

Putting the Local into Global Heritage: **Executive summary**

**Balancing conservation, tourism,
development, and community interests at
the sites of the world's National Trusts**





A report of the International National Trusts Organisation

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Foreword



Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE
INTO Chair

I'm delighted to introduce this important report.

It's been commissioned by the International National Trusts Organisation, the umbrella body for the global family of National Trusts and similar organisations, of which I am Chair. Through INTO, we come together to share ideas, resources and experiences. We work to grow the capacity of existing trusts and establish new ones in countries where they do not currently exist. And we act as a global voice on international heritage.

The job of National Trusts all round the world is well captured by INTO's mission statement: to 'promote the conservation and enhancement of the heritage of all nations for the benefit of the people of the world and future generations'. For more than a century, this has focused National Trusts on the challenging tasks of conservation and sharing special places with all those who want to visit and enjoy them.

But it's increasingly clear that we need to do more, if we want to do our job truly sustainably. The people who live in, around, and near extraordinary heritage sites have for too long and too often felt like a forgotten audience, though they often have to bear the down-side of huge numbers of tourists and visitors.

This report, *Putting the local into global heritage*, shows how some of the world's most famous heritage sites have re-thought their relationships with the communities around them, and how their conservation and engagement ambitions have been enriched by that process. Before Covid-19, this process was often triggered by escalating numbers of visitors: now, with almost no tourists, the local community is even more important. Not only are local people our neighbours, at a time of few or no visitors they need even more to become our partners, our collaborators and our friends.

The National Trusts have always been about both people and place, but the way we think about them evolves and matures over time. The pandemic has exposed us to the shock of growing inequalities in our societies, but it has also exposed how much we need the things that money can't buy: the values of community, comradeship and collaboration and the experiences — whether built or natural, tangible or intangible — that heritage provides for us all. We've seen how heritage provides essential services to society, the economy and our environment, and how the world's National Trusts are playing their part in our collective recovery and healing.

We're enormously grateful to American Express for collaborating with us on this important research, and to David Brown of Bearden Brown LLC, the report's author, for his diligent and meticulous research and writing. American Express has long supported INTO's conferences and encouraged our work with communities, and David, a former Executive Vice President and Chief Preservation Officer at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, has been a long-time advocate for the work of our global National Trust movement.

The report will serve as a foundation for an in-depth series of sessions at INTO Online 2021. And we will develop that conversation further as we work towards our INTO Antwerp Conference in May 2022.

Above all, it's a call that reinforces our conviction that what we do matters, so much; and that our work will only be enhanced by enriching our understanding, collaboration and partnership with the people who live on our doorsteps.

Executive summary

The full version of this report is available to read and download [here](#).

Conservation, awareness, and community are essential to the core mission of an extraordinary group of heritage conservation organizations: the world's National Trusts.

The National Trust movement began in the late 19th century in response to fast-disappearing natural and cultural heritage. Beginning with the first Trust more than 125 years ago, the focus has been on places worthy of protection and conservation. Today, the members of the International National Trusts Organisation (INTO) are responsible for some of the most significant natural and man-made cultural touchstones in a diverse and ever-changing world. These are places not only to protect and conserve, but they are also to be shared. The National Trust model of individual members, provided with extensive volunteer opportunities at a network of local sites, is based in community. "For everyone, forever" is more than a slogan; it is the polar star that has guided this work

To be clear, heritage sites and their stewards have too often been slow to fully recognize the importance of local communities. But that is changing. As our understanding of what's worth saving expands and the threats to the world's historic and cultural treasures change, the National Trust movement has responded. The members of INTO are

- increasing their engagement with communities to help uncover forgotten history, and
- working more closely with those who have not always seen their contributions identified and celebrated in the past.

Integration into local communities, an element of the Trust model in structure and theory if not always in practice, now takes on added significance to ensure that resilient and equitable cities, towns, and rural districts are involved as stakeholders in the mission to preserve these irreplaceable reminders of our connectivity as humans.





Project Overview

INTO, with the support of American Express, began this project in 2020 with a focus on how heritage organizations are supporting sustainable tourism models to reduce the environmental impact on heritage sites, enhance the visitor experience at those sites, support local economies, and protect local cultures and traditional values. As we confronted our existing environmental and social challenges in the context of the global impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, INTO and American Express refined the project scope to examine the way heritage organizations help sustain resilient and equitable communities by balancing conservation, tourism, development, and local interests.

We used this unique opportunity to seek out lessons from the efforts of INTO members and others; lessons that highlight proven pathways toward a more equitable understanding of our heritage — delivered with and by local communities — in the new world emerging from the crises of 2020. The study uncovered ways that some of the world's most famous heritage sites have reconsidered their relationships with surrounding communities, and how that reassessment has enhanced the conservation and engagement work of these National Trusts.

While the focus on tourism models led us to examine sites that welcome large numbers of visitors, we recognize that many INTO members are engaging local communities in a variety of ways, through programs such as the successful Main Street model in the United States. Likewise, the lessons learned extend beyond sites where tourism is a key driver. As our analysis clearly illustrates, there are multiple ways heritage conservation groups large and small, both within and outside the National Trust family, can strengthen their mission and work through local engagement that is focused on sustaining resilient and equitable communities.

Key Lessons

The reconsideration and strengthening of relationships begins with deep, authentic, and lasting engagement with the local community. It relies on crafting an inspiring vision of commitment and sensitivity to those communities. It is open to the possibilities of unexpected resolutions. It understands the broader societal context that provides new opportunities. It leverages multiple platforms to help protect these irreplaceable treasures and sustain local communities.

And in the midst of cascading crises, the world's National Trusts show their own resilience, responding boldly to the needs of the present.

Representatives from INTO and the consulting firm of Bearden Brown LLC collaborated with stewards of five of the world's most famous sites for a deeper analysis. They were chosen in order to consider a cross-section of issues in a variety of contexts and capacities. Each case study revealed multiple learnings, but six key lessons for putting local communities at the heart of our global heritage efforts rose to the top. Each lesson is linked to a particular site, but these key learnings surfaced again and again across all of the case studies.



1 Deep, authentic, and lasting engagement with the local community is crucial to building long-term trust.

The Giant's Causeway

The Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland is an area of some 40,000 interlocking basalt columns flanked by the North Atlantic Ocean and a landscape of dramatic cliffs. As owner of one of the most heavily visited sites in Northern Ireland, the National Trust of England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (National Trust) has faced a variety of challenges to ensure sustainable, responsible tourism that works for the residents of the local community. The National Trust implemented an extensive community outreach program at the Giant's Causeway — one shaped with the particular history of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, and the United Kingdom in mind — to bring the relevant stakeholders together, build the local community's trust, safeguard the site, and shape a sustainable future for all.

[Read the full version of this case study](#)



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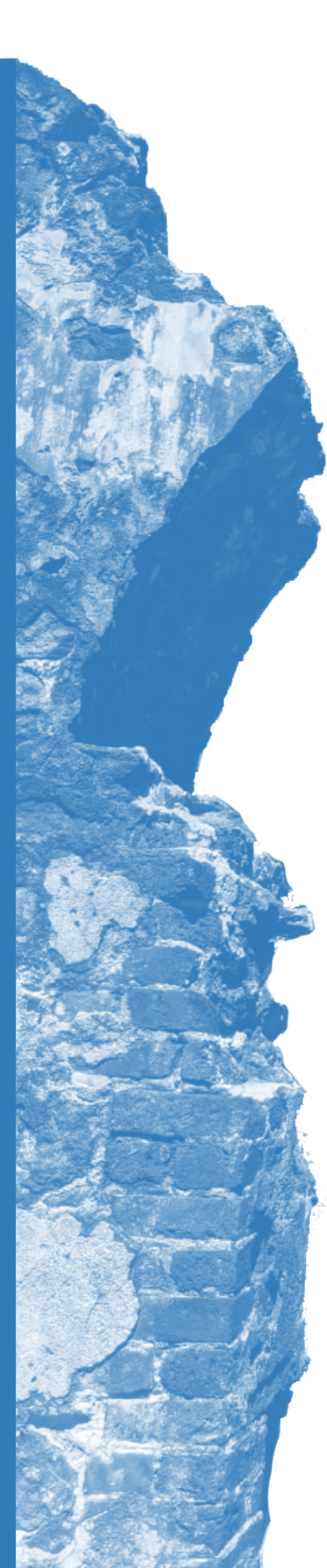
Ensure that your core mission prioritizes local communities.

Mehrangarh Fort

Mehrangarh Fort has long played a central role in the lives of the residents of Jodhpur in northern India. It is the fulcrum of identity and pride as well as the locus of economic and administrative activity in a city where the citizens have a multi-layered sense of cultural identity. The Mehrangarh Museum Trust (MMT), having long worked to reflect this uniqueness within the Fort, realized a number of years ago that among the major challenges as they adapted to the future was the changing nature of the relationship of the Fort with the citizens of Jodhpur. They responded with a vision for increasing the Fort's engagement with that population, creating innovative means of addressing their needs and concerns, and making the entire Fort experience more relevant to local visitors and residents.

[Read the full version of this case study](#)





3 Expect and embrace the unexpected outcomes arising from local engagement.

Pigeon Island National Landmark

Pigeon Island National Landmark is an islet on the northwest coast of Saint Lucia. A nature reserve with ruins of colonial military buildings, the site is leased and operated by the Saint Lucia National Trust (SLNT). The Saint Lucian fishing community has traditionally worked in the immediate vicinity, creating conflicts with paying visitors. The greatest conflict occurred when the fishers would leave their nets on the beach overnight, precluding visitor use the next day. SLNT, beginning with the common goal of supporting the livelihood of the local fishing community, negotiated a solution. Now, watching the fishers has become an attraction of interest for visitors, with some even helping the fishers bring their nets ashore, a testament to the evolving interests of tourists favoring more local, cultural, and “real” experiences.

[Read the full version of this case study](#)

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Explore new and creative methods and partnerships to channel short-term transactions into lasting social benefits for the local community.

La Pedrera

La Pedrera in Barcelona, Spain, is a 1912 residential building designed by the renowned architect Antoni Gaudí and owned since 2013 by La Fundació Catalunya La Pedrera. In Barcelona, tourism is more than an economic sector: it is an “inherent and constituent part of the current urban phenomenon.” Such an interrelationship demands a nuanced and unwavering examination of a site’s contribution to addressing the city’s challenges. The organization’s mission is to build “a better and fairer future,” so rather than focusing solely on La Pedrera their wider programs leverage a portfolio of natural heritage sites. Funded with tourism revenue and benefitting more than half-a-million residents each year, the social work includes educational mentoring, resources for elders, science education, cultural exhibitions, and performances.

[Read the full version of this case study](#)





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Leverage your platform with government and industry to provide a voice for those local residents who are less powerful and among the least appreciated community stakeholders.

Petra

Petra is a city in southwest Jordan with monumental façades sculpted and built out of solid rock. Managed by a regional authority with support from the Petra National Trust (PNT), the site welcomed 1 million visitors for the first time in 2019. All entities involved recognize the fragile nature of the resource and the negative impacts that result from overcrowding. Government policies that promote large-scale visitation are one reason for the large number of tourists. PNT plays an important role in leveraging its national platform to advocate for changes in policies that may be resisted by powerful stakeholders. They also work with the local community to help broaden the understanding of the value of diversifying income and businesses away from a tourism-only model.

[Read the full version of this case study](#)

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Never let a serious crisis go to waste: use challenges to explore fresh approaches to longstanding problems.

A July 2020 survey found that the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic and attendant fallout is straining the financial and programmatic sustainability of many of the stewards of our shared global heritage. Those impacts are coming as they struggle to support their communities and manage tourism at their sites. But many of these organizations have responded in the spirit of never letting a serious crisis go to waste. INTO members are taking fresh approaches to address longstanding problems given the opportunity presented by the crises of 2020. Unsurprisingly, the pandemic caused a reset at all five sites included in our case studies. Strategic plans developed with the expectation of increased tourism based on pre-2020 now require adjustment and flexibility to reflect the reality of curtailed international travel, the health concerns of the local citizens, and the uncertainties and apprehensions of tourists.

“The places and things the National Trust cares for are needed now more than ever, as the nation needs to recuperate and recover its spirit and wellbeing. Our focus will remain on the benefit we deliver to people, every day.”

Hilary McGrady, Director-General, National Trust

National Trusts have protected monuments in nature — both man-made and those crafted by other hands — through earlier pandemics, world and civil wars, changes in climate, and other threats. They have shared and celebrated stories from our past that have opened new understandings both of our past and of who we are today. Out of the experience stretching over 125 years, National Trusts have found that historic times such as these in which we find ourselves now generate interest in history. Alongside a real desire to protect those places that are part of our individual and collective memories and create our community identity, the pandemic provides another opportunity to focus on what matters.

[Read the extended version of this case study in chapter 3 of the full report](#)



