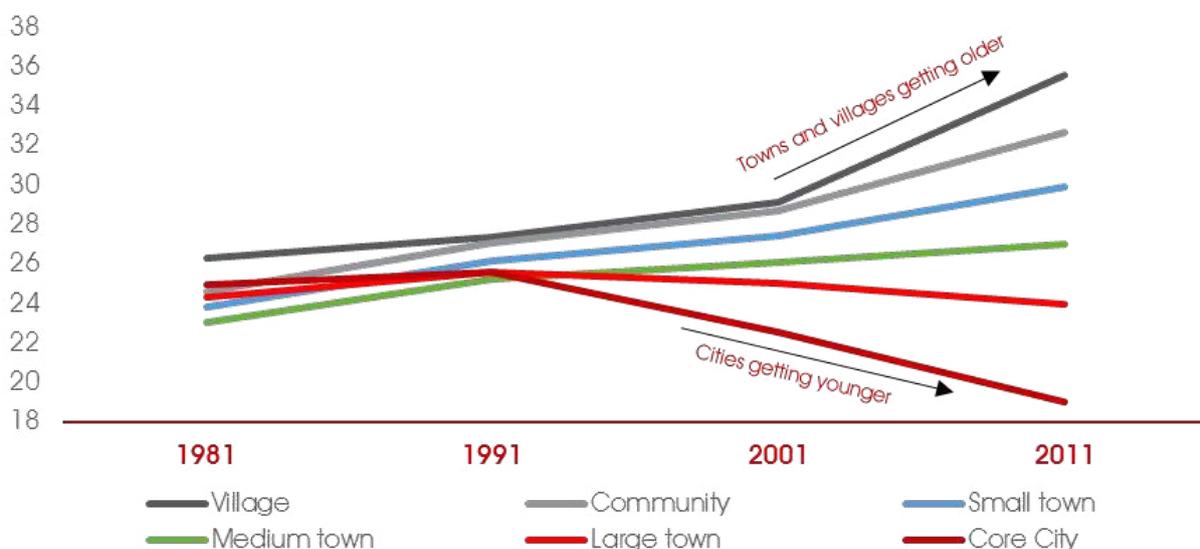


Figure 9: Old age dependency ratio's by place type in the UK, 1981-2011. This indicator is the ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and over (age when they are generally economically inactive) and the number of persons aged between 15 and 64. The figure shows that the old age dependency ratio is sharply increasing, with communities, villages and small towns facing the most rapid changes in terms of ageing population. Source: Centre for towns, 2019.

symptoms in older adults. The latest research by Fancourt, Steptoe and Cadar (2018 and 2020) indicate that cultural engagement and other social activities can prevent dementia, by improving memory and cognitive reactions in older adults. The study uses data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, a large longitudinal cohort study, and a sample of 3,911 people who were dementia free in the start of the 10-year period. Adults aged 50 and above, visiting museums every few months or more had a lower incidence rate of dementia – a ratio of 0.5 compared to the almost double (0.89) for those visiting less than once a year. (Fancourt et al., 2020)

- **Amongst elderly participants, personal memories and recollections through engagement with history of place created stronger links to aspects of identity (Johnston and Marwood, 2017).** Reminiscence therapy, relying on heritage artefacts, objects and places, has also been shown to increase mood, wellbeing and behaviour in those with dementia. This involves the discussion of past activities, events and experiences (usually with help of artefacts such as photographs, music and familiar items (Hood, 2015).
- **Engaging with archive collections or objects, has wellbeing benefits for hospital patients and volunteers.** Historic artefacts can improve wellbeing for mental health service users and those undergoing neurological rehabilitation (Ander et al., 2013a). The intrinsic, physical and material properties of objects can trigger memories, projections, sensory, emotional, and cognitive associations (Frogett et al., 2011; Thompson and Chatterjee, 2016).

- **Cultural engagement, including engagement in community groups and associations, support feelings of living a meaningful life at older ages.** Recent research has examined the relationship between feelings of a worthwhile life with social engagement, prosperity, health, biology, and time use. The research found that frequent cultural engagement was linked with lower reported loneliness, supporting better mental health and health outcomes for those individuals. The research observed that there was a higher probability in the groups engaging culturally, to also state that life is worthwhile. The study used both cross sectional and longitudinal data from an English representative sample of 7,304 men and women.
- **Heritage enhances sense of belonging and through that helps people live more meaningful lives.** Four diverse studies found correlational, longitudinal, and experimental evidence that shows that an increased sense of belonging is linked with perception of leading a more meaningful life (Lambert et al., 2013).
- **The layouts of historic town centres enhance walkability and healthy habits, which is particularly important for supporting healthy lives for older people in urban centres (Rosso et al., 2011).** Recent research has demonstrated the cost in terms of health and environmental sustainability of poorly designed modern layouts, and has recommended a return to the old centripetal concept of place that historic streets support (BBBCC 2020).



Heritage Open Days, Gloucester. Group being led past city walls.
DP137586 © Historic England Archive

13. Heritage can support and empower younger audiences

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Heritage engagement at a young age can shape wider educational horizons and develop skills and opportunities for professional development. Heritage engagement can also enhance self-esteem and confidence.



Heritage Open Days, Gloucester. Group outside church of St Mary de Crypt.
DP137591 © Historic England Archive

■ **Heritage engagement increases likelihood of attending further education.** Within a sub-sample of 16-18 year olds, participants in the arts, those who visited heritage and those who visited libraries were found to be more likely on average to go on to further education in later years (0.99%, 1.02%, and 0.66% respectively) (Fujjwara et al., 2015).

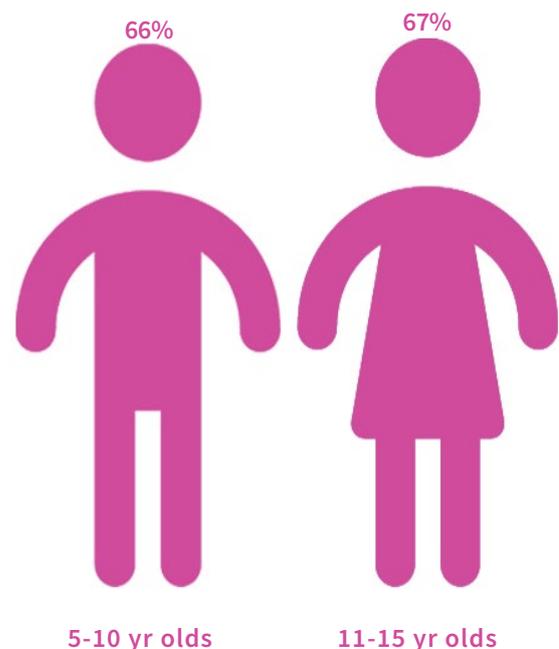
■ **Urban parks, including historic parks, are critical for the social lives of children and families:** Urban parks build emotional wellbeing for children and families (Hordyk et al., 2015). They also facilitate belonging, social relationships and the creation of positive memories (Peters et al., 2016; Rishbeth and Powell, 2013).

■ **Frequent cultural heritage engagement (visiting) is significantly associated with increased self-esteem amongst young and adolescent girls aged 10-15** (Lakey et al., 2017b). Comparing girls who visit heritage sites with those who don't visit, finds that only 15% of those who visited reported a lack of 'things to be proud of', compared with 25% of non-visitors. 9% of non-visitors reported the highest levels of self-esteem, compared to 15% of visitors. Self-esteem is associated with depression and mental health

balance, and adolescent girls are a particularly vulnerable group.

■ **Visiting heritage outside of school.** In 2018-19, 70.5% of children aged 5-10 and 67.2% of young adults aged 11-15 had visited a heritage site outside of school in the last 12 months (DCMS, 2019d).

Visits to heritage sites outside of school in 2019-20



Base: All aged 13/15 who also responded at age 10/11, England, 2010/11 and 2014/15, N=587

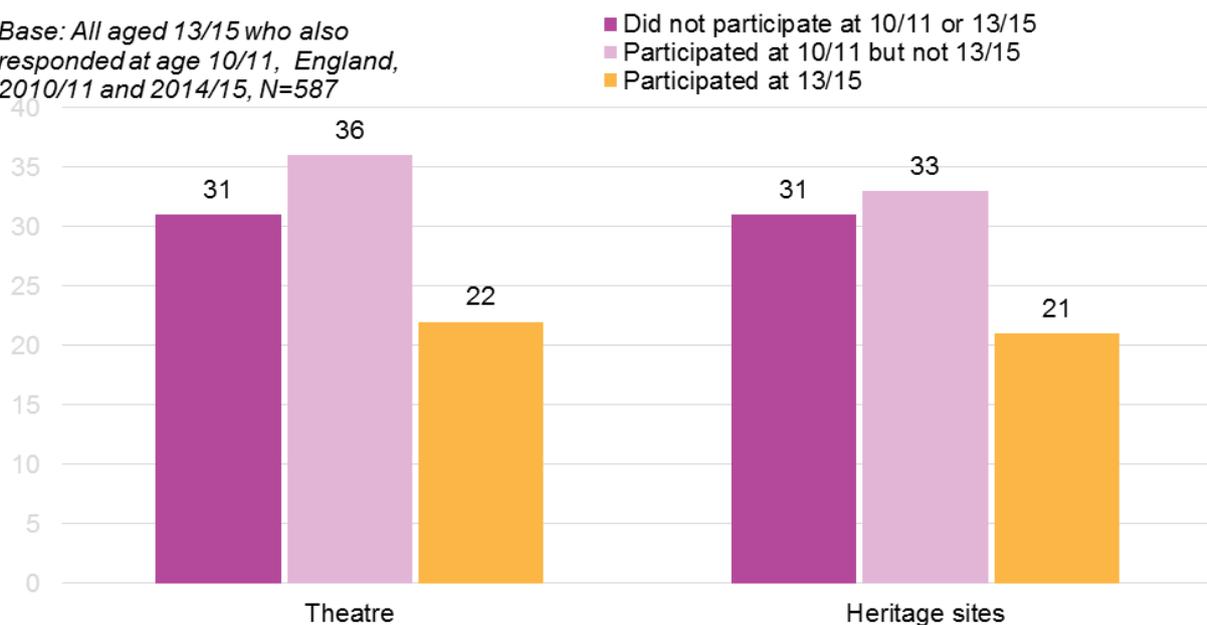


Figure 10: Proportion of young people who felt they did not have much to be proud of, by longitudinal participation in visits to theatre and heritage sites (2010/11). 21% of those who visited heritage did not have things to be proud of, compared to 31% of those who did not visit. Source: Lakey et al., 2017b

- **Engagement with heritage however varies widely between young people from different ethnic groups.** Young people of Black Caribbean origin had relatively low levels of heritage engagement (39%) compared with a higher level for white young people (59%) ([Lakey et al., 2017b](#)).
- **Local heritage offers itself as a learning resource across privileged and disadvantaged neighbourhoods.** An ‘achievement gap’ between poorer pupils and their more privileged peers was already noted before the COVID-19 pandemic, according to evidence from the [Department for Education, 2019](#). Free educational heritage visits are important for children’s educational attainment but are on the decline. English Heritage reports there were 347,263 free educational visits to their sites during 2018-19, which is a 14% decline since 2001-02 ([English Heritage, 2018](#)).
- **National heritage programmes that focus on familiarising children with heritage within the curriculum have a great impact on their sense of place and identity.** Historic England’s Heritage Schools programme focuses on helping school children to develop an understanding of their local heritage and its significance within the school curriculum. The programme has had positive outcomes for children by raising awareness of the role of place and improving pupils’ sense of pride. The programme has reached approximately 100,000 children since it began in 2012. Annual evaluations of the Heritage Schools programme show that amongst teachers and partners:
 - 99% agreed learning about local heritage improved pupils’ sense of place
 - 97% agreed learning about local heritage improved pupil’s sense of pride (across both years)
 - 89% of teachers surveyed in 2017 and 97% surveyed in 2019 agreed that their pupils have an increased knowledge and understanding of local heritage
 - 92% of teachers agreed that their pupils are more connected to the place they live in 2016-17 ([Historic England, 2017c](#)), increased to 96% in 2018-19 ([QA research for Historic England, 2019](#)).
- **Heritage programmes that focus on children’s sense of place increase wellbeing through shaping stronger identities.** Research with children and young people has repeatedly shown that place, identity and wellbeing are often closely connected ([Rowles, 1983](#); [Chawla, 1992](#); [Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996](#); [Green and White, 2007](#); [Irwin et al., 2007](#)). Programmes supporting the understanding of local distinctiveness are important as they create a sense of belonging and identity.
- **Children gain their personal identity through their place attachment.** Several seminal studies also emphasised the particular significance of unsupervised ‘secret places’ that facilitate imaginative play for child development, a function that historic buildings and monuments fulfil ([Spencer and Woolley, 2000](#); Lynch, 1977; Moore, 1986; [Thomas and Thompson, 2004](#)).
- **Attending cultural or sports events are the largest predictors of civic engagement.** Research by Bennett and Parameshwaran ([2013](#)), based on Understanding Society longitudinal survey data, found that attending cultural or sports events was the largest predictor of civic engagement. Young people who said they “often” attended cultural events (theatre, ballet, classical music concerts, museums, art galleries or sports events) were 65% more likely to take part in voluntary work than those who went less often. Young people were also more likely to volunteer if they were from ethnic minority backgrounds, female or lived in rural areas. They analysed a sample of 4,760 people aged 10-15, the first large-scale quantitative analysis of volunteering among youths in the UK (3,626 households, data collected in 2010 and 2011 in the Wave 2 of the survey).
- **Heritage and creative activities have a role to play in increasing creativity and stimulating imagination.** Heritage bodies offer a rich digital offer of resources online ([Dig online, 2020](#)), which can support digital learning and achievements, contributing to enhanced, equal access for all pupils.
- **Encouraging local engagement with heritage can counterbalance the effects of the ‘shrinking world of childhood’** ([Jack, 2010](#) and [Gill, 2008](#)), particularly during the primary and early secondary school years, due to restricted use of one’s local environment.



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Picturing Lockdown: A farmer showing his appreciation for the NHS during the COVID-19 pandemic
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Front cover: Monument to Queen Victoria, Piccadilly Gardens, Greater Manchester.

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