

AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) Historic England and English Heritage CDP Research Topics 2019

CALL FOR PROPOSALS: SUBMISSION DEADLINE 22ND NOVEMBER 2019

Background

The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (HBMCE) was established by the National Heritage Act 1983, and until 31 March 2015 was known commonly as English Heritage.

On 1 April 2015 English Heritage separated into two organisations:

- Historic England, the public body that champions and protects England's historic environment
- The English Heritage Trust, a charity that, under license from HBMCE, looks after the National Heritage Collection consisting of 400 historic sites, such as Stonehenge and Dover Castle

Together, Historic England and English Heritage were recognised as an Independent Research Organisation in 2017.

HBMCE's **Collaborative Doctoral Partnership** (CDP) programme, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, allows us to identify and co-supervise 3 collaborative PhD studentships per year.

Call for Proposals

We are now issuing a Call for Proposals for co-supervised studentship projects, based on one of the CDP Priority Research Topics listed below. These have been chosen either for their inclusion in the [Historic England Research Agenda](#) or support of current priorities for the [English Heritage Trust](#).

Proposals for studentships should be made by a university based researcher in collaboration with a named member of staff from Historic England or English Heritage, who will act as the co-supervisor for the studentship. We are not looking for project ideas directly from potential students.

To submit a studentship project please carefully read the **Proposal Form and Guidance** which can be found on the [Historic England website](#). Completed forms must be submitted by the closing date of **November 22nd 2019**.

Priority Research Topics 2019

Each topic is presented on a separate page.

1. Social value
2. Economic value
3. Contested values
4. Materials
5. Untold Stories of the National Heritage Collection
6. Insect pests and historic collections and interiors
7. Temperature sensitivity of historic collections made of vitreous materials (such as painted stained glass and enamels)

Priority Research Topic 1 (Historic England)

Social Value

Context and Further Details

Heritage is a vital part of our society and contributes to social capital. It provides a link to the past, a sense of permanence, stability, and belonging. This in turn has many positive benefits, including increased individual and community sense of self-esteem and identity, and positively impacts on individual health and well-being. It fosters strong, resilient and more welcoming communities, and acts as a catalyst for involvement in shaping local areas.

Research into the complex relationships between heritage and society will have impact if it provides clear evidence for the real benefits the historic environment can offer society in terms of boosting pride in local areas, improving individual well-being and building better places to live and work. Innovative research data helping us to understand the range of values attributed to heritage by individuals and communities will help us shape our advice and policy, and will, in turn, ensure that more people can benefit from their heritage.

Research questions that will help our mission include:

- What is the contribution of heritage to individual and societal well-being and how does it work?
- How can we measure and capture the social contribution of heritage?
- What is the role of the historic environment in place-making and place-shaping?

Examples of previous research in social value are available from the Historic England website at

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-society/> and

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/social-and-economic-research/reports-and-briefings/>

Economic Value

Context and Further Details

An important reason for looking after and investing in our heritage is that it makes a significant contribution to the national, regional and local economy in a variety of economic sectors and functions. These include the tourism industry; the construction sector; conservation services; economic activity within historic buildings; investment in the investigation, research and display of archaeological sites and structures; and education. This variety makes it difficult to capture the value of heritage using orthodox economic methods, such as price or cost arising from the use, purchase or ownership of goods and services.

In contrast heritage typically has what economists refer to as ‘non-use value’ – the value that people assign to things even if they never have and never will use them. Our current economic research programme includes: economic impact studies; contingent valuation research; heritage accounting studies; surveys of heritage owners, the wider public and organisations managing heritage; and spatial impact assessments.

Research will have impact if it develops and deploys innovative economic methods and data sources to help us gain robust and up-to-date insights into this complex landscape. Work to gather evidence of the economic value of heritage to individuals, businesses, communities and the wider economy will help make the case for new fiscal policy, and champion the cause of sustained investment, broadening the resources for the sector.

Research questions that will help our mission include:

- What is the scale and value of the economic contribution of heritage to the national, regional and local economy?
- What methods best capture the total economic value of heritage?
- What central or local government fiscal measures could help prevent historic buildings from becoming redundant and vacant?
- How can the public, private and third sectors collaborate most efficiently to provide a sustainable base for heritage?

Examples of previous research in social value are available from the Historic England website at

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/heritage-and-economy/> and

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/social-and-economic-research/reports-and-briefings/>

Priority Research Topic 3 (Historic England)

Contested Values

Context and Further Details

Although we identify and celebrate our physical historic environment through historic buildings, archaeological sites and distinctive landscapes, our definition of heritage is itself influenced by current understanding, interpretations and attitudes. Different groups in society have different views on what heritage is, what it means and why it is important. Sometimes views on heritage (such as imperial, colonial or military heritage) and its preservation are passionately contested.

Research will have impact if it recognises and explores this complexity, and the disputed values that can sometimes result. It will help us gain a better informed approach to the appreciation and management of heritage. This will help us work more effectively with others, engage more widely, enrich the range of heritage assets deserving of protection and ensure that our National Heritage List for England, and all aspects of our work better reflect society as a whole.

Research questions that will help our mission include:

- How can we better understand the diversity of attitudes to heritage?
- How are hidden histories within society reflected in the historic environment?
- How can the potentially contested nature of heritage be best addressed, and reflected in the National Heritage List for England?
- How can new approaches to interpretation, including digital technologies, be used to provide multiple narratives, and to help arbitrate when heritage is contested?
- How do we best acknowledge difficult or uncomfortable histories?

Examples of Historic England's work in contested heritage can be found on our website at

<https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/statements/contested-heritage/>

Priority Research Topic 4 (Historic England)

Materials

Context and Further Details

From prehistoric earthworks to post-War concrete buildings, the materials used in the past have shaped what we now see as the historic environment. Understanding the character of these materials is an essential part of understanding past societies - how raw materials were selected, what technologies were used to extract, produce or recycle them, and how they were transformed into useable products.

Research will have impact if it underpins understanding and help us better assess, interpret, manage and present our heritage. It may also lead to new marketable technologies or techniques, and will build a richer knowledge of the crafts, industries and manufacturing techniques of past societies.

Research questions that will help our mission include:

- What materials should we be focusing our efforts on as priorities, either as part of investigative research to establish date, origin, function and degree of preservation, or conservation priorities?
- What new methods can be devised to support faster, more cost-effective characterisation of materials and how can we help get them to the market effectively?
- How can we enhance our understanding of production, provenance, and chronology of artefacts and residues encountered in archaeological investigations to help refine the interpretation of remains discovered?
- Can we synthesise from existing reports chronological or spatial changes in different types of material that may reveal technological innovations, patterns of supply, and cultural differences in use, adaptation, discard and recycling?

Examples of the range of materials we are interested in can be found on the Historic England website at <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice/archaeological-science/materials-science-and-industrial-processes/>

Untold Stories of the National Heritage Collection

Context and Further Details

English Heritage holds the national collection of historic monuments, but we also tell a narrative of national history. This narrative reflects historic and contemporary privilege, including manifesting biases in terms of class, gender, sexuality and/or ethnicity. As custodians of both tangible and intangible national heritage, English Heritage must uncover and present stories of the marginalised and ignored, and better understand audiences that do not currently identify with English Heritage.

This theme encourages projects that will recover untold stories, expose the process of marginalisation, and enable English Heritage to tell a more representative narrative of place, people and nation.

A proposed project can pursue any of the following approaches alone or in combination:

- Search for narratives of places and people previously overlooked from the historic record.
 - For example, through against the grain readings of evidence (e.g. using queer theory or feminist critiques).
- Interrogate the construction and exploration of counter-authoritative layers of significance and meaning on EH sites and collections by/for marginalised groups, for example, through alternative or counterfactual histories, acts of protest, speculative literature and other creative responses.
 - For example, LGBTQ+ readings of the symbolism of classical statuary.
- Understand best-practice of incorporating the above within site presentation.
- Attempt to understand why marginalised histories have become marginalised and/or why audiences have been marginalised at EH sites.
- Compare evidence gathered under the above to ‘authoritative’ meaning presented on site in order to understand why some audience groups feel that a site is not relevant to them?

Marginalisation can be defined either in terms of the historical record and/or according to audience profile (i.e. groups not traditionally well-represented at heritage sites). This might include (but is not limited to):

- LGBTQ+
- Gender identity
- Class
- Race and ethnicity
- Religion
- Disability
- Regional identity
- Migration status

The outcomes of this project can include experimental on-site interpretation, including creation of on-site content through community co-design, and evaluation of the scheme through audience responses. Although not essential, innovative digital methods of data-collection and public engagement are encouraged, including digital crowdsourcing of data, and digital deep-mapping, data-scraping and machine learning.

This theme doesn’t make any presumption about the site or time period in focus but can pertain to *any* time period encompassed by English Heritage’s portfolio.

Priority Research Topic 6 (English Heritage)

Insect Pests and historic collections and interiors

Context and Further Details

English Heritage cares for a collection of over 500,000 artefacts, and 400 buildings. Collections and interiors can be fragile, and subject to potential degradation from environmental conditions, pests and human actions. These threats have to be managed to preserve objects and decorative finishes for future generations to enjoy. Research is crucial to understanding the threats that our collections and interiors face, and then putting in place measures to mitigate these.

Insect pests can cause significant damage to collections and buildings. An integrated pest management (IPM) programme aims to minimise the risk of infestations, carrying out monitoring and applying treatments where applicable. Due to restrictions on insecticides some treatments are no longer available, and remaining treatments can be ineffective, or require great expense, and staff resource. For many insect pests the effect of the environment on the life cycle is poorly understood.

We are looking for research projects that can provide an improved understanding of the environmental parameters that allow for insect pests to develop through their life cycle and would allow for appropriate environmental control to prevent/control infestations in *historic* collections and interiors.

A further important factor is the impact of climate change: research indicates that damage from insect pests is expected to increase in future. This was a generic assessment; research into the life cycles of insect pests and the effect of environmental parameters such as temperature and relative humidity would allow for specific assessments for individual insect pests. This would allow for adaptation and mitigation strategies to be developed. More so it is expected with climate change that species not previously prevalent in England could become established. Understanding which species present a future risk could present an important aspect of the research.

Priority Research Topic 7 (English Heritage)

Temperature sensitivity of historic collections made of vitreous materials (such as painted stained glass and enamels)

Context and Further Details

Temperature is rarely considered as a risk to collections and mitigation measures or temperature control for cases is limited and expensive. Air conditioning the exhibition space is difficult within a historic house, giving little options for how to display these objects during the summer. The continued display of these materials is challenging and requires a new approach, particularly for the existing display cases and historic house environment.

Whilst the relative humidity (RH) sensitivity of heritage collections materials is widely accepted, temperature is often seen as affecting only the chemical deterioration rate. Some collections materials, such as wax, are known to be temperature sensitive, whilst other materials, such as acrylic paints have been shown to be affected by low temperatures. However many materials are thought to be stable at typical display temperatures.

During the heatwave of 2018, a number of Renaissance enamel objects were removed from display at English Heritage properties after small fragments separated and were seen on the case fabrics. High temperatures have previously caused similar problems. The reason for this deterioration is unclear, it may relate to previous repairs, changes in glass composition, glass instability, or the layer structure of some enamel objects. Acoustic emission (AE) activity was previously found to increase with increased temperatures but the deterioration mechanism was not elucidated. Similarly the temperatures, or temperature changes, that could cause this deterioration are not understood nor defined.

Limited research on painted medieval stained glass (grisaille) has indicated that thermal shocks may lead to the cracking and loss of these details. Whilst thermal shocks of this magnitude (ΔT of 40°C or more) might be seen on stained glass in situ, it would be unlikely for items on display. There is little information on how burial affects the condition and deterioration of already vulnerable medieval glass, or the sensitivity of the painted details following burial. Further work is required to understand the thermal behaviour of vitreous collections materials, and whether the research on painted medieval stained glass is relevant to enamel objects. Initial surveys to determine what vitreous materials are present in the collection and their condition, as well as any deterioration or previous repairs would be useful to understand what the main risks are.

Case environmental control has focussed on RH and pollution, with temperature control often technically challenging or expensive. In the future, warmer temperatures are likely to become more frequent, risking temperature sensitive objects might not be displayed. Understanding the safe temperature range for display, would inform collections management and display practice. It is also important to be able to implement these temperature ranges, within English Heritage display cases and so the technological requirements to achieve them would also need to be explored.

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