

How the global National Trust movement is rising to the C-19 challenge

(This report is based on a Webinar held on 28 January 2021 with around sixty participants from INTO member organisations across the world and other stakeholders)

Introduction by Catherine Leonard, INTO Secretary-General

The world is changing, life is changing and how we run our National Trusts is changing too. I don't want in any way to diminish the human cost of the pandemic, but when I was asked by our National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago friends to be part of this project, they were keen to focus on the positive. To be inspired and uplifted.

We therefore drew very heavily on two surveys of the INTO membership. The first in July 2020, undertaken as part of our work on Sustainable Tourism / Sustaining Communities we're undertaking with the support of American Express. A summary can be found on our website [here](#).

I did the second, more informal poll when we started planning our Building Resilience webinar, focussing on three questions:

- How did you leverage technology?
- How did you engage the public during lockdown?
- How have you reconfigured your finances, strategy or staff?

From the responses received from the INTO membership, we extrapolated five main themes.

1. Focus on our audiences

We often talk about our work being more about people than the places we look after, but it's definitely been true over the last year. We've all played our part, offering beauty, nature, wellbeing, learning, history, culture. And these are all values that people have really connected with.

There's been some surprises too, like the US National Trust for Historic Preservation, which has really opened up its landscapes this year. Their audience loves it.

In return people have engaged with us as organisations. We've seen record attendance at online AGMs and conferences this year. And successful fundraising, like the National Trust for Scotland's

[Save Our Scotland](#) appeal or the growth in membership at [Heritage New Zealand](#) where they really zoned in on local tourism and staycations.

2. Working at pace

Our sector is not famous for moving fast or breaking things (thankfully!) but we've been entrepreneurial and agile – and broken our usual moulds. We built online booking systems in record time. Something that would have taken years before.

Our new members in Poland, the [Chudow Castle Foundation](#), created a pre-paid discounted ticket which worked very well. People didn't just buy one or two, some even bought 50 tickets! And they received a special pin brooch in return. The money collected paid their electricity bills for 5 months.

Likewise, our Nigerian members, [Legacy 1995](#), organised photoshoots at their property which enabled them to pay the wages of their cleaners, gardener and building facility manager.

Colleagues at FAI – Fondo Ambiente Italiano (The National Trust for Italy) quickly evolved their successful [#ItaliaMiManchi](#) campaign (Italy, I miss you) into [#ItaliaMiPiaci](#) (Italy, I love you) changing tone to focus on greater awareness of their work, national pride and active participation. They are portraying FAI as a big family that has been apart but will reunite in the future.

Lastly, we've all learned that fast, crisis management is in many ways easier than longer term planning. But we've all just done something completely audacious in surviving this far. And I know the National Trusts of the world are ready to take on the next new challenges too now.

3. Engage and build relationships online

With our audiences at home, online and looking for things to do, INTO members have been very creative with their digital content: virtual visits, heritage festivals, regular webinars.

The [Singapore Heritage Society](#) organised a very successful [webinar on 'Food Heritage at Home'](#), featuring a panel of established heritage food advocates, including cookbook writers and TV chefs. The ensuing discussion touched on issues of authenticity and cultural appropriation.

The [Saint Lucia National Trust](#) undertook a citizen scientist competition inviting people to share images and thoughts on the changes they had noticed in nature since COVID-19 began. Winners received a gift token and SLNT membership.

This type of engagement may not lead directly to money or sales, but it's all about deepening relationships, which will reap benefits in the long term.

(Although we've also heard that people are often quite happy to pay a small amount for special online content like workshops or events.)

And it's not just members and visitors. We're better connected to our partners and stakeholders as well. In Canada they hold regular 'Gatherings' – some designed to 'gather' knowledge across the sector; others to 'gather' strength in numbers to make a case to government. Such as the successful ["Shovel Ready Heritage"](#) campaign – a countrywide effort to encourage governments to ensure that COVID-19 recovery funding and any economic incentives would expressly include (or at least not exclude) investments in heritage places, preservation, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.

4. Play the long game

National Trusts exist forever for everyone so, we've got time to play the long game.

Many of you have talked about COVID as a reset button. A chance to refocus on organisational purpose, values and origins. And a reminder to keep the local community at the heart of what we do. Those not rewriting business plans are undertaking other projects that it's sometimes difficult to

find time for, like finalising documents, starting online shops, updating databases, writing grant applications.

5. Everything has changed

We have accepted that we won't be simply throwing open the doors again and popping back to normal. Everything is new. As teams, 'normal' means more online meetings, more working from home, travelling less and watching what we spend.

At our sites, we'll be making the most of technology, like in the [Netherlands](#) and Italy where they are using smartphones to download property information and redeploying volunteer guides elsewhere.

Change has become normal too. There will always be more new ideas to try. And I know you'll continue to be resilient and audacious, testing out new approaches and sharing learning from each other. We'll be ready for the next crisis, and we'll keep supporting each other as a global National Trust family.

INTO itself has also developed new services, like our [INTO Places](#) reciprocal visiting programme and our [TAP-INTO COVID grants](#).

So, I know these are challenging times but there's also a lot to feel uplifted about. And I am, as ever, in complete awe of everything you've managed to achieve this year.



Interview with David J Brown, Principal at Bearden Brown LLC

David J Brown, the founder of Bearden Brown LLC, is a non-profit leader, speaker and author with an established four-decade record of growing and strengthening organisations at local, state, national and international levels. He was Chief Preservation Officer at the US National Trust for Historic Preservation until 2019, and a founding trustee of INTO. David is undertaking INTO's research into Sustainable Tourism / Sustaining Communities which is funded by American Express.

We know it's not finished yet, but tell us about the project – how it started and how it changed?

The study began as one about sustainable tourism - and managing over-tourism – at heritage sites. This changed with the COVID pandemic and the shifting of priorities at American Express, our funder. You can read more about the project [here](#).

And what's INTO's role in all of this?

Well, the threats to the world's historic and cultural treasures have changed over time, and so has the National Trust movement. Integration into local communities has always been an element of the Trust model, but now takes on added significance. To ensure that equitable and resilient cities and towns are involved as stakeholders in the mission to preserve these irreplaceable reminders of our connectivity as humans.

That's really interesting about local communities. We've found ourselves talking a lot recently about the importance of 'the local' when we talk about the National Trust model. What has your research revealed on that front?

We started talking about sustainable tourism and in our conversations with the National Trust at the Giant's Causeway we learned of their work with an engagement consultant, Cillian Murphy, who put it so well:

"We need to radically rethink our tourism development strategies...(and) to focus...on the sustainability of the host community and their environment, and we can only do that by putting them right at the very centre of the tourism development process."

So even when we were looking at this from the standpoint of sustainable tourism, we were talking about the need to make sure that the local community is very much engaged, and part of the planning for our efforts as National Trusts.

That's so true, as I'm sure we'll hear more about when we come to the panel discussion. Can you tell us how went about the research more generally?

We started almost at the beginning of the pandemic and the first part of the project was the survey Catherine alluded to. Finding out the impact of COVID-19 on the world's National Trusts (and you can read about that on the [INTO website](#)).

The report now has a new focus on how National Trusts can help sustain resilient and equitable communities through new models of sustainable tourism.

With the importance of addressing the environmental, health, and social challenges, INTO worked to provide lessons from the efforts of our members and others in proposing pathways toward sustainable tourism — delivered by their local communities —in the new world emerging from the crises of 2020.

So, in the process, we looked for ways that the National Trusts of the world could be strengthened by these efforts and come out of the pandemic stronger and more resilient as well.

We focused on five case studies – Jordan, India, Saint Lucia, Northern Ireland and Catalonia, Spain. The sites were chosen in order to consider a cross-section of resources and issues in a variety of contexts and organisational capacities.

Tell us more about what you learned.

We have focused on six key learnings out of these case studies ... You'll have to sign up for the [INTO Online conference, 20-22 April 2021](#) to hear them all, but I'll give you a teaser of a couple of those key learnings.

Deep, authentic, and lasting community engagement is critical to success. And it also brings benefits to our National Trusts. Many groups look at all the stakeholders they have to deal with, and the local residents are among the least powerful and often the least appreciated.

But when National Trusts and other NGOs approach community engagement as a box to tick off, they help build mistrust among the people who should be closest to them.

It's really important to have deep, authentic and lasting engagement. And Giant's Causeway exemplifies this well. The site presents a number of challenges, including political and sectarian divides. But the National Trust brought in consultants who used techniques learned in community engagement through the sectarian issues. And Cillian Murphy told us that it often takes five cups of tea to get to the real things people are concerned about. So, you have to drink a lot of tea!

A second lesson is that clear articulation and understanding of the value of adopting sustainable tourism models by the local community, the government, the travel industry, NGOs, and other stakeholders is critical as the stewards of these sites (usually National Trusts) work to combat an over-reliance on tourism. Changes to the local economy that expand the financial base beyond tourism and prioritize long-term protection and sustainability require government cooperation at multiple levels.

Time and again we heard that local economies that rely solely on tourism are not really thriving economies.

And National Trusts can help work to help expand local business and economies – we saw this at [Mehrangarh Fort](#) in India through support for local handicrafts and traditional businesses, but also through other models, such as supporting restoration of traditional architecture as buildings for those local business.

COVID has changed all our plans ... we really need to be flexible and nimble. We heard that from all 5 case studies. And it's been really great to be able to share the experience of all these places with the wider INTO family.

That's really fascinating David. What's next? How can we find out more?

We're finalising the report now and it will be launched at [INTO Online 2021](#) (20-22 April)! And we'll be showcasing our five case studies then, as well as other conversations around the issues arising from the report.

Quick-fire presentations from the global National Trust community

Abdullah Abu Rumman, Executive Director, [Petra National Trust](#), Jordan

Petra National Trust has taken different measures to cope with the pandemic in Jordan. Working out what can be done remotely and what can continue as usual, with new priorities and new short-term goals, but continuing to focus on what the PNT stands for and its organisational values.

Tips from Petra:

- A task-based matrix to follow what staff based remotely are working on.
- Pivoting training focussed on site preservation to training local communities in how to digitise their businesses.
- Reducing costs and shuffle budgets, duties and staff.
- Using online gatherings to boost and maintain staff morale.
- Not going dark – keeping a lively online, social media presence to keep reminding people of the site and its values.
- Including COVID guidelines in future project plans, especially when working with other countries.

Sinead Owens, Operations Manager, [An Taisce](#), The National Trust for Ireland

An Taisce means the 'hoard' or the 'treasury' and their role is to keep heritage in trust for Ireland. They manage properties, undertake advocacy work and run lots of educational programmes (Green Schools, Young Reporters for the Environment, Clean Coasts, Blue Flag Programme).

Experiences from Ireland:

- When the schools closed, An Taisce staff couldn't go in to deliver education work. They stopped face-to-face work immediately and pivoted to an online offer.
- Funders were very supportive.
- Clean up campaigns usually use large community groups but because of the restrictions that was no longer possible. These are now geared towards family groups – cleaning up beaches together or outside their houses. This has been quite successful and has helped raise awareness.
- Using social media to continue to keep important climate issues in people's minds.

Annick Jackman, Executive Director, [National Trust of the Cayman Islands](#)

One of the things that has been really important in re-engaging the community in the Cayman Islands has been collaboration. The National Trust has been working with other NGOs, organisations and government agencies to create attractive promotions, packages and educational programming that encourages the public to come out in support.

Examples of new products from the Cayman Islands:

- '[Homegrown](#)' photography exhibition of native plants in partnership with the National Gallery – presenting them in a very sex way as 'Plant Portraits'. Accompanied by a 2-month educational and awareness programme including tours of gardens, talks with school groups to increase awareness and appreciation

- [‘Best of Both Worlds’](#) in partnership with Tourism Attractions Board. The National Trust’s Blue Iguana Conservation programme shares space with the Botanic Park. They have collaborated on a new, joint, self-guided promotion that has been very successful.
- A pilot project with the Government Recruitment Agency to retrain 10 young Caymanians, previously working in the tourism industry, in all aspects of National Trust work, from environmental protection to built heritage and history. When tourism returns, these individuals will work as ambassadors, promoting different sustainable tourism messages that move visitors beyond sun, sea and sand!
- Launching a new lecture series, the first of which is on the links between Cayman and Africa, the second on Butterflies, Beetles and Bugs!
- Education and awareness raised through these programmes leads the public to give financial support to the National Trust.



Arun Narayanan, [Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage](#), Palakkad

Palakkad is in the southern most state of Kerala, close to Sri Lanka and a rural, agrarian area where many handicraft skills are still practised.

Projects ideas from INTACH Palakkad:

- In response to people saying they missed heritage tours usually offered by INTACH Palakkad, they are creating a new heritage board game.

- With disrupted supply chains resulting in a lack of certain products in the shop, there was a slow realisation that local produce was a good thing. They are thus creating an e-commerce platform for farmers and craftspeople to sell to the world.
- Folk artists have lost 70-80% of their income which they normally make during the major festivals that were cancelled this year and last. INTACH Palakkad responded with small grants and is now developing a more longer-term fund.



Graeme Suite, Business Development, [The National Trust of Trinidad & Tobago](#)

Graeme reflected on the previous presentations, highlighting the capacity of National Trust staff across the world to pivot quickly, innovatively and creatively. Whilst being adaptive, responsive and considerate of their audiences' needs.

Tips from Trinidad and Tobago:

- Collaborating with the national tourism entity and destination marketers to create new, joint local experiences bringing different types of heritage together (built, natural, culinary, etc).
- Modifying cost plans, such as pivoting to an 'on demand' purchasing model in the National Trust shop and not tying up limited cash assets in unsold stock.
- Creating a heritage-themed workbook for families during lockdown, which has been really popular and plays to the idea giving away things of value for free.
- Instead of publishing and promoting a tour schedule, the Trust has developed a '[Friends and Families](#)' platform where people can choose a time, date and location that suits them.

Discussion

Peter Stevens, Chairman, [Barbados National Trust](#)

The Barbados National Trust's focus has been very much on financial survival until now, which they have managed to do. So, they have learned a lot from the exchange of experiences from INTO and are feeling ready to start rebuilding and moving forward.

Arun Narayanan, Indian National Trust for Art & Cultural Heritage, Palakkad

In Palakkad they discovered Zoom at the beginning of lockdown and many people tuned into those early webinars, including from the diaspora community. They were really interested in their 'home' heritage and concerned that their children were growing up disconnected from it. Thus, INTACH was able to connect with the diaspora via new technologies. And it's also a great potential market for the e-commerce platform as people want to buy traditional products from back home. Nostalgia is important but as many often live in countries where heritage is well-looked after and exploited, they also understand INTACH's values and aims, and are ready to contribute to support them.

Eric Carey, Executive Director, [Bahamas National Trust](#)

The pandemic hit the Bahamas National Trust with a shock, suddenly cutting off visitation and impacting greatly on income. They had to take tough decisions, laying off some of their 75 members of staff and taking salary cuts. Eric said, "there's no fat in NGO budgets but we had to cut off whatever appeared to be fat".

Fundraising may be a scary thought but once donors are able to begin thinking about giving again, don't be afraid to ask them for money. If they believed in and loved you before the pandemic, they will do now too!

Eric finished by saying the Bahamas National Trust was excited about becoming active members of INTO again and looked forward to more learning and sharing across the network.

Graeme Suite, Business Development, The National Trust of Trinidad & Tobago

When asked what he wanted to steal from the webinar, Graeme highlighted the board game and talked briefly about the Trust's Heritage Keepers education programme and the importance of gamification, making heritage exciting and sexy. (INTO celebrated 'Heritage Keepers' with an Excellence Award in 2019.)

Annick Jackman, Executive Director, National Trust of the Cayman Islands

Annick mentioned their membership of the [INTO Places](#) reciprocal visiting programme, but with the travel restrictions she highlighted their wish to develop more virtual visits like the one organised by [the National Trust for Canada](#). They are trying to make their members feel very special by giving them specific content. And they are really open to collaborating with other organisations on more general, public facing content.

Sinead Owens, Operations Manager, An Taisce, The National Trust for Ireland

Green Schools are more focussed on formal learning settings but An Taisce has been able to offer informal tips to families, linked to the Green Schools curriculum. For example, transport is one of the modules and with people not cycling to school during lockdown, they've been encouraging young people to get out on their bikes more (particularly girls who stop cycling earlier than boys).

Abdullah Abu Rumman, Executive Director, Petra National Trust, Jordan

Reduced visitor numbers has given the site time to breathe and given government the opportunity to undertake conservation work. With domestic tourists still visiting, interventions were developed to increase safety and hygiene. But they have also been able to get on with physical conservation of the ancient site.

David Brown noted that this is borne out in his research as many sites have been able to focus on longer-term conservation and relationship issues during this quiet period.

Przemysław Nocuń, Chairman, [Chudow Castle Foundation](#)

Przemek described how his organisation, an umbrella body for five ruined castles, sold vouchers for future visits to the sites. People locally – and far away – bought 1, 10, sometimes 100 vouchers! Many said they might not ever use them, but they wanted to offer their support.

Another project is a virtual run from castle to castle. People sign up for a small fee and then run the 19km inside on their machines or outside their houses, receiving a special pin in return.

Abdullah Abu Rumman, Executive Director, Petra National Trust, Jordan

Petra National Trust has submitted a proposal for a platform where they will feature live virtual tours from a number of providers. They offered to share this with the INTO network if successful.

The Way Forward by Neisha Ghany, Deputy Chairman, The National Trust of Trinidad & Tobago

Everything has changed. The rules are no longer the same. We're no longer inward-looking, battering down the hatches, making it to the end of the year. We're on a path to something! Responding to the needs of our audiences and taking a more strategic look at the future, focussed on the values of our National Trust movement.

The monuments we look after have endured wars, pestilence, famine, hurricanes. They are still standing. And so are we. And now we have an opportunity to really make our organisations and work truly essential to our communities. By focussing on and responding to current needs. Can we offer our sites as medical facilities? Vaccination or testing centres? This is how we build resilience – by reclaiming power. And playing our part in the daily life of our nations.

We've heard some excellent examples of resilience today, and also about re-engineering our organisations during this time of change.

One suggestion for a 'next step' is to organise a strategic planning or change management workshop and INTO members are invited to give their thoughts on this suggestion. What is important is to remember that you are not alone and that through INTO we can all work together.

Kara Roopsingh shared her experiences in the [TAP-INTO Technical Assistance Programme](#) saying that in 2019 she had attended the US National Trust's [PastForward](#) conference where she had learned and shared with a variety of colleagues. And then Clea Warner from the [National Trust for Scotland](#) came to Trinidad to advise the National Trust on their management of the Five Islands and Nelson Island, their flagship site. She encouraged everyone to take a look at the programme saying that it was so valuable talking to other organisations who had undertaken similar work. And that TAP-INTO was a true and ongoing mentorship, transferring expertise and upskilling the organisations involved.

Neisha's graphic summary of the webinar was admired by all. She explained that the coconut tree was the support provided by INTO and the international National Trust family. The indefatigable character at the wheel was driving the van forward. And the list of thoughts and ideas at the bottom could have been 50 times as long. But the most resilient thing in the picture were the weeds the dog is sitting on!

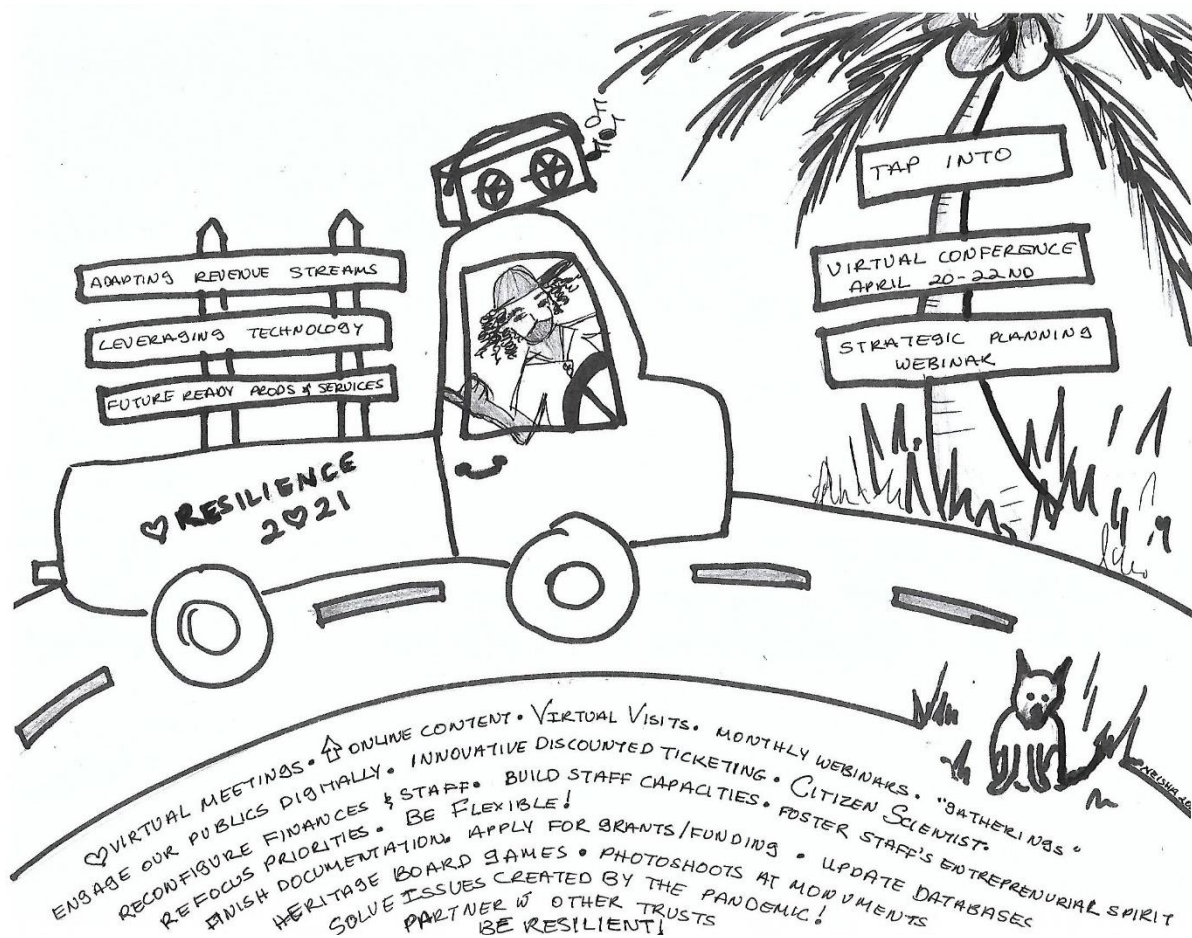
Weeds bend in the wind, accommodate extra water, adjust to thrive. And regardless of what the dog does, sitting on our head (!), we have the resilience to not just survive, but flourish!

As we move away from being inward looking and step into our own power, we see how easy it is to accomplish things when we're in it together. Many of us are islands but we don't need to act like islands.

This year, we've also been responding to contested heritage, BLM, monuments being torn down. And it's good to have INTO to lean on and to be able to reach out to colleagues. Making sure that we don't reinvent the wheel but share our experiences and content, especially now we have embraced and leveraged new technology.

We have no idea when the end will be in sight, but by being resilient and walking side-by-side, we have a good chance of coming out better than when we went in.

Thank you all.



Organisations represented on the Building Resilience webinar

An Taisce, The National Trust for Ireland
 Anguilla National Trust
 Bahamas National Trust
 Barbados National Trust
 Bermuda National Trust
 Czech National Trust
 Environmental Research Institute
 Charlottville (ERIC), Tobago
 Gibraltar Heritage Trust
 Grenada National Trust
 Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and
 Development
 INTACH Palakkad
 INTBAU
 INTO
 Legacy The Historical and Environmental
 Interest Group
 Montserrat National Trust
 National Park Service USA
 National Parks Trust of the Virgin Islands
 National Trust for Canada
 National Trust for the Cayman Islands
 National Trust of Australia (NSW)

National Trust of Korea
 National Trust of Trinidad and Tobago
 National University of Singapore
 Newton Heritage Consulting
 NPMC
 National Trust (England, Wales and
 Northern Ireland)
 Parvenir Heritage Restoration and
 Maintenance Company Limited
 Petra National Trust
 Pro Patrimonio Foundation
 Saint Lucia National Trust
 St Christopher National Trust
 Stichting Monumentenfonds Aruba
 Stichting Monumentenzorg Curacao
 Stichting Rancho, Aruba
 St Vincent and the Grenadines National
 Trust
 The Chudow Castle Fund (Poland)
 The Craig Group
 Turathuna Foundation, Syria
 West Africa Shared Cultural Heritage
 Trust