

Discovery, Innovation and Science in the Historic Environment

# RESEARCH



Historic England

ISSUE 20 • WELLBEING AND HERITAGE SPECIAL 2022

# Welcome...

## **...to this wellbeing and heritage special issue of Research magazine.**

Health and wellbeing are more prominent than ever in politics and the media than ever before. This is partly a result of the pandemic, but also the long-term work of the voluntary and charities sectors and shifts in how primary care is developing in the UK.

How the historic environment can and does support health and wellbeing is the topic of the first article on Historic England's wellbeing and heritage strategy. The remainder of the volume focuses firstly on new research; then on case studies. We hope these will move forward the debate on the potential of the historic environment and provide shared learning on good practice.

In order to address unequal engagement with heritage and historic places, we need to understand the geographical landscape of this inequality, as discussed by the University of Glasgow.

Visiting heritage sites and parks as restorative activities during and after lockdown is the subject of Sofaer and Gallou's contribution on heritage during lockdown and Jenifer White's on the value of public parks to wellbeing.

Active participation through volunteering is the subject of research by Carenza Lewis, examining Heritage at Risk's specific wellbeing benefits; and our Enriching the List team report on positive benefits of adding to the National Heritage List for England.

Desi Gradinarova shows us exemplars of how heritage and social prescribing are working together in practice, building on her contribution to an earlier volume.

Chatterjee and Shearn show us how a place-based approach is integrating health and wellbeing with heritage in Kirkham in partnership with the NHS.

The important role of digital resources is the subject of Woodhouse and Chalmers work on the co-curated exhibition Lost and Found, and Natasha Lord's explanation of Worcester Life Stories, which, with the NHS, develops local archives to support people living with dementia.

Jonathan Last examines the interrelationship between heritage, landscape and wellbeing in the Lincolnshire Wolds.

**Dr Linda Monckton**  
*Head of Wellbeing and Inclusion Strategy  
with Historic England.*

**Front cover image:** Dancers from About Time Dance Company and schoolgirls from Carr Hill school.  
Photo credit: Jenny Reeves (About Time Dance Company).

We are the **public body** that **helps people**  
**care for, enjoy** and **celebrate**

England's **spectacular**  
**historic environment**

# Contents...Wellbeing & Heritage special



6

## **A Wellbeing and Heritage Strategy for Historic England**

A strategy so all can experience the wellbeing benefits of heritage.



26

## **Places of Joy**

The role of heritage sites during the COVID-19 pandemic.



40

## **Geographic exposure to heritage**

How exposure to heritage varies according to income deprivation and how visits to heritage are influenced.



56

## **Worcester life stories**

How a Historic Environment Record came to support older people and people living with dementia.



68

## **Forging a bridge to wellbeing**

Kirkham supports wellbeing and cohesion in its community through a social prescribing programme.



84



14

## **Heritage at Risk, volunteering and wellbeing**

New research illuminating the relationship between volunteering and wellbeing.



32

## **Enriching the List, enriching lives**

Assessing how contributing to heritage through Enriching the List can help the personal wellbeing of contributors.



50

## **Public parks and greenspaces matter**

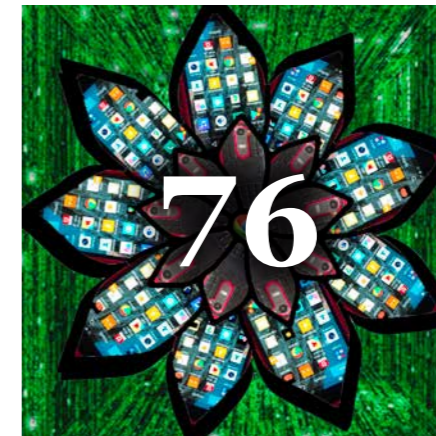
Evaluating the health and wellbeing value of historic public parks and green spaces.



62

## **Heritage and social prescribing in action**

Sharing good practice on social prescribing delivery in community heritage projects.



76

## **Lost and Found: Treasures in the Archive**

A successful online digital heritage wellbeing project.

# A Wellbeing and Heritage Strategy for Historic England

Developing a Historic England strategy to ensure that everyone can experience the wellbeing benefits of heritage.



Historic England’s purpose, in its Future Strategy, is ‘To improve people’s lives by championing and protecting the historic environment’. Wellbeing is one important tool to help us achieve this.

## Context

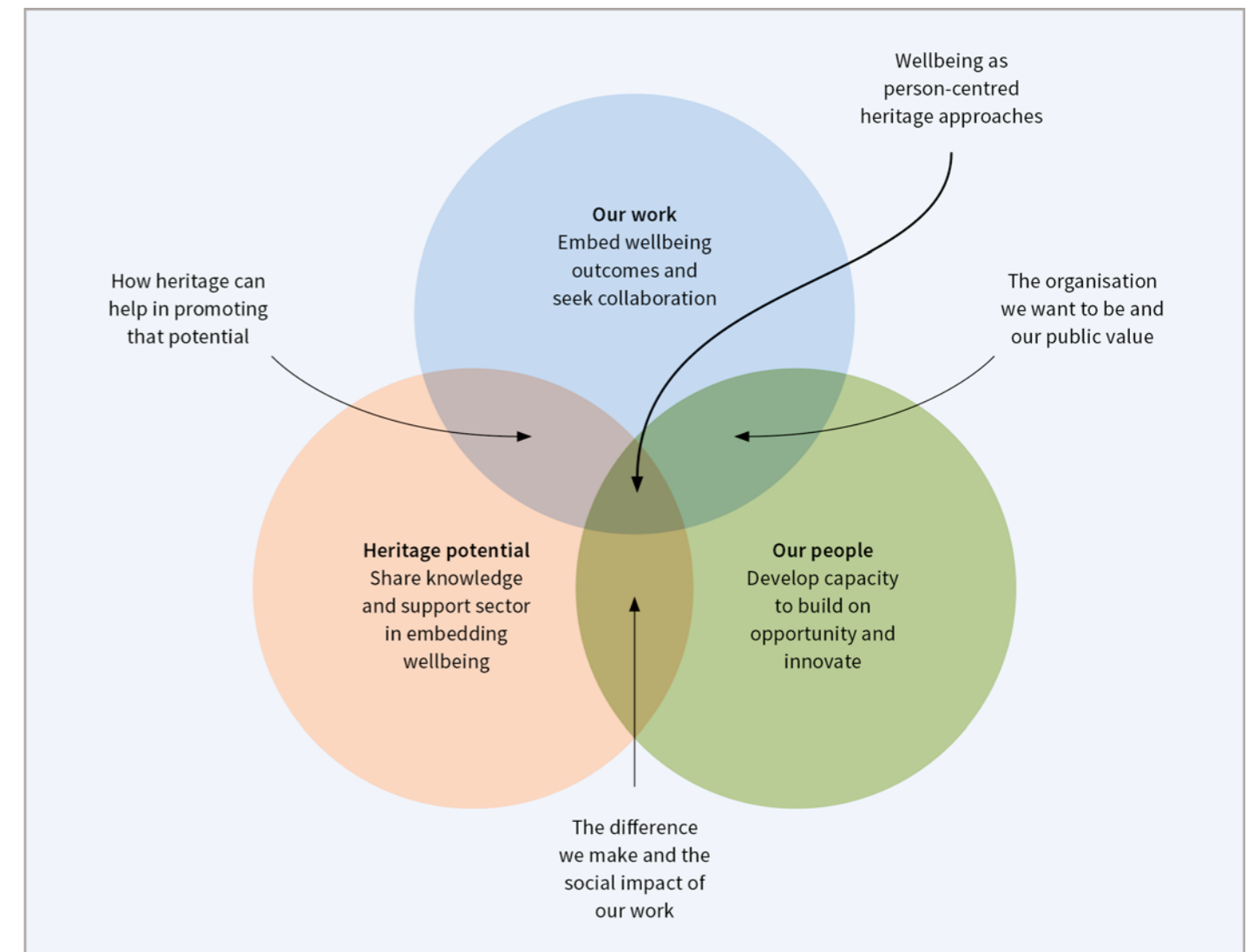
In December 2020 Sir Michael Marmot, past president of the World Medical Association, and author of *Health Equity in England ten years on*, stated that the nation must put health and wellbeing at the heart of strategy.

COVID-19 has highlighted and exacerbated inequality and will lead to significant long-term issues for many communities. At governmental level a small group of countries (Scotland, Iceland, New Zealand, Wales and Finland) are leading the way by developing wellbeing economies. However, recent conversations with our own staff have shown the strength of feeling about the benefits of having wellbeing as a primary driver for their work: for many it relates to personal ethics, that is, it is an issue of social justice (or put simply a ‘no-brainer’). >>

Historic England’s purpose, in its Future Strategy, is ‘To improve people’s lives by championing and protecting the historic environment’. Wellbeing is one important tool to help us achieve this.

**Below left:** Venus and Cupid sculpture by Shane Johnstone at Morecambe, Lancashire. © Historic England Archive. Photographer Alun Bull, DP174971

**Below right:** Historic England’s Wellbeing and Heritage Strategy: key aims and their purpose.





Above: Prehistoric sites, ancient forests: urban parks and green spaces are parts of our landscape that can add to a sense of wellbeing.

© Historic England Archive. Photographer Alun Bull, DP234828

## Strategy

Our organisational commitment to this is shown through developing our Wellbeing and Heritage Strategy. Our vision is to ensure that everyone can experience the wellbeing benefits of heritage. We have three key strands of work on which we will focus:

1. Our work (what difference can we make?), with aims of embedding wellbeing outcomes in our work and seeking out opportunities to learn from and collaborate with organisations that share our ambition to deliver improved wellbeing outcomes.
2. Our people (what can our people do?), with aims of developing the knowledge and expertise of our people to ensure they can recognise opportunities and take forward initiatives to achieve positive wellbeing outcomes.
3. Heritage potential (what can the heritage sector do?), with aims to be generous and share the knowledge we gain with other organisations working in heritage, to challenge and support them to embed wellbeing outcomes in what they do.

## Change

Such an approach will help Historic England deliver goals in multiple areas of importance including inclusion, diversity and equality, levelling up and place-shaping.

It means that wellbeing should be at the centre of what we do, how we position ourselves, how we do things, and our corporate language; it can permeate our advice on historic places and the public realm, the way that we stage events and activities and *how* we do things, from archaeological projects to Heritage Action Zones; it can help us prioritise our work so that we maximise our

public value at every opportunity; it can help us raise funds by showing funders that we care about making real difference to people's lives.

Recently Mark Carney, ex-Governor of the Bank of England, stated that *post-COVID-19 policy should be centred on health and social outcomes*. If we don't do this, we will fail to make a positive difference to individual and community wellbeing and thereby also not demonstrate our public value. It says something important about 'who we are'. >>

## Action

Rhetoric is easy, however, and such aspirations are not straightforward. There are multiple aspects to consider.

One is, how does the organisation work at the moment? In particular, how do we do what we do, what are the current benefits to society and are we missing anything? What are the most critical aspects of social need and how should we respond to them through a focus on our core functions? With these and other questions in mind we have been undertaking various work strands on wellbeing to work out what a strategic heritage and wellbeing approach looks like for us and to what extent do our existing core functions address them. These form a series of important steps in assessing our own working practices; whilst somewhat less exciting than the aspirations, they are crucial steps towards our goal. In particular, we have done or are doing the following:

- Identifying and building on the strengths and good practice that already exist which contribute to good mental health both of staff within Historic England and of society through heritage-based interventions.
- Identifying external support and understanding how we might best use, build relationships with, and influence what is available outside the organisation to support and train staff and to support project development.
- Consulting with stakeholders and working on co-creation and co-production of initiatives so that everyone feels committed to positive mental health and wellbeing outcomes and to ensure that mutual learning is an embedded part of project development.
- Being aware of where our expertise ends and of the fact that external expertise is required to work collaboratively and most effectively.
- Measuring the impact of what we do to promote and support mental health inside Historic England and externally for the wider community.

How do we do what we do, what are the current benefits to society and are we missing anything?

## Balance

Strategic planning and mapping out a future in which wellbeing and heritage are, wherever possible, considered together also requires balance: balance between need and resources and balance between obligations and aspirations. In order to achieve this, we are suggesting a model against which to consider this balance in relation to our wellbeing outcomes. This is an in-house tool to help us with wellbeing goals only; our Future Strategy and our Corporate Plan set out the broader context of our work.

It is based on an idea that our work might reasonably be considered as not only responsive to threat and need (fixing things and assets) but also pro-active in working towards a more sustainable historic environment (research and advice). wellbeing can be used as a delivery mechanism to respond to immediate social need and thereby be seen as responsive or reactive, or it can work with prevention and in anticipation of need.

This approach produces a simple two-by-two matrix, the purpose of which is to create a framework against which to map our existing work and see where we could do more and identify gaps. The matrix creates four domains:

**Domain A** will encapsulate all our work that is or has the potential to proactively support **communities**; **B** will encapsulate all our work that is led by the needs of **individual development** and where it has the potential to be more therapeutically driven. **C** is about **promoting place** and how the historic environment can support community life satisfaction through sustaining the historic environment and **D** is about responding to the changing needs of places and includes our work on **place-shaping** and levelling up. **As a model this aims to help us see how wellbeing relates to aspects of our work, and inevitably in the real-world these areas overlap. >>**

Strategic planning and mapping out a future in which wellbeing and heritage are, wherever possible, considered together also requires balance: balance between need and resources and balance between obligations and aspirations.

APPROACH   THEMES	PEOPLE	PLACE
Proactive Preventative	DOMAIN A Maximising life satisfaction and wellbeing of groups and communities	DOMAIN C Making places and landscapes as healthy as possible
Responsive Healing	DOMAIN B Enhancing wellbeing for individuals in most need	DOMAIN D Addressing heritage and community need in local places

Above: A draft people and place matrix to assess balance between wellbeing approaches across the organisation.



Above: Group or individual actions with heritage can support healing. © Historic England Archive. Photographer Alun Bull, DP234039

### Priorities

We have established priority areas of concern in which we will aim to work: these are based on current known social needs as seen through government priorities and population health information. Through connecting with heritage, we will prioritise support for the following target groups:

- People with mental health needs.
- People who are lonely or socially isolated.
- Older people, especially those who are coping with age-related challenges or reduction in their capacity to thrive.
- Younger people, especially those who need support to counter disadvantage.

We are aware that these are not mutually exclusive groups, neither do they cover every element of health and wellbeing. Yet we believe this focus will help us to develop knowledge with partners to understand specific needs of particular communities.

In applying this approach we aim to provide a practical tool for ensuring that we and our partners have a range of means to address widely differing circumstances and needs. Always, however, our core functions will be directed towards establishing a balanced approach to heritage and wellbeing and towards delivering results through our people and place-based strategic initiatives ■

### The author

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*Head of Wellbeing and Inclusion Strategy with Historic England.*



Linda is an architectural historian with a special interest in the social impact and potential of the historic environment. She has worked in the heritage profession for 25 years as a researcher, analyst and strategist and is leading on Historic England's strategic approach to delivering health and wellbeing outcomes through its work.

### Further information

Carney, Mark Reith Lecture December 2020: 'How we get what we value' [https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2020/Reith\\_2020\\_Lecture\\_3\\_transcript.pdf](https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/radio4/reith2020/Reith_2020_Lecture_3_transcript.pdf)

Historic England, A Wellbeing and Heritage Strategy for Historic England: executive summary <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/about/wellbeing-and-heritage-strategy-summary/>

Historic England Future strategy <https://historicengland.org.uk/about/what-we-do/strategy/>

Historic England corporate plan 2021-22 <https://historicengland.org.uk/about/what-we-do/corporate-plan/>

Marmot, M The Marmot review 10 years on <https://www.health.org.uk/publications/reports/the-marmot-review-10-years-on>

Reilly S, Nolan C and Monckton L *Wellbeing and The Historic Environment Assessment, 2018* set the scene for our role within Wellbeing and created our first public profile in the area. It has successfully enabled us to show leadership and created an appetite for others to work with us.

Monckton, L. *Wellbeing and Historic Environment: Why Bother?*, article in *HE Research*, issue 15, Jan 2019 was part of our dissemination plan for the Assessment.

Monckton, L. "Public Benefit as Community Wellbeing in Archaeology", *Internet Archaeology* issue 57 2021, <https://doi.org/10.11141/ia.57.12>

NHS Long term Plan <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/>

# Heritage at Risk, volunteering and wellbeing

New research illuminating the relationship between heritage volunteering and wellbeing.

## Introducing the University of Lincoln's Heritage at Risk and Wellbeing (HARAW) project

During 2020-21 Historic England has developed its strategy relating to how the historic environment could contribute to wellbeing. As part of this initiative, it commissioned the University of Lincoln to undertake the Heritage at Risk and Wellbeing (HARAW)

project to explore the relationship between wellbeing and volunteering in activities dealing with assets on the [Heritage at Risk Register](#), which identifies those sites that are most at risk of being lost as a result of neglect, decay or inappropriate development. The HARAW work has thrown new light on the ways in which heritage volunteering is associated

with wellbeing and has identified achievable objectives for the future which will help people, places and our understanding and appreciation of the preserved past.

Wellbeing is a fundamental aspect of health, a priority of the World Health Organisation since 1948 and one of the United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals. >>



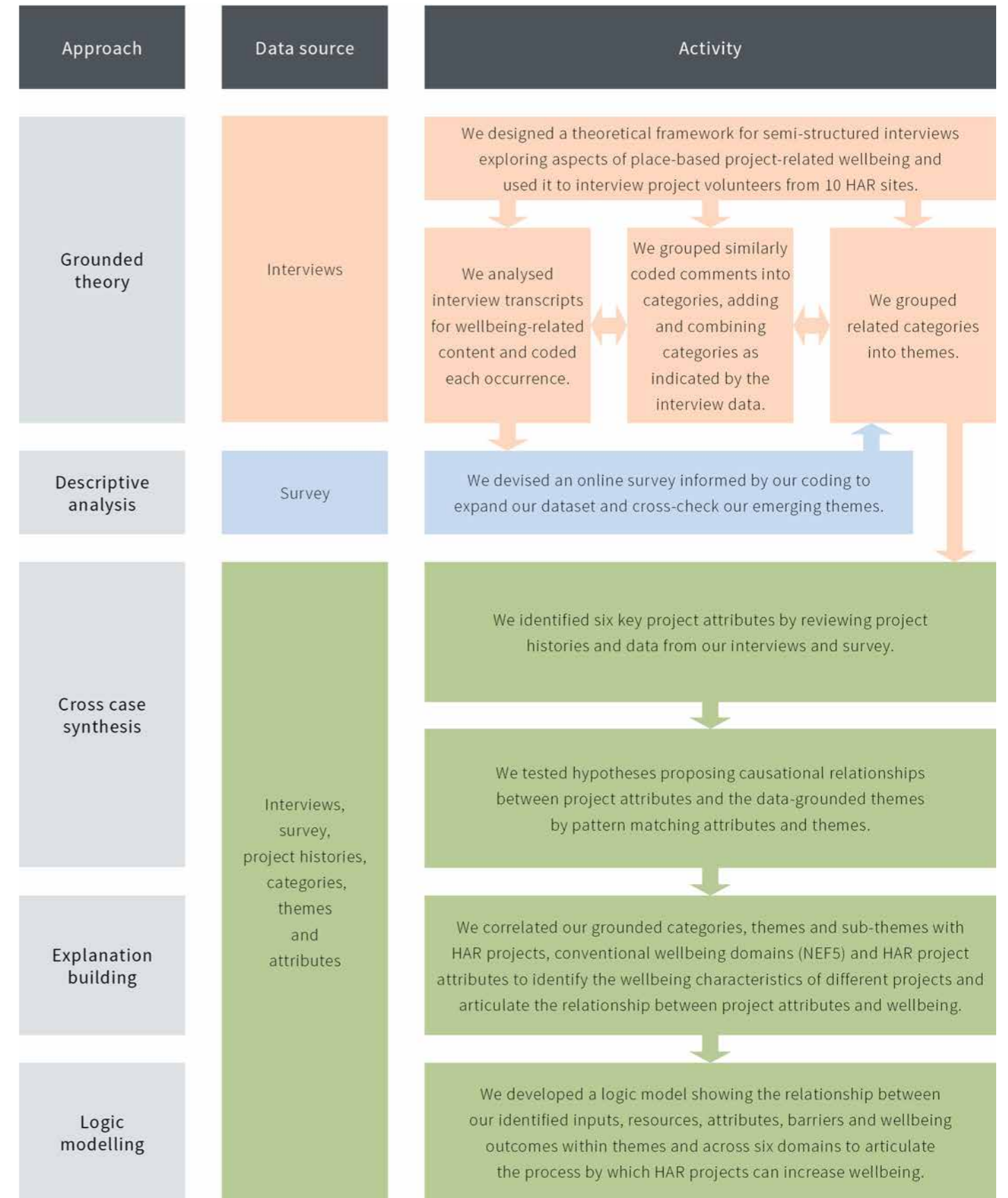
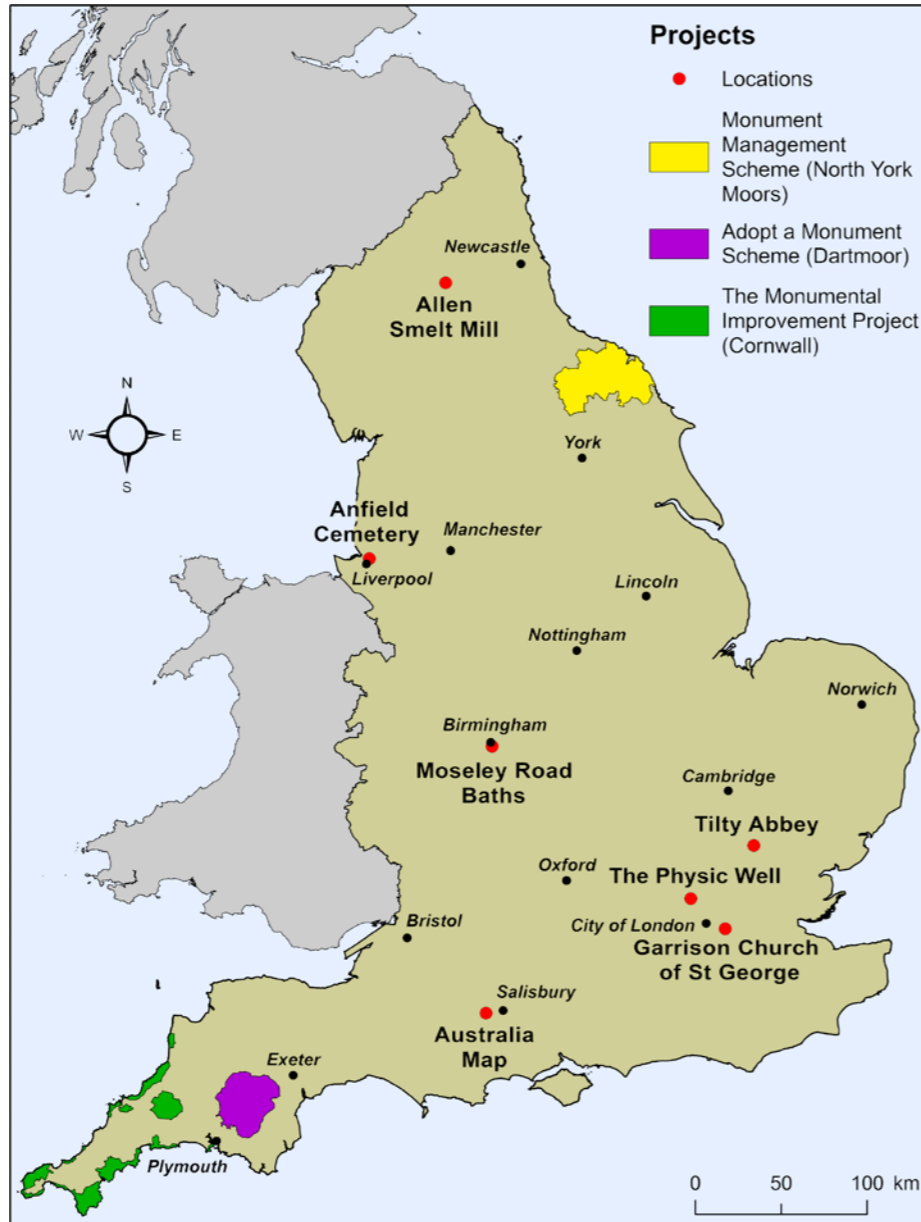
A group of volunteers from the 'Monumental Improvement' project clearing bracken and undergrowth from a monument at Trebarveth, Cornwall. © James Gossip, Cornwall Archaeological Unit



## HARAW methodology

HARAW used a mixed methods approach. First, researchers conducted post-participation interviews with 35 volunteers on ten completed HAR projects across England. The interviews were recorded online during lockdown in 2020 and generated transcribed texts extending to 180,000 words. Researchers coded the transcripts using a grounded theory approach. This involved analysing the transcribed texts to identify comments relating to wellbeing; ascribing each comment to a sub-category with others expressing a similar concept (adding a new sub-category if no similar comments had previously been noted); grouping sub-categories into related categories; and grouping related categories into themes. Using this method, the themes which characterised the association between wellbeing and heritage volunteering emerged *from* the data analysis, rather than being predefined from existing theories. This reduces the risk of confirmation bias in which data interpretations are 'fitted' to match pre-conceived ideas.

The interviews were complemented by an online survey providing quantitative data. Each theme was then explored for the insights it offered into the particular or unique value of *heritage* volunteering, a question that has proved difficult to answer, and (in the context of HAR interventions) on the value of volunteering on *at-risk* assets. >>



**Above left:** Map showing the locations of 10 completed HAR projects across England.

**Below left:** Training in recording archaeology with an apprentice, Allen Smelt Mill, Northumberland, 2014.  
© Allen Valleys Partnership Scheme

**Above right:** Flowchart showing the mixed method approach to the research and intelligence gathering process.

Analysis confirmed previous anecdotal evidence from HAR staff at Historic England that wellbeing is associated with HAR volunteering.

### Results of the analysis

Analysis confirmed previous anecdotal evidence from HAR staff at Historic England that wellbeing is associated with HAR volunteering. Coding showed this wellbeing to fall into six themes: purpose, being, capacity, sharing, self-nurture and self-actualisation. These were all underpinned by the unique HAR experiential 'offer' of heritage and at-risk assets.

#### 'Purpose'

Wellbeing in the first theme, 'Purpose', was associated with volunteer perceptions that they had chosen their volunteering purposefully, often because it allowed them to indulge their interests in

history, archaeology and historic places, but also because it offered an opportunity for altruism (helping other people in a useful activity).

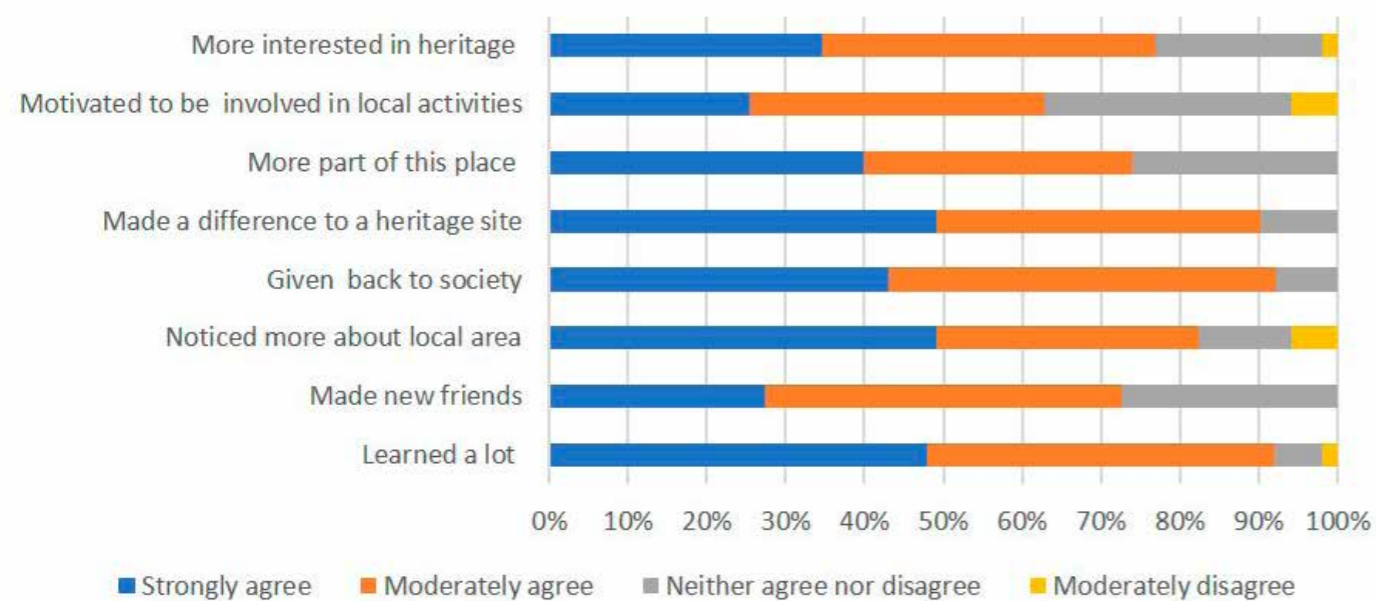
Wellbeing in this theme was strongly related to the *heritage* context of the volunteering (sometimes to the privileged access it offered), and also to the *at-risk* status of HAR sites, with many coded categories associated with awareness that the site needed 'help'.

#### 'Being'

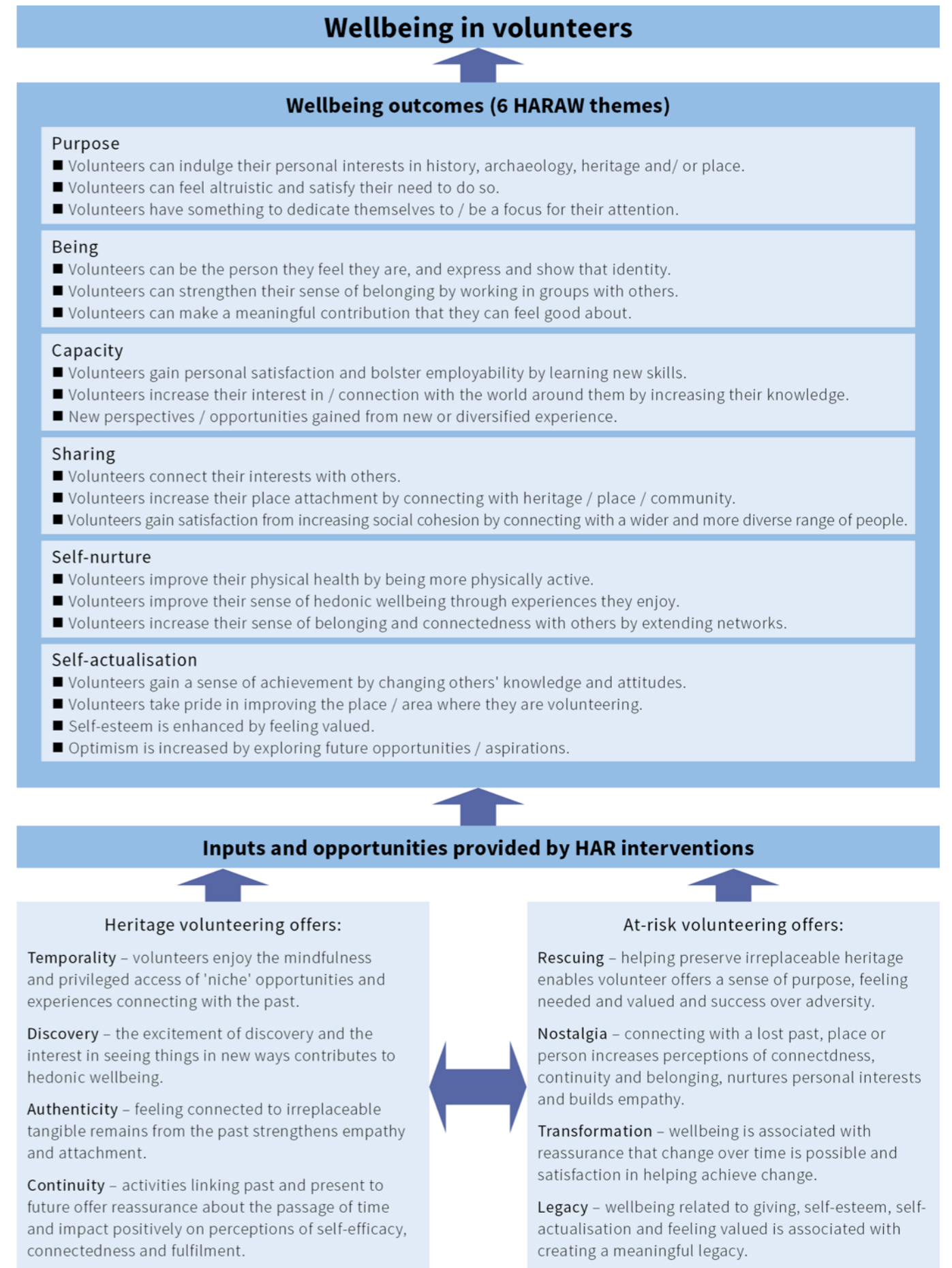
The second theme was 'Being', in which wellbeing was associated with HAR volunteering because it enabled volunteers to express their identity, to strengthen their sense of

belonging and to do something they themselves valued.

Wellbeing in this theme was strongly associated with *heritage*, whether through personal connections to the heritage asset or through volunteers feeling that an interest in heritage was part of their identity. *At-risk* status was also strongly associated with Theme 2 wellbeing as volunteering offered fulfilment for those whose identity was rooted in public-spiritedness or whose connection was emotional, such as a desire to acknowledge a past achievement or to atone for a past wrong. Site vulnerabilities could also be a source of wistfulness which was associated with wellbeing. >>



Above left: Questionnaire results on how participants felt about themselves and what they had done.



Above right: The six wellbeing themes arising from HAR volunteering opportunities.



**Above left:** A group of volunteers training in the use of lime mortar at Allen Smelt mill, Northumberland, in 2016. © Allen Valleys Partnership Scheme



**Above right:** Volunteers on the 'Monumental Improvement' project training to survey monuments at Castle Dore, Cornwall. © James Gossip, Cornwall Archaeological Unit

### ‘Capacity’

Wellbeing in the third theme, ‘Capacity’, was associated with gaining skills, expanding knowledge and diversifying life experience.

Much of this was directly related to the *heritage* context of the site, including gaining heritage-related skills or satisfaction from the need to be creative when working with irreplaceable assets from the past. *At-risk* status on the other hand was rarely associated with capacity-related wellbeing, other than in offering improved understanding of the threats that sites can face.

### ‘Sharing’

Theme 4 ‘Sharing’ wellbeing was associated with volunteers gaining pleasure and satisfaction from

engaging with others, with making, strengthening and widening interpersonal connections and with making their lives and communities more diverse and inclusive.

Sharing-related wellbeing was strongly associated with *heritage*, with happiness, satisfaction and a sense of privilege associated with rendering previously obscure sites more visible (and thus more sharable) and through sharing little-known stories or ‘guild’ historical knowledge. Likewise, *at-risk* status was strongly associated with wellbeing by generating excitement at new opportunities the saved or repurposed sites offer for sharing with others, and senses of satisfaction and pride in having created something good from an unpromising starting point.

### ‘Self-nurture’

The fifth theme, ‘Self-nurture’, included wellbeing associated with health benefits directly to volunteers, including increased physical activity, improved emotional and psychological mood, and wider social interaction.

Analysis indicated that wellbeing in this theme was associated not only with the health benefits themselves, but also with volunteers gaining reassurance from knowing that they were doing themselves good. Few of the wellbeing associations in this theme appeared to be related specifically to *heritage* or *at-risk* status, except where mitigating threats was associated with raised self-esteem.

### ‘Self-actualisation’

‘Self-actualisation’ related to wellbeing associated with volunteers’ sense of satisfaction and self-fulfilment from achieving goals, recognising their achievement, increasing their appreciation of heritage sites (and history in general), changing attitudes or behaviour, supporting placemaking, engaging in self-reflection, leaving a legacy, and exploring their aspirations for the future.

*Heritage* specifically was associated with Theme 6 wellbeing because it offered reassurance by increasing volunteers’ sense of ‘continuity’ (connecting past, present, and future). Working with heritage also increased volunteers’ capacity to empathise with past lives and even

experience the past vicariously in ways which may create similar wellbeing associations to nostalgic remembering and object handling. *At-risk* status was associated with satisfaction in having helped save or mend something from the past, enhanced by volunteers’ awareness that a heritage asset, once lost, can never be replaced.

### Cross-theme analysis

In addition, cross-case analysis explored the association between wellbeing and specific attributes of HAR volunteering opportunities. Hypotheses proposing causal relationships between wellbeing and seven key attributes of HAR interventions were tested by comparing the pattern of wellbeing comments when attributes were

present or absent. The attributes were identified from the interview responses. They were: site setting, site condition, volunteer environment, volunteer impact on asset, physical activity level, volunteer management, and opportunities for public engagement.

Analysis showed that all types of project had some association with wellbeing. However, the attributes most often and/or most strongly associated with wellbeing were rural setting, ruinous condition, outside activity, activity making a difference (to the asset or in other ways), physically demanding activity and activity engaging with local (non-volunteer) communities. These associations are explored in detail in the full report. >>

### The special value of heritage

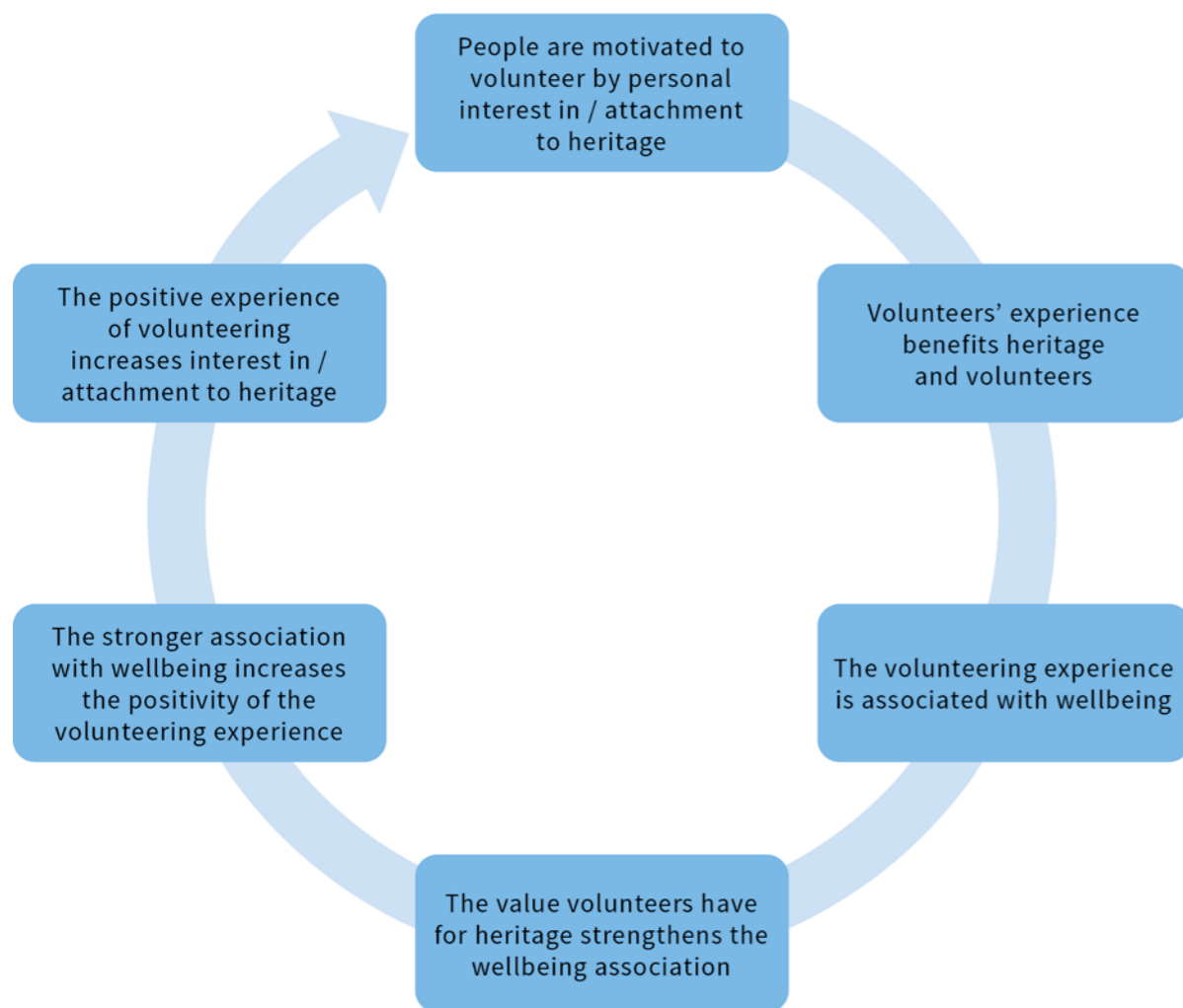
Across the themes, the wellbeing benefits specific to *heritage* appeared to be associated with opportunities to experience or achieve temporality (fulfilling volunteers' desire for opportunities relating to their particular interests in history, archaeology and the past), discovery, authenticity, and continuity (offering connectedness,

fulfilment and reassurance by linking past to present to future); while *at-risk*-related wellbeing was associated with positive feelings about rescuing something, shared nostalgia, changing something and leaving a legacy.

Analysis indicated that HAR interventions serve as a force multiplier for wellbeing because

the characteristics of their 'offer' (combining heritage *and* at-risk status) are complementary rather than contradictory: connection with a valued, authentic, irreplaceable, sharable asset from the past (heritage) to which one can make a difference (by mitigating risk) completes a virtuous circle of associating wellbeing with heritage volunteering. >>

Across the themes, the wellbeing benefits specific to heritage appeared to be associated with opportunities to experience or achieve temporality, discovery, authenticity and continuity; while *at-risk*-related wellbeing was associated with positive feelings about rescue, nostalgia, transformation and legacy.



Above left: The heritage and wellbeing virtuous circle.



Above right: Volunteers from the 'Monuments Matter' project clearing vegetation at a site in Cornwall. © Jacob Parry, Cornwall AONB

Inputs (what projects need)			Activities (what people do)		Outcomes (what people gain)	
Aims and motivations	Enabling actions	Resources needed	Opportunity	HAR-specific experience	HARAW wellbeing themes	NEF/NHS wellbeing
<b>From HAR team – all essential:</b> Identified need for heritage asset Assessment of required actions Project design	<b>Barriers to be removed:</b> Lack of resources Lack of information/awareness of opportunities Too much responsibility on volunteers	Accessible asset with a heritage 'story' – can be any site type or condition (eg rural/urban/building/archaeological site, ruin/intact)	Opportunities to connect with and learn from heritage/history/archaeology/place	<b>Connecting with heritage aspects of project/asset provides the opportunity to experience:</b> Temporality Discovery Authenticity Continuity	<b>Purpose:</b> Interest increased Altruism fulfilled Purpose found	Be mindful Give Learn Connect
		Specialist advice and expertise	Opportunities to contribute and have a positive impact on asset/place/people		<b>Being:</b> Identity expressed Belonging strengthened Contribution made	Be mindful Connect Give Learn
<b>From volunteers – all desirable:</b> Time Energy/enthusiasm/commitment Skills and knowledge Networks Interest in history/heritage Belief in value of history/heritage Desire to preserve heritage/save from threat Aspiration to occupy time purposefully Attachment to site Attachment to place/community Desire to give to community Desire to connect with nature/countryside Desire to use existing skills/knowledge Desire to learn/maintain physical/mental capacity	<b>Barriers to be managed:</b> Seasonality/weather Health constraints Negative attitudes Site accessibility Poor communication Burdensome bureaucracy	Range of activities to match volunteer interests, aspirations and availability	Opportunities for public/community engagement	<b>Connecting with at-risk aspects of project/asset provides the opportunity to experience:</b> Rescuing Nostalgia Transformation Legacy	<b>Capacity:</b> Skills gained Knowledge expanded Experience diversified	Learn Connect Give
		Support/mentoring/leadership			<b>Sharing:</b> Engagement achieved Connections made Inclusivity extended	Connect Give
		Processes for communication/providing feedback	Range of activity types (eg physically demanding and sedentary, heritage-specific and generic)		<b>Self-nurture:</b> Physical activity Psychological benefits Social benefits	Be mindful Connect Be active
		End-of-project support with reporting	Flexible management (activities are regular and/or as-needed, processes are managed and/or self-directed)		<b>Self-actualisation:</b> Attitudes changed Placemaking supported Self-reflection undertaken Aspirations explored	Be mindful Give Learn Connect
Support for scoping future activity (including ongoing volunteer activity and new project ideas)						



## A new logic model and objectives for the future

Finally, the HARAW team developed a concluding logic model articulating the inputs, activities and wellbeing outcomes of HAR projects involving volunteers.

The team also identified six objectives for the future. These are to:

1. Ensure that all stakeholders know how activity such as HAR interventions which prioritise heritage protection can also support wellbeing in volunteers;
2. Scope all proposed HAR interventions for potential to involve volunteers and support wellbeing;
3. Promote publicly the potential wellbeing impacts of HAR interventions in order to attract a more diverse range of volunteers;
4. Monitor HAR volunteers' aims and experience over a sustained period of time;
5. Track the development of skills, knowledge, and experience (for volunteers who wish to record this);
6. Capture feedback from HAR volunteers.

It is hoped that the HARAW report, the logic model and the toolkit developed by the HARAW team will help meet these objectives.

**Above left:** The concluding logic model developed by the HARAW team.

**Below left:** Volunteers from the 'Monumental Improvement' project learning to survey archaeological monuments at Stowes Hill, Cornwall. © James Gossip, Cornwall Archaeological Unit.

HARAW has been innovative in providing a substantial new evidence base for the special wellbeing benefits of voluntary working with Heritage at Risk sites. It shows this engagement offers a very diverse range of outcomes which improve the lives of volunteers. HARAW has permitted the development of a methodology both for the working practices during projects, and for the recording, analysis and understanding of volunteer experience. It has, furthermore, provided an intellectual framework for projects of this kind and a model for initiating future projects. The full report sets out in detail the project's methods, findings, recommendations and future research objectives which can act as the starting point for further development ■

## Acknowledgments

The HARAW team was led by the author but thanks also go to all those in the team, which included: Professor Niro Siriwardena, Professor of Primary & Pre-Hospital Health Care and director of the Community and Health Research Unit (CaHRU) in the College of Social Science; Dr Despina Laparidou, CaHRU Research Assistant; Dr Julie Pattinson, CaHRU Research Assistant; Dr Claudia Sima, Senior Lecturer in tourism in Lincoln International Business School; Dr Anna Scott, Associate Lecturer in the College of Arts and Programme Manager in the Centre for Culture and Creativity; Professor Heather Hughes, Professor of Cultural Heritage Studies; and Dr Joseph Akanuwe, registered nurse and post-doctoral research fellow in CaHRU.

## The author

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Previously a senior investigator for RCHME, presenter on Channel 4's

*Time Team* and founding director of Access Cambridge Archaeology at the University of Cambridge, her research interests include historic rural settlements, childhood in the past, public archaeology and the social benefits of heritage participation, leading many public and community heritage programmes in England. Currently pioneering participative community archaeology in the Netherlands, Czech Republic and Poland, she is also President of the Medieval Settlement Research Group and Vice Chair of Trustees for the Council for British Archaeology.

## Further information

Joseph Akanuwe, Heather Hughes, Despina Laparidou, Carenza Lewis, Julie Pattinson, Anna Scott, Claudia Sima, Niro Siriwardena 2022: 'Wellbeing in Volunteers on Heritage at Risk Projects' RRS 57/2021 <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/57-2021>

Also of interest for web pages <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/social-and-economic-research/wellbeing/participation-and-engagement/>

Heritage at Risk (HAR) <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/heritage-at-risk/>

# Places of Joy

## The role of heritage sites during the COVID-19 pandemic

Historic England is working with researchers at University of Southampton, University of Cambridge and University of Surrey to examine the ways that people are using heritage sites to support their wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic.



The south front of Mottisfont Abbey near Romsey, Hampshire.  
© The National Trust Photolibrary / Alamy Stock Photo

### Heritage in time of crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented scale of public wellbeing need. Provision of non-clinical solutions to support mental health using existing resources is therefore vital.

The Places of Joy project, supported by Historic England and The Heritage Alliance, investigates whether heritage appears as a joyful space at a time of national crisis, and if so, how and why.

The work aims to understand the roles and characteristics of heritage sites in contributing to wellbeing. Its findings are revealing the importance of visits to heritage sites in promoting positive subjective wellbeing, as well as satisfying deeper psychological and socio-cultural needs.

The research took place in the unique period following the release of the first lockdown in England (June–October 2020), when access to heritage was regained after a period of deprivation, to explore the potentials of heritage by examining:

- What are the wellbeing benefits of visits to heritage sites during the COVID-19 pandemic?
- What motivates people to visit heritage sites after lockdown? What needs do access to heritage sites satisfy?
- What are the affordances (qualities) of heritage sites that may enhance public wellbeing?
- What impacts do visits have on people and how might this affect attitudes and visits to heritage sites going forward? >>

Crucially, during the period of research, visits to sites were framed by an explicit awareness of *what* was being regained and *why* such visits took place. This extraordinary context lends visitor responses from this time of particular interest. In the rawness of routines and access having been disrupted and then regained, recognition of the use-value of heritage sites was intensified, casting unique light on some of their essential characteristics and potentials. As one visitor put it,

*Lockdown made me realise just how important these national treasures are to our wellbeing.*

Questionnaire: Corfe Castle, 02.08.20

### Methodology and data gathering

Mixed methods research including 780 questionnaires, 328 interviews, participant observation and ethnography was conducted in-person and online at seven case study heritage destination sites, along a spectrum from primarily green space to the built environment and interiors, thereby providing a variety of heritage engagement opportunities and experiences. Sites included both free and pay-to-enter locations, visited at intervals throughout the study period.

In contrast to many previous studies of the wellbeing potential of heritage, the research focussed on unmediated visits rather than on large scale surveys or targeted interventions. It thus examined encounters with heritage of the type experienced by the majority of visitors. Data was collected on pre- and post-visit subjective wellbeing, visit history, motivations for visiting, emotional effects and perceived benefits of the visit (including specific wellbeing and restorative state effects), the affordances of sites including the perceived importance of the historic environment and green space to the visit, and demographic information, as well as opportunities for open-ended responses to the experience and how lockdown affected respondents' attitudes to visiting heritage sites.

### Findings

The results show that single visits to heritage sites have clear subjective wellbeing effects in increasing happiness and reducing anxiety.

Visits may be particularly effective for people with low to moderate levels of subjective wellbeing prior to the visit. Importantly, it is not necessary to be a 'heritage aficionado' in order to feel these effects: there appears to be no difference in the subjective wellbeing benefits experienced by visitors who explicitly value the historic environment and those who do not.

The research demonstrates that heritage sites fulfil a broad range of uses and important societal functions far beyond aesthetic appreciation, learning about history, or visiting collections and exhibitions. This insight offers heritage providers opportunities to reach new audiences who might otherwise assume that visits to sites are not for them.

For example, during the pandemic sites are taking on an important role as social spaces where people feel safe. Before lockdown, 42.4% of visitors in a national survey said that they visited heritage sites to spend time with friends and family (DCMS Taking Part Survey 2019), whilst in our post-lockdown sample the proportion of visitors who chose that reason was 83.5 per cent. Forty-one per cent of people in our sample said that a reason for visiting heritage sites was because they are a 'managed safe space': visits to heritage sites gave people confidence to leave their homes.

*We were afraid to go out for the first time and to come here but [the visit] has given us confidence in going out.*

Questionnaire: Mottisfont Abbey, 15.08.20

The strong subjective wellbeing effects that people report following a visit to a heritage site can be explained by the unusual combination of hedonic

and eudaimonic experiences that such places afford. Hedonic wellbeing refers to feelings of pleasure, satisfaction, and relaxation. Deeper psychological needs, however, are fulfilled through eudaimonic experiences, including those promoting autonomy and control, a sense of efficacy and accomplishment, relatedness, caring about and contributing to something larger than oneself, and a sense of reflection, purposefulness and meaning. At a time when people's lives were destabilised, access to heritage sites reinstated a sense of normality and control over their actions.

We find that responses to heritage include relaxing and stress-reducing effects, emotional safety and life purpose effects.

Although there was sometimes a gap in visitors' recognition of the role of the historic environment in stimulating wellbeing effects, the time depth that is a unique feature of heritage sites nonetheless facilitated a distinct experience. It provides people with a sense of ontological security (that is to say stability in the sense of self and one's place in the world) that is fundamental to wellbeing and reducing susceptibility to anxiety. >>

The research demonstrates that heritage sites fulfil a broad range of uses and important societal functions far beyond aesthetic appreciation, learning about history, or visiting collections and exhibitions.



Right: A day out during the pandemic at the National Trust's Corfe Castle, Dorset.  
© Joanna Sofaer

In contrast to many previous studies of the wellbeing potential of heritage, the research focussed on unmediated visits rather than on large scale surveys or targeted interventions.



Above left: Avebury, Wiltshire. © Joanna Sofaer

At a time of crisis when ways of living that are normally taken for granted are thrown into question, heritage offers a special quality of contemplation that can enable individuals to situate themselves in long-term history, reflect on mortality, ‘time travel’ to periods before the pandemic, and find meaning in the continuity between past and present. By promoting feelings of ontological security, visits to heritage sites can provide people with a buffer against stresses and strains in life which are particularly acute during the pandemic. In our data, the opportunity to situate the self in deep time enabled some visitors to experience a sense of comfort and hope in reflecting that people in the past had been through and overcome various forms of crisis, creating a sense of perspective on the COVID-19 pandemic: the more temporally distant the site, the greater the perceived sense of stability and permanence, and the greater this effect.

*The stones speak to me. They give me a sense of belonging in a way that I don't feel if I look at a piece of porcelain [in a museum]. It's about a sense of mortality. That there's a continuum and I am part of a bigger picture. It makes me feel better.*

Questionnaire: Avebury, 30.7.20

### Conclusion

Heritage sites are complex environments. Their richness offers visitors subjective wellbeing effects via a wide range of hedonic and eudaimonic benefits. Our data indicate that heritage sites are more important to visitors than they were before the pandemic: unmediated visits to heritage sites provide healthy and meaningful experiences, positioning heritage next to other publicly accessible wellbeing resources like the green environment and the arts.

Our research demonstrates the potential of heritage sites as useful assets in public health mitigation strategies associated with the pandemic and beyond.

**Our research demonstrates the potential of heritage sites as useful assets in public health mitigation strategies associated with the pandemic and beyond.**

Future detailed understanding of the ways in which visits to heritage sites can contribute to wellbeing may allow the matching of visitor needs to the specificities of site affordances. This will maximise wellbeing outcomes and develop the medium to long term effectiveness of such visits in enhancing wellbeing ■

### The authors

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*Professor of Archaeology at University of Southampton, Co-Director of the Southampton Institute for Arts and Humanities, and Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) Knowledge Exchange and Impact Fellow for the Public Spaces programme.*



Joanna leads *Places of Joy* and has directed and partnered on several high-profile international research projects, bridging academic and non-academic worlds. She is particularly

interested in the relationship between wellbeing and historic environments.

### Eirini Gallou

*Senior Social Analyst (secondment) with Historic England.*



Eirini works within the Policy and Evidence group at Historic England to support data analysis and informed decision making. Eirini holds a PhD from UCL Institute for Sustainable Heritage (ISH), on

sustainable heritage management in historic landscapes looking into the social impact of cultural engagement for rural communities. Eirini worked as a teaching assistant at UCL ISH and has been awarded the Associate Fellowship by the Higher Education Academy (AFHEA). She holds an MSc From TU Delft, Netherlands in Architecture, Urbanism and Building Sciences with a specialisation in Restoration.

### Further information

Joanna Sofaer, Eirini Gallou & Ben Davenport (in submission) Heritage Blindness? Wellbeing and Motivations to Visit Heritage Sites During the COVID-19 Pandemic in England.

Joanna Sofaer, Ben Davenport, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, Eirini Gallou & David Uzzell (2021) Heritage sites, value and wellbeing: learning from the COVID-19 pandemic in England, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 27:11,1117-1132, DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2021.1955729



# Enriching the List, enriching lives

Assessing how contributing to heritage through Enriching the List can help the personal wellbeing of contributors.

## What is Enriching the List?

'Enriching the List' is an innovative User Generated Content tool managed by Historic England whereby anyone can share stories, photographs and other content to be included alongside the statutory List entries for England's most significant historic buildings and sites, as registered on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE). The list entries are usually concise descriptions of the features and significance of a building or site. Enriching the List offers the opportunity to supplement this with new information from the public, building up a fuller picture and capturing a new range of values. Under the scheme, anyone using the Historic England website can view shared content and sign-up for an account to share their own. We welcome anything that celebrates and enhances our understanding of designated heritage assets:

- Photos - new or old
- Historical events and social history
- Information about the architecture or archaeology
- Links to useful online resources

Further information on Enriching the List and on resources that may help with contributing images can be found <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/enrich-the-list/> and <https://heritagecalling.com/2015/10/08/tips-for-photographing-buildings/>

We launched Enriching the List in 2016 to great success. However, after five years an upgrade was needed. As a result, in December 2021 we relaunched the Enriching the List tool, alongside a new design for the NHLE webpages. The new Enriching the List tool offers a better user experience with a more modern, attractive and accessible interface, so that anyone can share their thoughts, feelings, memories and images. >>



Dawn at the Coate  
Water diving platform,  
Swindon, Wiltshire.  
© Nicola Turner

Enriching the List can reveal new information not only about a building but also about a person.

### Wellbeing and Enriching the List

Anecdotal evidence from the scheme so far suggested that Enriching the List had two beneficial outcomes. It enhances the List as a public resource by adding information and perspectives to it, but it also benefits the people making the contributions. For example, when East Kent Mencap purchased a listed building in need of repair in Ramsgate to expand their services, they developed a project to document its restoration using Enriching the List. A group of members with learning disabilities took photographs of the building, which were uploaded with individual reflections. This allowed participants to develop a relationship and a sense of ownership with their building. Having their [images and reflections uploaded and available through Enriching the List](#) reportedly provided participants with instant connection to the building and a reward for their efforts.

Contributions through Enriching the List can reveal new information not only about a building but also about a person. Some of

the most captivating are those that provide glimpses into the stories of the people that have been associated with it in the course of its history, even up to recent times.

One example of this is a cottage called Monk's in [Sible Hedingham near Braintree](#), a Grade II timber-framed building of the 17th century. A contributor took the time to share the following:

*My mother, Margaret Allen, was the owner of Monks. We, as a family, returned there in 1958 from Tanganyika after the death of my father who was in cattle ranching. I recall that the other contributor must have left some of his comics, which I remember as showing a glittering world of plenty (for a child) in what was a pretty glum and austere world; England in the late fifties. We grew up there, my mother moving to Castle Hedingham in the 1990's. The house was a place of pleasant memories, in darkish times.*



This, combined with comments from other contributors, started to paint a picture of the life of the building and its relationship with its inhabitants.

Whilst the NHLE is a resource for heritage management and the public alike, these two examples show how Enriching the List provides a tool which allows active engagement with the List. It provides an opportunity to creatively contribute to the lasting legacy of designated heritage assets and offers an avenue for personal story-telling. In recognising the potential of this a small project was designed with the aim of evaluating the wellbeing benefits of engagement with the NHLE via Enriching the List.

### Research Methods

Six participants were selected from among our 'super users' for this study. 'Super users' are defined as Enriching the List contributors who submit a large volume of content and/or are frequently active on the platform.

Data was collected in one-to-one phone interviews with participants. These took a semi-structured format with a mix of rated or single-answer questions to quickly identify any consensus or disagreement; and open-ended questions for a deeper understanding of personal experience and for richer themes to emerge. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and thematically analysed. Participants were asked to confirm that transcriptions were accurate records of the interview and they had the opportunity to request changes. All responses are anonymous and to protect their identity we have not included any of their Enriching the List contributions in this article.

The questions sought to understand our contributors' relationship with Enriching the List with regard to: Getting started, Impact of lockdown, Engagement and activity, Motivation, Interest in local heritage, Interest in the List, Wellbeing, and Purpose. >>

Enriching the List provides a tool which allows active engagement with the List.



Left: Night-time photograph of Culmstock Beacon, Devon. © Paul Steven



**Above left:** Manor Road Garage, East Preston, West Sussex. Art Deco frontage. © Brian Mawdsley

### Preliminary Findings

Some participants happened across Enriching the List by chance whilst others had seen promotional activity and followed it up. Since they started, which for most is since its launch in 2016, all participants have been committed contributors. They described their participation either as ‘a hobby’ or as ‘volunteering’ or ‘contributing’.

Lockdown had a severe impact on the ability for people to contribute to the List and this had negative consequences for participants, ranging from experiences of frustration to depression. Emerging from this was a sense of the multiple values of Enriching the List – it was identified as

Enriching the List was identified as a reason to go and see things that would not otherwise have been visited.

a reason to go and see things that would not otherwise have been visited. One participant said:

*‘I’m going to places that I’ve not been to, some I’ve never been to, last week I went up to Lancaster... where I’ve not been since I was on holiday there as an 8 year old in 1954.’ The participant reinforced this by stating that ‘There are thousands of places I wouldn’t have gone to’.*

Further responses showed how participation provided a focus especially in periods of personal difficulty. It gave people a purpose and enabled them to get their existing photo



**Above right:** Hadrian's Wall, Northumberland. The upstanding remains of Hadrian's Wall, the milecastle and turrets are Listed Grade I, from turret 34a to turret 35a. © P Hempel <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000098?section=comments-and-photos>

archives and newly created material out there into the public domain.

Participants felt as if they were making a difference, learning new skills and enjoying an opportunity and motivation to exercise – one participant stated that ‘It exercises your brain as well as your feet’.

There was a strong sense among participants that doing something useful had a positive impact on mental health. An inter-related impact valued the legacy element: once submitted, the participant’s text, photos and information became part of a permanent presence for the future, and this emerged as a powerful source of personal satisfaction.

There was a strong sense among participants that doing something useful had a positive impact on mental health.

One participant stated that:

*‘members of the public and perhaps researchers and the like, they will be looking back perhaps 50 years, 100 years from now and they will be looking at these photographs. So it gives me some satisfaction to think that I’m contributing something which might be useful to... people in the future’.*

This further led to a sense that the work of Enriching the List made the NHLE more accessible to non-heritage professionals, helping others to understand and identify listed buildings. >>

## Conclusion

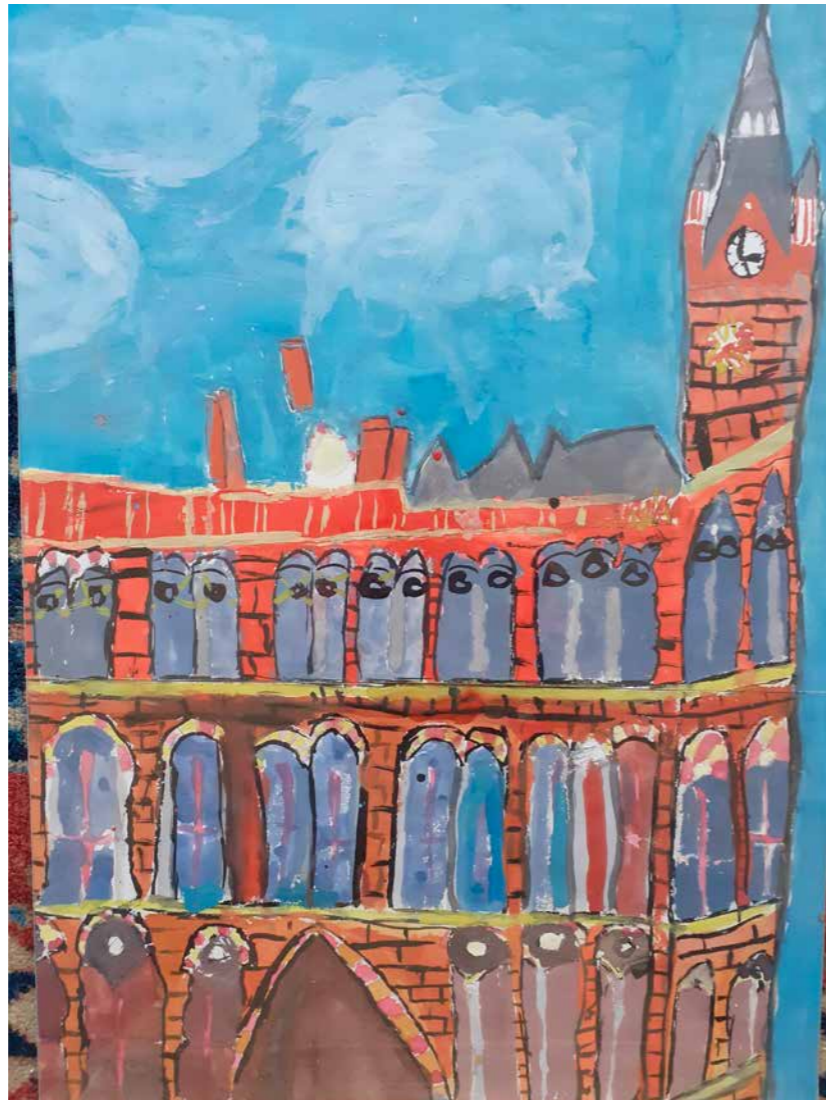
The survey responses indicated that participation provided new insights and perspectives on place and that adding a photograph made the buildings more appealing and interesting to investigate. There were several comments relating to the idea that a picture paints a thousand words and how Enriching the List was a great way to bring buildings to life. Participants highlighted a sense of accomplishment and how their involvement meant they had visited many places, expanding their experience of heritage and taking them to sites that they had never previously visited.

The value to the individual contributors was clear and one stated that 'it's my life really. I enjoy it and I'm very happy continuing with it.' This notion of having a purpose and a focus was strong amongst the participants, showing the activity can be a powerful means of supporting wellbeing.

It provides insight into how volunteering in this way can provide positive benefits for life satisfaction and mental health.

This research is small in scale, but it represents the first inquiry into the benefits of Enriching the List to those making the contributions. It provides insight into how volunteering in this way can provide positive benefits for life satisfaction and mental health. It can stimulate pleasure and joy and help expand perspectives. In combination with the clear legacy of the material as part of the archive that sits alongside the NHLE, Enriching the List provides a great opportunity for 'meaning making' through its role in providing new perspectives for individuals on life and experiences, and gives a purpose that helps current and future generations connect with, enjoy and understand our heritage better ■

**Below left:** Schoolchildren's painting of St Pancras Station and Midland Hotel by Year 4, Edith Neville School.



## The authors

**Dr Linda Monckton FSA**  
*Head of Wellbeing and Inclusion Strategy with Historic England.*



Linda is an architectural historian with a special interest in the social impact and potential of

the historic environment. She has worked in the heritage profession for 25 years as a researcher, analyst and strategist and is leading on Historic England's strategic approach to delivering health and wellbeing outcomes through its work.

**Brook Bishop**  
*Information Services Officer with Historic England.*



Brook is a part-time Information Services Officer for Historic England and currently a moderator for

Enriching the List. He has a combined 10-years' experience in roles at heritage organisations, dedicating his remaining time to a part-time marketing position at English Heritage and volunteering as an interpretation assistant with the Churches Conservation Trust.

**Below right:** Chimney remains, Over Whitacre, Warwickshire.  
© Ann Clayden



**Annelly Souza**  
*Information Services Officer with Historic England.*



Annelly first joined in 2017, starting out as an apprentice at Historic England and became an Information Services Officer once she

completed her apprenticeship. Her role is to help users navigate the NHLE, find out if their building is Listed and provide general advice on Listing. Annelly is also responsible for moderating the content added as part of the Enriching The List Project along with her colleagues.

**Ahad Noor**  
*Information Services Officer with Historic England.*



After graduating from the University of Liverpool in 2017 with a BA (Hons) in History, Ahad spent two years working at English

Heritage before joining Historic England in 2019. He currently works as an Information Services Officer which involves helping users navigate the National Heritage List for England) and Enriching the List, moderating Enriching the List contributions and providing general advice on Listing.

## Further information

List Entries where people have written a personal story about their relationship to a Listed building:

[Monk's, Sible Hedingham, Essex](#)

[Daffodil Cottage, Grendon Underwood, Buckinghamshire](#)

[The Post Office, Lawshall, Suffolk](#)

[The Herdsman's Cottage, Malton Road, York](#)

# Geographic exposure to heritage, reported visits and income deprivation, in England

Research exploring how geographic exposure to heritage varies according to income deprivation, and how exposure influences visits to heritage.

The ruined entrance to Whitby Abbey,  
North Yorkshire. © istock 520013716  
© istock 1269288572



Research indicates that people living in more deprived neighbourhoods are less likely to engage in the arts, culture and heritage regardless of an individual's personal socio-economic status.

### Project background

This project is a collaboration between academics within the [Places and Health programme](#) at the [MRC/CSO SPHSU](#), and colleagues from [Historic England](#) (Monckton, Gallou), to investigate how spatial and survey data may help to explore the health impacts of heritage environments.

### Heritage and health

There is an ever-sharper focus within Public Health on environments which help us stay healthy. Research has paid considerable attention to the benefits of green spaces; how they can protect our physical and mental wellbeing was centre-stage during the COVID-19 lockdowns. A much smaller evidence base suggests that visiting heritage, such as historic buildings or monuments, may offer similar health benefits; heritage engagement has been associated with stress reduction, increased physical activity, improved life satisfaction, and improvements in mental health.

### Inequality in visits to heritage

Despite these benefits, research indicates that people living in more deprived neighbourhoods are less likely to engage in the arts, culture and heritage regardless of an individual's personal socio-economic status (Mak *et. al* 2021). One contributing factor could be poorer geographic exposure – by which we mean the proximity

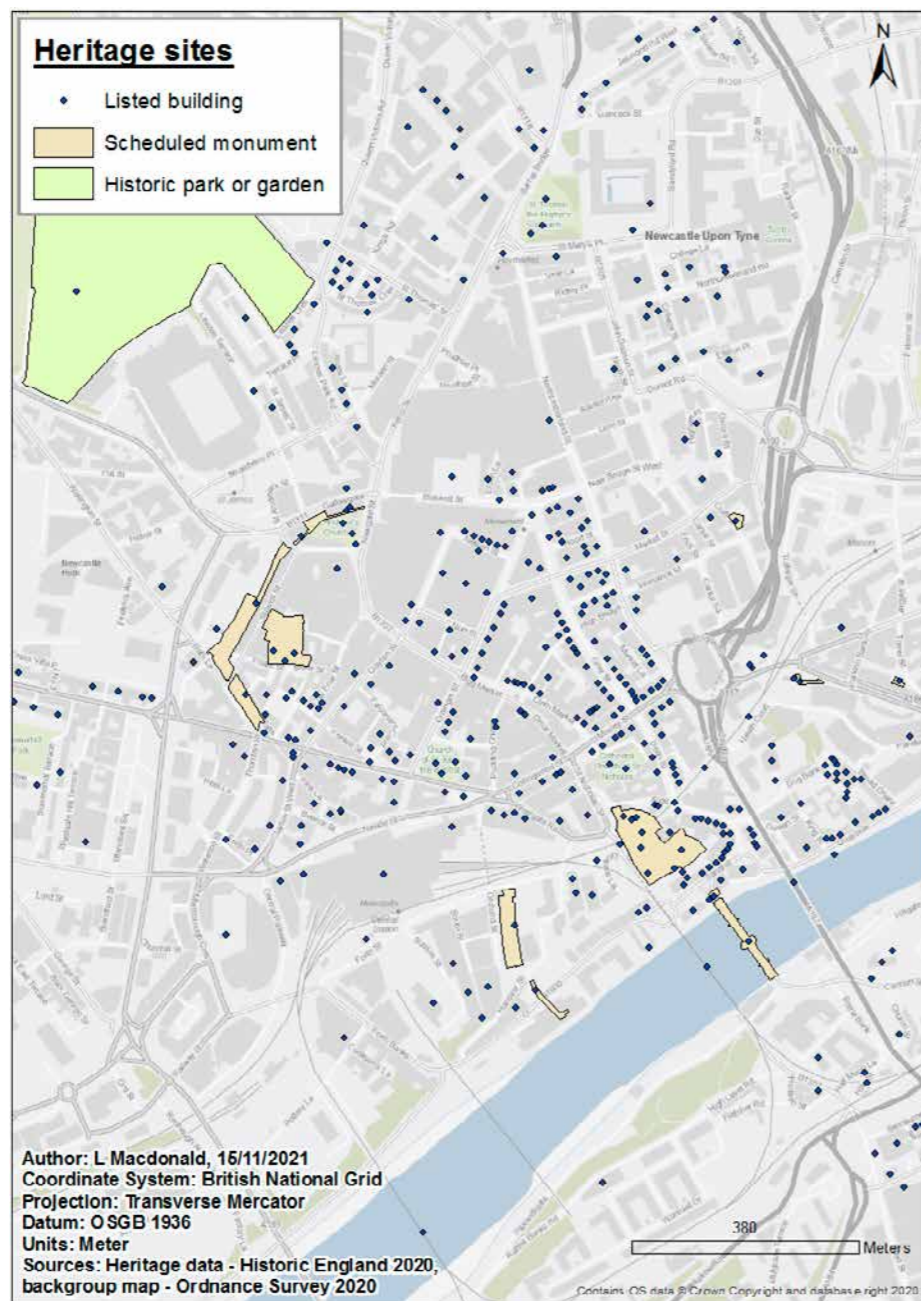


Figure 1: Heritage sites, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 2020.

Mapping in this way enabled us to link data on the heritage environment with data on the socio-economic situation, at small neighbourhood area level.

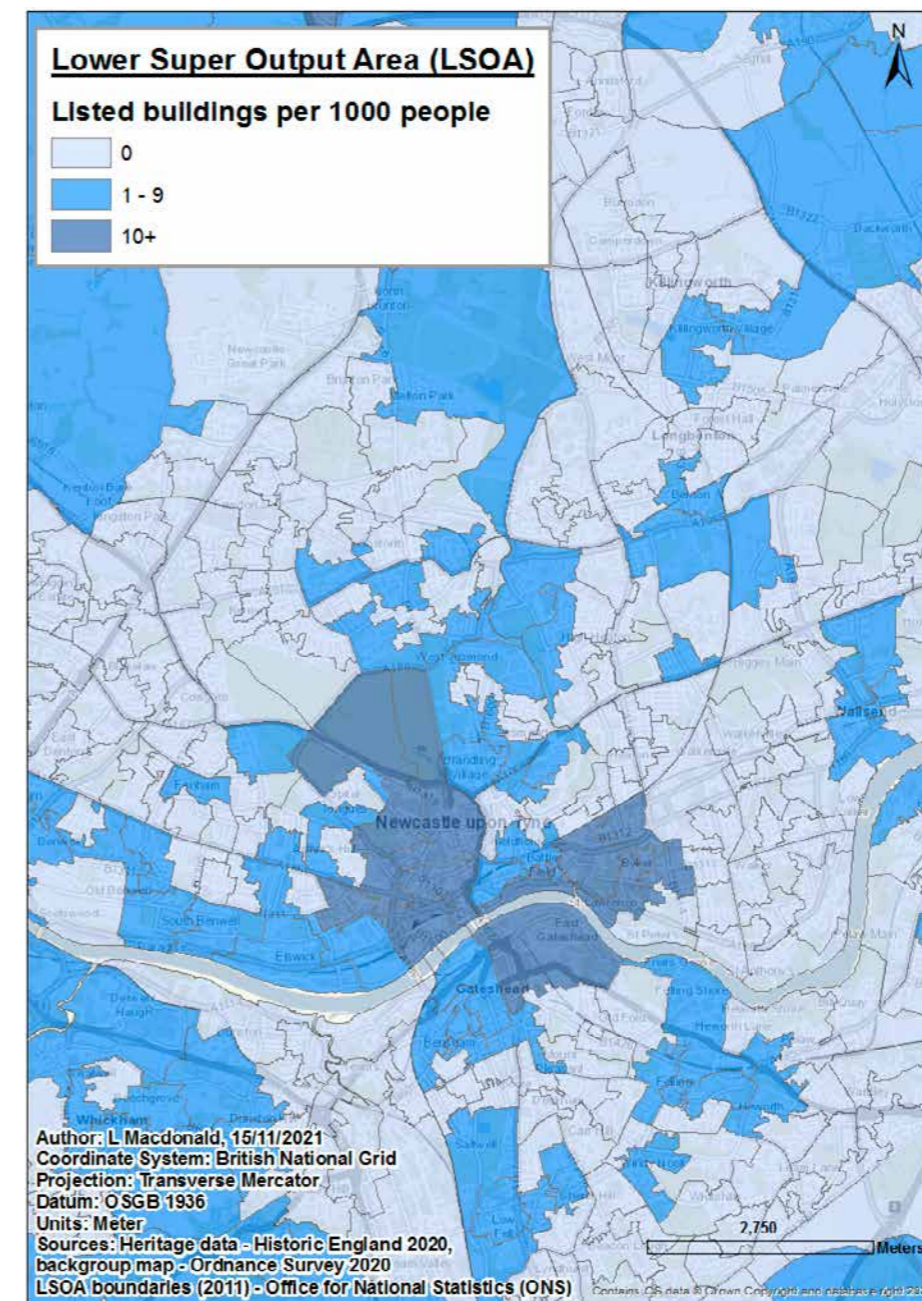


Figure 2: Listed buildings per 1000 people per LSOA, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, 2020.

and availability of heritage sites to visit or landscapes to experience. The interaction between neighbourhood-level exposure to heritage and socio-economic situation in influencing visits is a dimension of heritage which has received less attention.

### Mapping geographic exposure to heritage in England

The team obtained information on the location of listed buildings, scheduled monuments and historic parks and gardens from Historic England colleagues. We used a [Geographic Information System](#) to map heritage sites (as of 2020). As an example, Figure 1. shows heritage data for Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. We created various measures to capture heritage exposure, such as densities of listed buildings, and percentage of land designated as monuments or historic parks and gardens. Mapping in this way enabled us to link data on the heritage environment with data on the socio-economic situation, at small neighbourhood area level. Figure 2. shows listed buildings per 1000 population for [Lower Super Output Area \(LSOA\)](#) 'neighbourhoods' (i.e. LSOAs are small areas used in the Census) around Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. Darker blue areas represent higher densities of listed buildings. We used LSOAs in our analysis as they can be linked to population numbers, deprivation scores, and heritage survey data. >>

Overall, the results suggest geographic exposure to heritage is socio-economically unequal; poorer areas have fewer assets identified as heritage.

### Inequality in geographic exposure to heritage

We used the income measure from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) [English Index of Multiple Deprivation](#) to capture the socio-economic situation of the neighbourhood areas, i.e. LSOAs. Table 1 shows the mean number of listed buildings per 1000 population, and per square kilometre (km<sup>2</sup>) of land in an LSOA, by income-deprivation quintile (LSOAs ranked by deprivation, divided into five equal groups).

We used these two measures because they each capture different aspects of the 'supply' of heritage. Across the 32,844 LSOAs, the mean number of buildings was 6.7 per 1000 people and 10.7 per km<sup>2</sup>. The latter figure seems high. This is because more densely settled LSOAs with large numbers of listed buildings tend to be physically small. The more income-deprived (i.e. poorer) areas (Quintile (Q)1) had fewer buildings per 1000 people on average (1.7) compared to the more affluent areas (Q5: 10.0). The poorer areas also showed the lowest mean number of listed buildings per km<sup>2</sup> (Q1: 8.6).

Table 2 shows the mean percentage of land occupied by scheduled monuments and historic parks and gardens. The more affluent areas

have, on average, a higher percentage of land that is classified as scheduled monuments (Q5: 0.21%), and a higher percentage devoted to historic parks/gardens (Q5: 1.28%) than poorer areas (Q1: 0.11% and 0.61% respectively). Overall, the results suggest geographic exposure to heritage is socio-economically unequal; poorer areas have fewer assets identified as heritage.

### Geographic exposure and visits to heritage

We were also interested in whether geographic exposure to heritage is associated with whether an individual is likely to visit. We used existing data from wave five (2014) of the [UK Household Longitudinal Study](#) (UKHLS). The UKHLS is a large panel survey, which has tracked around 31,000 people in England since 2009.

Respondents were asked how often they visited each of these heritage sites: 'a city or town with historic character', 'a historic building', 'a historic place of worship', 'a historic park or garden', 'a place of industrial history or historic transport system', 'a monument such as a castle, fort or ruin', 'a site of archaeological interest' and a 'sports heritage site', in the past 12 months.

Around 61% of respondents (n=19,232) reported visiting a

heritage site at least once in the past 12 months. However, 77% of individuals living in more affluent areas reported visiting a heritage site, compared to 40% in poorer areas. We then created and joined measures of heritage exposure for 2014 based on the study respondents' neighbourhoods of residence (i.e. LSOAs as respondent postal codes were unavailable). It is important to understand we did not know whether the visits reported were to heritage in the respondent's neighbourhood.

Table 3 shows the percentage of respondents visiting any heritage at least once in the past year, against various measures of their local (i.e. LSOA level) heritage exposure. Fewer people visited heritage when their neighbourhood did not contain any heritage sites. As the number of listed buildings per 1000 population increased, the percentage visiting heritage increased (no listed buildings - 56.8% visited heritage, five or more - 69.1% visited). However, greater 'amounts' of heritage in the neighbourhood area were not necessarily linked to higher rates of visiting; for the percentage of land as monuments/historic parks/gardens, and heritage sites per km<sup>2</sup>, the middle category of exposure (1-4) had the highest levels of visiting. >>

Fewer people visited heritage when their neighbourhood did not contain any heritage sites.

Income deprivation	Mean number per 1000 population	Mean number per km <sup>2</sup>
Q1 (more deprived areas)	1.7	8.6
Q2	3.8	13.1
Q3	7.1	12.3
Q4	10.8	9.5
Q5 (more affluent areas)	10.0	9.9

**Table 1:** Listed buildings (2020) - mean number per population and per area, by income-deprivation quintiles.

Income deprivation	Mean % land that is scheduled monuments	Mean % land that is historic parks/gardens
Q1 (more deprived areas)	0.11	0.61
Q2	0.17	0.71
Q3	0.23	0.74
Q4	0.25	0.99
Q5 (more affluent areas)	0.28	1.28

**Table 2:** Scheduled monuments and historic parks and gardens (2020) - mean percentage cover by income deprivation quintiles.

		% visited (n=19,232)
Number of listed buildings per 1000 population	0	56.8 (9844)
	1 - 4	63.9 (4312)
	5+	69.1 (5076)
% land cover as scheduled monuments & historic parks/gardens	0	59.6 (15607)
	1 - 4%	69.2 (2694)
	5%+	67.6 (931)
Number of heritage sites (all) per km <sup>2</sup>	0	57.5 (8311)
	1 - 4	67.0 (6047)
	5+	61.2 (4874)

**Table 3:** Percentage of English UKHLS respondents (2014) who visited heritage in past year by level of exposure at LSOA level.

Schemes may include targeting specific communities/areas to improve access, knowledge, and awareness of heritage, and providing investment in heritage environments in need of reinvigoration.

Such schemes have the potential to improve heritage engagement and ultimately provide benefits to health and wellbeing.



**Above:** Historic Bath seen from the air, including Royal Crescent and the surrounding streets and green spaces.  
© 2021 iStockphoto LP

### **Next steps: Geographic exposure and health**

Existing evidence shows that engagement with heritage is good for your health and wellbeing, but less is known about whether the physical presence of historically significant buildings, monuments or green space in your local neighbourhood also provides benefits to health for all, for residents as well as visitors. We aim to unpack these complex issues using health data from UKHLS respondents.

### **Why is our research valuable and potentially impactful?**

Our findings highlight lower exposure to heritage within poorer neighbourhoods in England and an apparent association between very low exposure to local heritage and lower levels of visiting heritage in general. These results can feed into place-based schemes to tackle inequality in exposure to heritage in poorer neighbourhoods. Schemes may include targeting specific communities/areas to improve access, knowledge, and awareness of heritage, and providing investment in heritage environments in need of reinvigoration. Such schemes have the potential to improve heritage engagement and ultimately provide benefits to health and wellbeing ■



## The authors

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Laura has a background in Sociology, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS),

and has worked as a public health researcher for 20 years. Laura's research explores the processes by which features of the local social and physical environment influence health and wellbeing, with a focus on health inequalities.

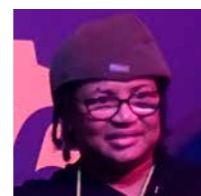
Prof Richard Mitchell PhD  
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Rich is an epidemiologist and geographer with a particular focus on the roles which

environments can play in creating, maintaining and reducing inequalities in health. Rich is interested in natural environments and the potential for different aspects of the environment to positively influence population health and reduce health inequalities. In addition to leading the Places and Health Programme, he is a co-director of the [Centre for Research on Environment, Society and Health \(CRESH\)](#).

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Statistician, Places and Health Programme, Social and Public Health Sciences Unit (SPHSU), University of Glasgow.



Natalie trained as a veterinarian, but transitioned to statistical and epidemiological work during her

PhD. She now works as a statistician supporting the Places and Health Programme, but retains an interest in epidemiology, both human and animal.

**Above right:** Traditional shops on the famous and narrow medieval Street known as the Shambles in York, North Yorkshire. © istock 1269288572



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mental health functioning using data from the UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS): are associations moderated by area deprivation?' *BMJ open* 11

Mak, H W, Coulter, R and Fancourt, D 2021 'Associations between neighbourhood deprivation and engagement in arts, culture and heritage: evidence from two nationally-representative samples' *BMC public health*, 21, 1-10

## Websites

Historic England, more information at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/>  
Geographic Information System (GIS),

more information at: <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/business-government/tools-support/gis/what-is-gis>

Lower Super Output Areas, more information at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/geography/ukgeographies/censusgeography>

English Index of Multiple Deprivation (EIMD), more information at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

UK Household Longitudinal Study, more information at: <https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/>

# Public parks and greenspaces matter

Evaluating the health and wellbeing value of historic public parks and greenspaces.

## The impact of the pandemic

Pandemic lockdown measures from March 2020 required people to stay at home; many venues including heritage attractions closed, and gatherings were limited to two people. Many relished the freedom to take exercise, and a local park was a great asset. The number of visits surged, and visiting local green spaces proved to be important to many people's wellbeing. >>

Lockdown exercising in Grade II registered <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000794>  
Brockwell Park, Lambeth (January 2021) © RichardBaker / Alamy Stock Photo

In 2021, the [Office for National Statistics](#) analysed the impact of lockdown on exercise levels and usage of public green spaces. People exercised more during the lockdowns and visits to parks increased in 2020 and 2021. In May 2020, 36% of people responding to Natural England's annual [People and Nature Survey](#) said that they spent more time outside during the pandemic than before, a figure that rose to 46% in July. Natural England's 2021 survey also showed that there were more social media conversations about parks and gardens than in the pre-pandemic period and these highlighted the importance of passive outdoor activities like sitting, chatting, picnicking, and reflecting alongside walking and connecting with nature.

TV presenter Claudia Winkleman (Daily Telegraph 21 August 2021) echoed these changes: *'I never really go outside, and I never move. I'm on the Tube, or I'm lying down on my bed, or I'm reading out loud for a living. That's basically it. But in lockdown I discovered the wonder of a park. Me and my family would do this walk and we named all the squirrels and gave them full characteristics. We continue to do it all the time – lockdown gave it to us and now we won't give it up.'*

### The role of parks and green spaces

There are more than 27,000 [public parks and green spaces across the UK](#) and we know from the National Lottery Fund's *State of Public Parks* report that the main park users are:

- People between the ages of 25 and 34 (70 % use their park at least once a month)
  - Households with children under the age of five (90 % use their park at least once a month)
  - People identifying as Black and Minority Ethnic (of whom 71 % use their park at least once a month compared to 56 % of people identifying as White).
- An earlier survey by the [Heritage Fund](#) revealed that:
- 95% of visits are enjoyable, peaceful and relaxing
  - 60% of visitors take more physical exercise because they use parks
  - 80% say the park helps make their area more attractive and a better place to live.

Evidence on the contribution of parks and green spaces to physical and mental health had already been submitted to the 2016-17 [Select Committee 'Public Parks' inquiry](#) and reducing stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression, combating loneliness and encouraging

community cohesion are recognised in the government's subsequent 2018 [25-Year Environment Plan](#). The Plan includes a policy to help improve health and wellbeing by using green spaces including through mental health services. However, progress was dogged by questions about the validity and reliability of data.

### The health evidence

Public Health England's 2020 ['Improving access to greenspace'](#) review was a game changer in making the case for parks. The review showed how the evidence base has grown on who benefits, how and to what extent: it has become irrefutable that access to greenspaces is important for health and wellbeing. The review called on local authorities to develop greenspace policies to deliver healthy communities, reduce social isolation and address climate change, and to work with health and social care services and local communities.

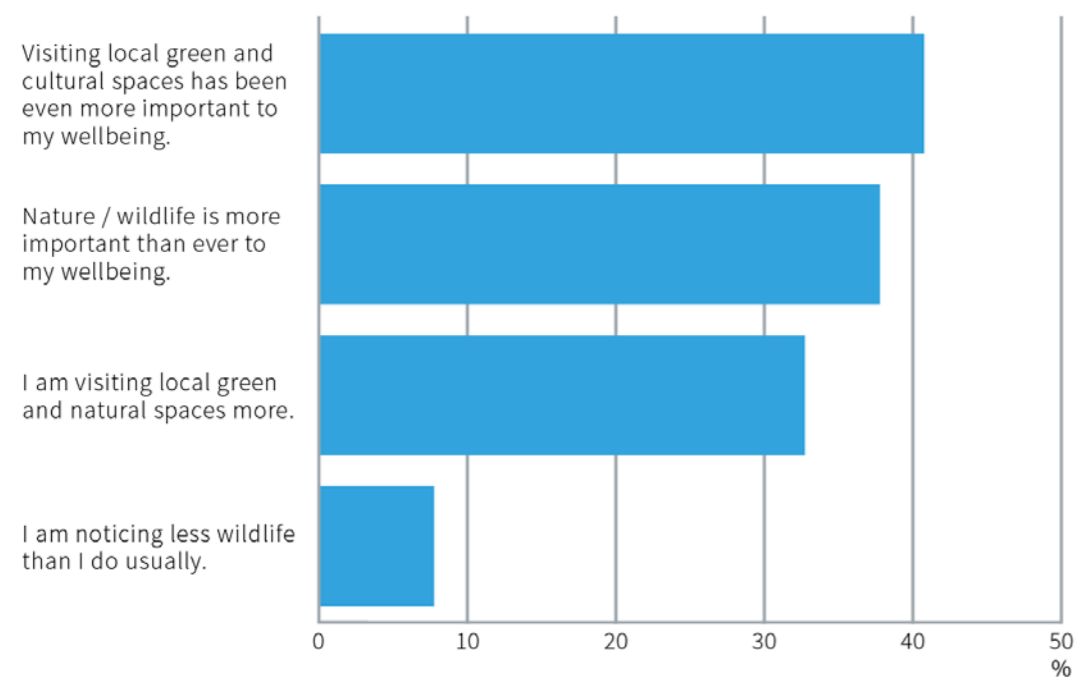
### Cultural heritage and parks

All public parks and greenspaces such as urban commons and cemeteries have a history. They are part of the story of our towns and cities, and vital to life in urban areas. Many date from the 19th and

early 20th centuries: this 150-year history of design and development is reflected in the national Register of Parks & Gardens of Special Historic Interest, and in the thousands of features like statues, railings and bandstands that are separately designated on the National Heritage List for England. Recent additions to the Register include Campbell Park, Milton Keynes (opened 1984) <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1467405> and Alexandra Road Park, Camden (completed 1979) <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1469254>.

The idea that parks are good for people is not new: many were designed specifically as places to enjoy, driven by a wish to create 'lungs of the city' and address community health and sanitation today. The Victorians sought to refresh the spirit of people through contact with nature, thereby creating long-lasting investments, great social assets and critical green infrastructure. For example Sir Frank Crossley's aspiration in creating Halifax's People's Park (1857) was *'to arrange art and nature so that they shall be within the walk of every working man in Halifax; that he shall go to take his stroll there after he has done his hard day's toil, and be able to get home without being tired'*. >>

### Proportion of adults that have noticed or done the following since coronavirus restrictions were introduced in England, February 2021



**Above left:** Local green and natural spaces have been important for wellbeing during the pandemic. © Office for National Statistics sourced from Natural England



**Above right:** Ways in which greenspace is linked to positive health outcomes (based on Public Health England 'Improving access to greenspace. A new review for 2020 review').

## New research findings

In 2021 Historic England commissioned an analysis of the economic, social and environmental values of 72 registered public parks of 'special historic interest' in eight cities using the Greenkeeper tool [www.greenkeeper.co.uk](http://www.greenkeeper.co.uk) launched in mid-2020. The demand model – based tool is designed to enable green space managers and investors have a better understanding of the full value, as opposed to cost, of urban greenspace. Using recreational visit numbers and applying a series of valuation methodologies, the tool estimates the benefit to individual visitors (physical health, mental wellbeing), local populations (local value) and global populations (carbon sequestration) and translates this into monetary terms.

The analysis showed that this cohort of nationally important parks generate 37 million visits per year and £856 million in annual benefits, including physical health, mental wellbeing, amenity value and carbon sequestration (the capture and storage of atmospheric carbon dioxide by trees). The mental health benefits alone equate to £543 million per year.

In Birmingham, a [City Council report](#) shows that the annual net benefit of all the city's parks and greenspace is nearly £600 million, and £4.6 billion in health benefits over 25 years. 23% of Birmingham's parks and green spaces are registered and Greenkeeper estimates that these sites alone account for £168 million or 28% of these annual benefits including over £106 million mental health benefits each year.

[Research](#) for the National Trust and the City of Sheffield (2016) showed that approximately '60% of the public accounts benefits of public parks in any large city arise from their contribution to physical and mental wellbeing and reinforce the positive role of parks for our health, confirming their place as significant capital assets contributing to the many services provided by the natural environment that benefit people, termed ecosystem services.

The challenge is now to tease out the role of, and quantify the benefits of, the heritage and cultural significance of parks and how these attributes help people engage with and use their parks more. We know that the quality of green spaces, (how they are planned, designed and maintained McCormack GR, Rock M,

Toohey AM, Hignell D 2010), is as important as having access to them evidenced by huge increases in the number and range of visitors and volunteers flowing from the Lottery investment in parks. This has been shown in Heritage Fund reports from [2013](#) and [2016](#).

DCMS is now developing a [valuation framework](#) for culture and heritage capital, a parallel for natural capital accounting that will include public parks. In step with the PHE 2020 recommendations, it would be helpful to have evidence-based case studies highlighting historic public parks and health outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups. We need to ensure the heritage and cultural significance of these parks is recognised and celebrated alongside their natural qualities ■

**We need to ensure the heritage and cultural significance of these parks is recognised and celebrated alongside their natural qualities.**



## The author

Jenifer White BSc MSc CMLI

*National Landscape Adviser with Historic England.*



Jenifer is a National Landscape Adviser at Historic England. Jenifer is a chartered landscape architect specialising in the conservation of historic parks and gardens.

**Below left:** The Grade II\* Cannon Hill Park <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001489>, dating from 1873, is one of 22 registered public parks in Birmingham. © Historic England Archive

## Further information

Office for National Statistics 26 April 2021 'How has lockdown changed our relationship with nature?' <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/howhaslockdownchangedourrelationshipwithnature/2021-04-26>

Natural England and Kantar Public September 2021 [Impact of Covid-19 on engagement with green and natural spaces](#). Natural England Report PANS003

House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee 2017 ['Public parks. Seventh Report of Session 2016–17'](#)

House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee 2017 ['Public parks. Seventh Report of Session 2016–17'](#)

[Heritage Fund October 2019](#)

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcomloc/45/45.pdf>

Defra 2018 ['25 Year Environment Plan'](#)

Public Health England 2020 ['Improving access to greenspace. A new review for 2020'](#)

Hölzinger O and Grayson, N. 2019 Birmingham Health Economic Assessment & Natural Capital

Accounts: [Revealing the True Value of Council-managed Parks and Greenspace](#). Birmingham City Council.

Social Finance 2016 ['New research shows value of greenspaces, as MPs debate the future of parks'](#)

McCormack GR, Rock M, Toohey AM, Hignell D 2010 ['Characteristics of urban parks associated with park use and physical activity: A review of qualitative research'](#). Health & Place. 16(4):712-26

Heritage Fund November 2013 ['Parks for People. Impact Evaluation'](#) and Heritage Fund 2016 ['State of UK Public Parks'](#)

# Worcester life stories: a partnership between heritage and health

A story of how a Historic Environment Record came to support older people and people living with dementia.

## Developing the Worcester Life Stories Project

Five years ago, I was working on an inpatient ward at Worcestershire Health and Care Trust (as it was then). I was recollecting working for the Black Country Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, when our Occupational Therapist invited a historian to talk about the city of Wolverhampton.

For the people on the dementia and mental health ward, this event was an opportunity to come together, share their stories, hear facts never heard before and connect through shared experience. Reminiscence is known to enhance wellbeing, and a sense of connection and

inclusion with others (<https://www.scie.org.uk/dementia/living-with-dementia/keeping-active/reminiscence.asp>).

I wanted to do something similar with within my current Trust. In conversation with Sheena Payne-Lunn, an archaeologist at the Worcester Historic Environment Record (HER), which is the official Worcester database, an idea began to form. Within the HER there exists a collection of 35,000 images of Worcester from the 1950s onwards, a resource of great potential benefit to patients suffering from mental health issues if only it could be made accessible to them. >>

Opposite page, top: A photo of The Shambles in Worcester (1951) from the collection.

Opposite page, bottom: An archive image of a street scene from the Blackfriars area of Worcester.



In considering how to exploit this material, Sheena spoke of an online platform called Know Your Place (KYP, 2020 <http://www.kypwest.org.uk/explore-the-map/>), first developed in Bristol by Peter Insole, Principal Historic Environment Officer. This provided online access to heritage material related to the historic city as well as an opportunity for the public to upload their own photos and memories.

As we discussed this further, I started to consider not only having readymade ‘Worcester packs’ which hospitals, care homes and so forth could access, but also developing the ability for people to create their own personal digital Life Story. As a Clinical Psychologist within an Older Adult Mental Health Inpatient Service, I already routinely used life story work and reminiscence for people living with dementia who came into hospital.

Within our thinking we planned to extend the current offer by people being able to create a private digital life story where they would be able to draw images and information from the KYP platform, as well as by uploading their own memories and photographs. Two distinct but inter-related platforms were envisaged, one led by the HER and one by the NHS, but their unique character would be the interaction between the two.

We engaged other organisations which work with older people, for example housing agencies and carers, and these became stakeholders from the start. They could see the value of the project and the difference it could make to people’s live and their care. They pledged their time and commitment to the project, which was a genuine partnership between diverse bodies. The KYP platform is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Worcester City Council, and the Life Stories platform by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Care and Health NHS Trust, and the developers of the platform VerseOne. Historic England pledged their support and agreed to fund the research looking into heritage and wellbeing.

The visual above (right) encapsulates the idea and an outline of the project.

**We engaged other organisations which work with older people, for example housing agencies and carers, and these became stakeholders from the start.**



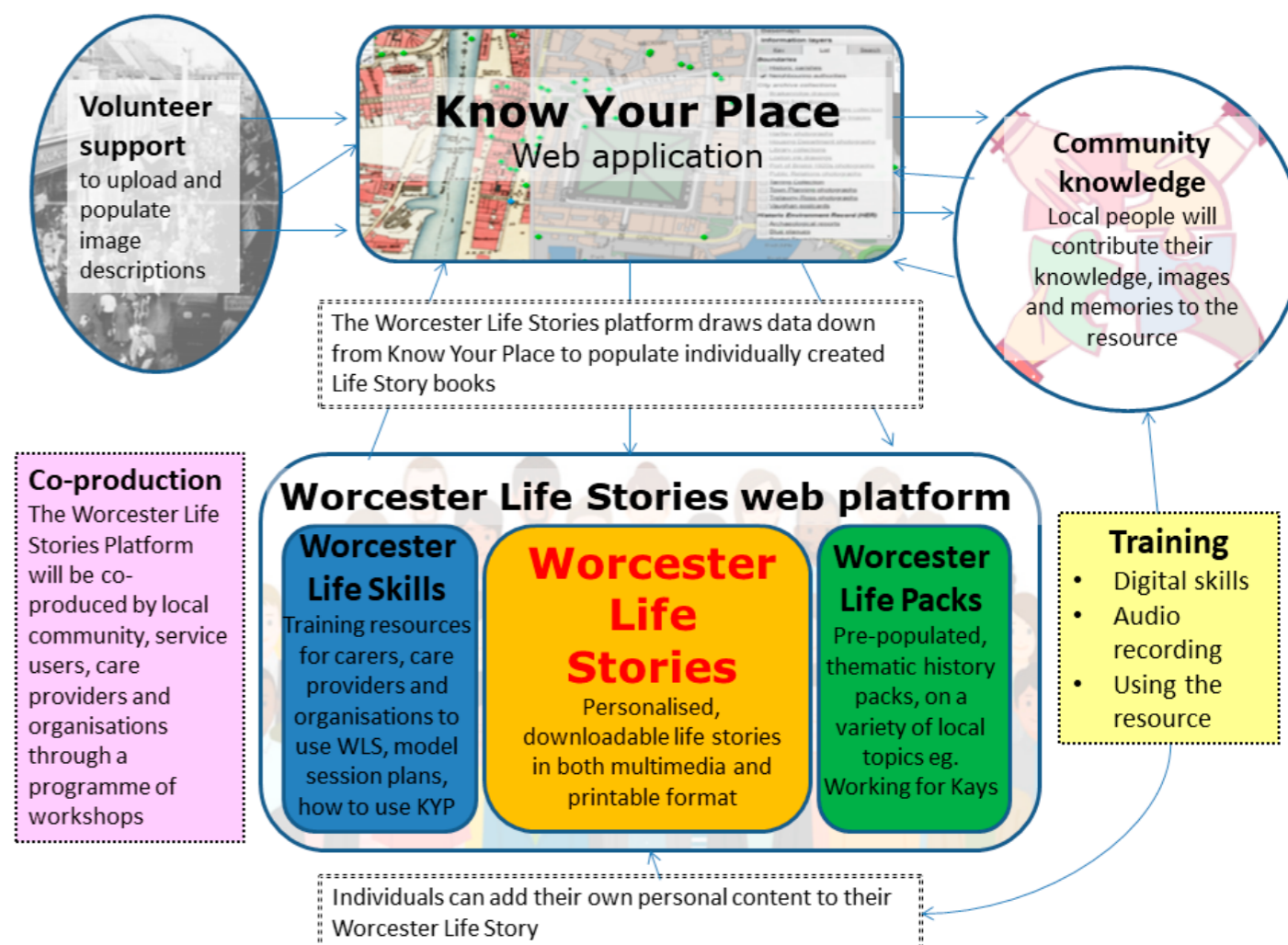
Above left: An example of Worcester’s ‘Know Your Place’.



Below left: Sheena Payne-Lunn and Natasha Lord on the Live launch of the platform.

### What we want to achieve

Life story work has been found to have a number of benefits for patients, their families and those who may be providing care for them. I strongly recommend the book *Life story work with people with dementia. Ordinary lives, extraordinary people* by Polly Kaiser for an excellent overview. Our ward life story books were usually created in word documents, with the families or friends bringing in photos and memories to hospital. Compiling the life stories could be time consuming, and there was an ever-present fear of important memories being lost. The books were held by the ward and a copy printed for the family.



Above right: Visual pictorial of the two platforms and how they would interact.

When Sheena started talking about the HER and her hopes to develop a Worcester Know Your Place, Polly’s suggestion that Digital Life Story Work, as opposed to the traditional pen and paper methods, could potentially be a more powerful tool in triggering memories and enhancing relationships came more to the forefront.

Often it can be difficult to find photos but with the HER so accessible with the development of a public facing platform, it would be easier to pull meaningful photos or facts into a life story. It also means that people can more easily create their book from wherever they were, not just when they were coming into hospital. The ability to add sound would mean that another sense would be used. People could write or talk about the significant places in their lives, for example, school, where they were married, the hospital the children were born in and so forth.

Digital life stories have a number of benefits; they can be completed by family members who are not local, meaning important information is shared more quickly. It can be easily changed and updated. It can be shared in different formats e.g. printed, on a screen or shared as a scrolling video. Ward staff can access the life stories more easily, allowing them to share meaningful moments with the patient about their life when family and friends are not there as well as updating the life story if is needed.

Through this process I have been struck by the importance of place to our wellbeing. This has also been evidenced through Sheena’s weekly quizzes during the COVID-19 lockdowns, where people rejoiced and connected over pictures of ‘old Worcester’ online although they could not meet in person. >>

## How we implemented the Life Stories project

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, face-to-face events with the public was not possible, but this made us more aware of how important the Know Your Place, and Herefordshire and Worcestershire Life Stories platforms could be in times of restricted physical access to archives and visitors coming into hospital, for example digital access would allow patients and their families to create online life story books without the need to come together.

For nine months we held a series of online workshops with the public, using our local stakeholders and social media channels to advertise the events. Two workshops were held to publicise the Know Your Place platform with the aims of introducing people to the upcoming facility, showing what it was capable of, and exploring accessibility and potential minor changes. Within the overall project, four consultation workshops were devoted to developing the Life Stories platform, starting from the original idea above and moving from initial concepts through to constructing the finished product. This was really interesting and took the platform further, especially through the voices of people who had worked with those who had had a stroke or who understood the barriers to older people accessing technology. All the workshops can be viewed on the project's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPCBspDMD95IszGHlpt5sBw>

Although full integration between the two platforms was not possible at this stage, the KYP platform is a feature of the landing page of the Life Stories Platform and the developers worked to ensure that copying an image would be possible so that users could easily add them to their Life Stories. Users report that it does not detract from either platform and that the increased accessibility for users was met.

The platforms can be accessed below:

Know Your Place Worcester – <https://kypworcester.org.uk/>

Life Stories Herefordshire and Worcestershire – <https://life-stories.hacw.nhs.uk/>

Within Older Adult Mental Health services, we recognise the value of knowing and understanding a person to be able to meet their needs, and the important role that heritage has in people's lives.



Above: Refreshments for participants at the live launch event.

## Our next steps

Within Older Adult Mental Health services, we recognise the value of knowing and understanding a person to be able to meet their needs, and the important role that heritage has in people's lives. At a recent Dementia Programming Board meeting, the Clinical Commissioning Group Leads for Dementia across Worcestershire and Herefordshire were so impressed about how the Life Stories platform could be used for people living with dementia that they were keen to consider how to take the initiative into the future. They secured funding. As a result, the platform will now become part of an offer for people in hard-to-reach communities, and for people who are house bound, by taking the materials to them in the form of a 'coffee and memory bus'.

As well as the Coffee and Memory Bus, the Life Stories platform is used within our inpatient services and we are working with the local Housing Associations to take both KYP and Life Stories into their sheltered schemes and homes. The Life Stories resource also forms part of our materials for people who have been given a diagnosis of dementia.

The success and importance of the scheme is evidenced by the fact that the Life Stories platform is being taken up by other Trusts as part of their offer for people across their life span and with a range of needs, for example in hospices, and in learning disabilities services. Know Your Place continues to grow and Pete Insole, developer of KYP has further examples of how the materials can be used. His ideas also pave the way for further health and heritage collaborations.

Because of the partnerships within the project, Museums Worcester is holding a series of workshops for people with early onset dementia through their Worcester Life Stories exhibition which is currently running.

## Research

We have two research projects being undertaken, the first looking at Heritage and Wellbeing across both Know Your Place and Life Stories being led by the Association of Dementia Studies and funded by Historic England, and the second examining the use of the Life Stories platform in inter-generational engagement which is being undertaken by the University of Manchester.

For me as a Clinical Psychologist, I can see how heritage makes a difference for people living with dementia; the fact that others can see this too accounts for the expansion and development of the programme. I am so pleased that the partners in the project were able to come together because the interaction between Health and Heritage services has added immeasurable value to the scheme, to the great benefit of participants.

I sincerely hope that this increased understanding leads to many more collaborations ■

## The author

Dr Natasha Lord

Clinical Psychologist with Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust.



Natasha's main work is within mental health needs and she is the Lead for Psychological Interventions. Natasha is also very active in improving the standard of practice for older people. She is the

Chair for the Accreditation Committee for the Quality Network for Older Adult Inpatient Mental Health Services (QNOAMHS) and Vice Chair for the Faculty of Psychology for Older People (British Psychological Society/ FPOP). She is also part of the FPOP Psychological Therapies Workstream. Natasha was nominated for the Una Holden award in 2014 for her innovative work for Older People Inpatient Services and a NHS Trust staff award for striving for older people in 2021. She won a Staff Award for Quality Improvement and for Patient Experience in 2016. You can contact her at [natasha.lord@nhs.net](mailto:natasha.lord@nhs.net)

## Further information

Kaiser, P & Eley, R., (2017) Life Story Work with People with Dementia. Ordinary Lives, Extraordinary People.

Know Your Place Bristol – <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/planning-and-building-regulations/know-your-place>

Know Your Place Worcester – <https://kypworcester.org.uk/>

Worcester Life Stories Website – <https://life-stories.hacw.nhs.uk/>

Suggested Reading:

Journal of Dementia Care has excellent articles on the different ways you can support people living with dementia – <https://journalofdementiacare.co.uk/>

The Faculty of Psychology of Older People Bulletin produces information on both people living with dementia and older people including interesting service evaluations – <https://www.bps.org.uk/member-microsites/dcp-faculty-psychology-older-people/publications>

# Heritage and social prescribing in action

Sharing good practice on social prescribing delivery in community heritage projects.

One of the most important sources of community support in these testing months of dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic has come from the voluntary sector. The hard work of all local Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations has been invaluable - especially for the most vulnerable groups. Our immediate natural and historic environment was often the only solace and opportunity to take fresh air and inspiration in times of hardship and restrictions in all spheres of our lives – and these unsung local heroes helped us to do this effectively.

Social prescribing is a way of referring people to activities that can support their wellbeing – as an alternative to traditional clinical approaches and medication.

These referrals are usually done by social prescribing link workers, employed by the NHS and hosted within the Primary Care Networks. Social prescribing is proven to work well for a wide range of people, but especially for those with one or more long-term conditions, complex social needs or who are lonely, isolated or needing support with their mental health.

Social prescribing and similar approaches have been practised in the NHS for many years, but in the past few years they have been actively rolled out across the country. The [NHS long-term plan](#) (2019) incorporated social prescribing into its [comprehensive model of personalised care](#), aiming to enable people to take greater control of their health and wellbeing.



Above: George helping a local young artist setting up his poster for the pop-up museum in Camden. © Somers Town Museum

Social prescribing has community support and local environment at the core of its philosophy and practice. The other crucial element is the individual need: the link workers look at what matters to the person, what their needs are and what could best support their wellbeing. This assessment is then followed by a referral to activities drawn from a range of agencies, such as those connected with heritage.

We have already shared some of the evidence and practice on heritage and social prescribing in an [earlier issue](#) of this magazine. Through our partnership with the National Academy for Social

Prescribing, Historic England is able to promote the role of heritage in supporting individual and community wellbeing better. We are now proud to announce a particularly exciting new initiative, led by the [Restoration Trust](#) and supported by a Historic England grant: a 2-year Test & Trial pilot project embedding a Heritage Link Worker within the existing social prescribing infrastructure in Great Yarmouth. The project will gather evidence for the wellbeing benefits of engaging with heritage and test the implementation of social prescribing approaches to community heritage activities. >>

**Social Prescribing is person-centred and with social justice at heart – and it can work well for supporting both individual and community wellbeing.**



The power of heritage to bring positive change in our lives is showcased brilliantly by the local community and grass-root organisations that help people on daily basis.

You can find out more about how heritage relates to wellbeing and social prescribing in the recently released [Heritage Special Podcast](#), which aired on the 2 December 2021, as an episode of the National Academy of Social Prescribing's [Podcast on Prescription series](#).

### **Making heritage count in local social prescribing projects**

The power of heritage to bring positive change in our lives is showcased brilliantly by the local community and grass-root organisations that help people on daily basis. We have had the chance to encourage and support several truly inspirational projects.

### **Somers Town Museum – “A Space for us”**

‘[A space for us](#)’ is a living memory project, created by the Somers Town History Club in Camden, London, founded not only to celebrate the local heritage and history, but also to benefit the local community as a social enterprise through education and arts.

The club’s director Diana Foster’s vision was to offer people opportunities and not just activities, to help them feel a sense of purpose and to build a network – whilst also allowing them to participate in something they feel passionately about. Through workshops, campaigns, walks and talks, members meet to discuss art, historic publications and photographs - but most importantly, they share their stories.

The club has been very successful and has been helping its attendees for years – many of them are older people, typically those suffering with loneliness or dementia. The next step was linking the existing activities offered by Somers Town History Club with social prescribing. Heather Allen, a social prescribing link worker, explains why people are referred to this initiative:

*“People share stories with me of their lives and they just want to be heard – some want to volunteer and make a difference, some would like the opportunity to be more creative, improve their physical fitness, connect with nature, preserve their community or reignite the lost artist inside themselves. The History Club is an amazing place to explore this, bringing people together across generations sharing their stories”.*

George joined ‘A space for us’ shortly after suffering a personal loss. The History Club helped him to deal with his grief through sharing his memories and knowledge of Somers Town with others. His experience and enthusiasm have since attracted others to the club, while also provoking interest and spreading awareness among younger generations. George took part in many of the club’s public engagement events, including through [media and film](#).



Above: Archaeology on prescription, © York Archaeology

### **Archaeology on Prescription**

[Archaeology on Prescription](#) is an innovative social prescribing project that seeks to engage York’s residents in archaeology to improve their health and wellbeing, foster new social connections and improve confidence.

The project is being piloted by the York Archaeology Trust in the shadow of York’s city walls, on the Council-owned site of a former care home. Whilst the project engages with people from all over the city, local residents from the surrounding Walmgate area are specifically encouraged to get involved to help create the most detailed picture of life in this part of the city from the medieval period to the modern day. With activities such as site clearing, excavation, finds processing, archive digitisation, and report preparation, participants are continuing to work with the incredible archaeology being uncovered at Willow House.

The scheme brings together York Archaeology and a range of local partners

working with those who will benefit most from taking part. For the first pilot, delivered in Autumn 2021, these included Converge, an educational charity for those with lived experience of mental health based at York St John University, and Changing Lives, which works with people recovering from addiction. The user response to this has been overwhelmingly positive and a second phase is planned to involve more partners across the City, in particular those working with younger people.

The innovative nature of Archaeology on Prescription has resulted in the national Community Renewal Fund awarding York Archaeology a £120,000 grant for the next stage, which includes embedding a social prescribing link worker and utilising the project’s activities for social prescribing referrals. The project to date has been supported by a number of funders including the Assura Community Fund, Ed de Nunzio Charitable Trust, City of York Council, Arnold Clark Community Fund and Culture and Wellbeing York. >>

## Heeley City Farm – Heritage department

For the last 13 years, Heeley City Farm’s Community Heritage Team have engaged thousands of people from the Sheffield area, including many volunteers, work placements and general participants of all ages in a variety of local heritage and wellbeing projects. These have included excavations, art, building roundhouses, transcription of medieval documents, sharing of memories, workshops and much more.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the work of the charity severely, but also mobilised it to play a very important part as a community hub in Sheffield’s voluntary sector response during lockdown. They enhanced their capacity by securing a National Lottery Heritage Fund grant for the appointment of a Heritage and Wellbeing Officer, who is now helping them explore social prescribing as a new delivery model, connect with local link workers and reach more people through engagement with local heritage.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the work of the charity severely, but also mobilised it to play a very important part as a community hub in Sheffield’s voluntary sector response during lockdown.



Above: Tinsley Time and Travel project – a Roman mosaic crafts session with a local carers group.  
© Heeley City Farm

Currently, Heeley City Farm’s Heritage department is preparing another NLHF application for the “Heeley Heritage Hub” project, aiming to engage under-represented and vulnerable groups from their community to connect with their local heritage and history through social prescribing pathways.

The above case studies illustrate the potential of using heritage to address specific local need, address inequalities and empower local people. They also demonstrate how such approaches can be adapted to fit a social prescribing model that is designed to link people with what matters to them in a way that addresses their wellbeing needs ■

### The author

Dr Desi Gradinarova  
*Senior Policy Adviser (Wellbeing) with Historic England and Historic Environment Lead at the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP).*



Desi has been working in heritage, research, education and policy for many years and is a passionate believer in the potential of heritage to bring people together and its crucial role in maintaining a vibrant and healthy society.

The above case studies illustrate the potential of using heritage to address specific local need, address inequalities and empower local people.

### Further information

Desi’s previous September 2021 article on Social prescribing, from Issue 18 of Historic England Magazine <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/research/heritage-and-social-prescribing/>

Historic England’s web page on Social Prescribing <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/social-and-economic-research/wellbeing/wellbeing-and-social-prescribing/>

Heritage Special podcast, part of the Podcast on Prescription Series [Heritage Special Podcast](#)

‘A space for Us’ Somers Town History Space website <https://aspaceforus.club/>

Archaeology on Prescription Website <https://www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk/archaeology-on-prescription>

# Kirkham: forging a heritage programme as a bridge to wellbeing

Supporting wellbeing and cohesion  
in a Lancashire community through  
a social prescribing programme.



Alison Gough, Mandala CIC leads an introduction to mindful heritage walking for the Phoenix Rising pilot programme in Kirkham 2021. Photo credit: Sue Flowers.

In Kirkham, Lancashire, the Kirkham Heritage, Health and Wellbeing programme is part of the High Street Heritage Action Zone initiative (HS HAZ), in partnership with Fylde Council and Historic England and in collaboration with the NHS, Lancashire County Council and other stakeholders.

Kirkham is an old Roman market town in the rural Fylde district, historically called Amounderness in Lancashire, with travel links between Preston and Blackpool. It has a long and rich history with the

discovery of remains of a Roman fort at Carr Hill, appearing in the Domesday book as Chicheham and recognised as a hub of Lancashire's thriving textiles industry: Kirkham, the Cotton town.

However over recent years Kirkham's high street has not been flourishing, with numbers of visitors declining and banks and shops closing. Alongside this are population health challenges: an ageing and widening community and long-term health conditions, increasing demand, deprivation, inequalities and the compounding

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic such as mental ill health, isolation and loneliness. Hence the investment in Kirkham offered an important opportunity to build a programme which bridges heritage and wellbeing and aligning with NHS drivers. The NHS Long Term Plan is driving forward social prescribing and integrated care systems (ICS).

### Background

The idea for a Kirkham Heritage and Wellbeing scheme was conceived by Andrew Chatterjee (Regeneration Programme

Manager) in 2019 as one strand of a £3 million grant application to Historic England's High Street Heritage Action Zone initiative (HS HAZ) scheme. The main thrust of the HS HAZ is the regeneration of Kirkham focusing on enhancing the built environment / placemaking. However, Andrew felt that local peoples' health and well-being was as important as the bricks and mortar developments and that a holistic and people centred approach was needed

Discussions were initiated early on with Historic England's Dr Linda Monckton on working up a scheme that would deliver some of her heritage and wellbeing policies on the ground in Kirkham. Andrew pitched the idea to local stakeholders in the community, NHS CCG, County Council Public Health and local GPS and developed a coalition of partners for the project, who wrote letters of support for the project. A programme was devised seeking to explore and evaluate if local peoples' health & wellbeing can be improved through engaging in a social prescribing programme of bespoke heritage-based activities.

A key objective is to get people out and about, interacting with each other in or around the high street, under an umbrella of pro-

social historical, community-based activities that, it is hoped, will improve physical and mental well-being.

The COVID-19 lockdowns (announced right at the start of the HAZ Programme in April 2020) were not an ideal baseline from which to begin such a venture. Alarmingly this marked the first time in human history that healthy, rather than sick people were quarantined.

Fylde Council commissioned Helen Shearn Associates (HSA) to undertake a feasibility study and planning a programme to improve personal and community wellbeing using the *architecture* of social prescribing and four overarching heritage themes and activities: Sustainable textiles; Life stories and memories; Heathy living and food and Heritage skills and craft. The study showed how the programme could contribute to the NHS Long Term plan with its whole systems approach, working better together, making best use of resources, assets and supporting health priorities.

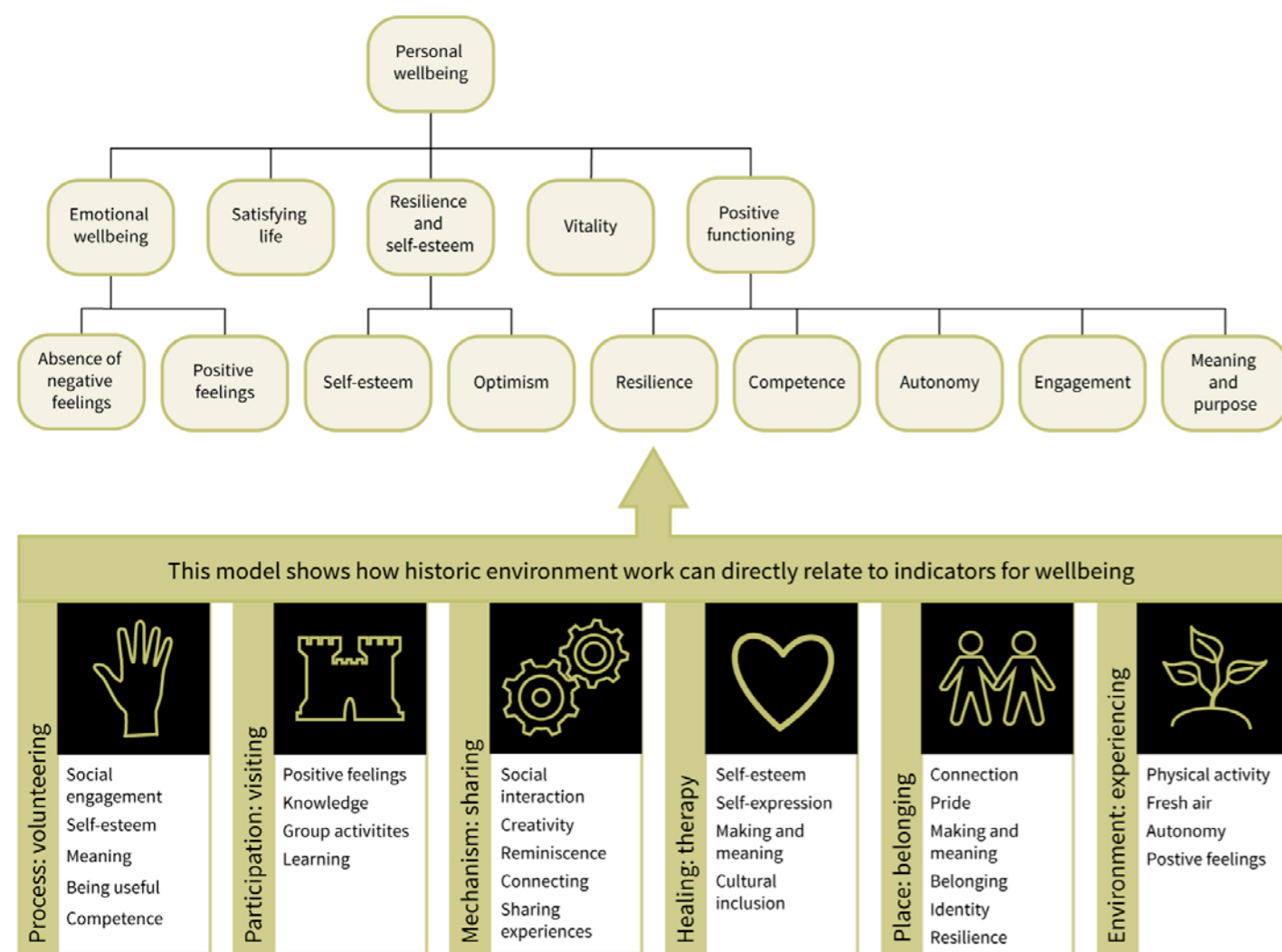
### Cross referencing

To inform the programme's approach and themes HSA cross referenced local and regional heritage case studies and frameworks including the research by Historic England (diagramme

below) and the Heritage Alliance Heritage, Health and Wellbeing Report 2020 with their use of the five ways to wellbeing (NEF). The conceptual framework Community Spirit Level by the Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) is also referenced with its four elements to improve community wellbeing: a sense of belonging to a community; cohesiveness and inclusion; good relationships with other members of the community; and collective action for the common good, and by harnessing community assets (time, skills, knowledge, experience, connections, financial resources and material resources).<sup>1</sup>

Building on a recent Historic England study (SQW, 2020) and a review of academic studies, HSA developed a social prescribing vision for Kirkham with recommendations for the three social prescribing process steps: referral, consultation with a link worker, interaction with the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector.

Evaluation by an independent research team has been commissioned to understand the impact of the pilot programme on personal and community wellbeing through social prescribing with heritage-based community assets and activities. >>



Above right: Model showing how the historic environment relates to wellbeing indicators. © Historic England

A key objective is to get people out and about, interacting with each other in or around the high street, under an umbrella of pro-social historical, community-based activities that, it is hoped, will improve physical and mental well-being.

## Phoenix Rising pilot social prescribing project

One of the first priorities was to commission a pilot project delivered by the Phoenix Rising partnership. This was also a pragmatic approach to extend and capitalise on the learning and relationships from their similar project in Central and North Lancashire and South Cumbria for the Thriving Communities funded scheme by the National Academy of Social prescribing (also supported by Historic England). They initially provided tasters and then regular weekly sessions in “combined activities involving art, nature and movement that will draw on the distinct heritage themes of Kirkham. The Restoration Trust refers to this kind of combined practice as Culture Therapy (Creatively Minded and Heritage report 2021).

*We want our work like the history of the town to weave people together building a new social fabric that will reflect people’s interest in the history and identity of the place.*

Sue Flowers (Phoenix Rising)

## Aligning with the NHS: the social and health contexts in Kirkham

On an NHS map, Kirkham sits in the Fylde Coast integrated care partnership (ICP) *Healthier Fylde Coast* (within the Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System (ICS) and locally in the Wyre and Extended Rural Primary Care Network (WREN PCN) with its two GP surgeries.

The WREN PCN is very keen to support this programme and strategic planning is underway on funding and recruiting for a unique and innovative key bridging role – a Local Heritage, Health and Wellbeing Coach (Gradinarova, D, 2021). It is expected that association with Historic England will provide a good basis for addressing this last issue.

As cited in the Creatively Minded and Heritage report:

The NHS’s Long-Term Plan places emphasis on prevention, which offers potential for heritage as treatment, and the National Academy for Social Prescribing is trying to deliver the promise of alternatives to medication. Link workers lack expertise in heritage and creativity; this needs to change through specialist appointments.

The WREN PCN and Recovery College at Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust

(LSCFT) are very interested in using the new Hillside Heritage, Eco skills and Wellbeing Centre (appropriately located in an historic building). The connection with the Recovery College has been facilitated through Phoenix Rising. HSA referenced the recommendation for cultural organisations to align with Recovery Colleges to develop sustainable commissioning (Cultural Commissioning Programme,

National Council for Voluntary Organisations NCVO 2013-17).

## Expertise and experience of people

It has been essential to engage the expertise and experience of local people and communities, hence Phoenix Rising started its 1st phase of tasters with Listening to Kirkham. A consortium has been established to build connections, collaborate and synergise opportunities such



The Cotton heritage dance performance, by the About Time Dance Company in Kirkham,

October 2021. Photo Credit: Jenny Reeves (About Time Dance Company).

as with Lancashire museum service, Kirkham Treasures and the Kirkham archives collected by Martin Ramsbottom, which were bequeathed to the care of St Michael’s, Kirkham’s Parish church and looked after by Adrian Long. Martin Ramsbottom was known as an authority on Kirkham and one of the founders of the previous Kirkham-in-Amounderness Museum. With the advice from Lancashire Archives, we plan to explore and digitise the collection, and with oral histories create heritage and wellbeing activities. Martin Ramsbottom’s original heritage trail can also be revisited and connect with the Kirkham Treasures quests and talking walls installation and Phoenix Rising’s mindful walks.

The programme development has benefitted from the knowledge and practice shared by Lancashire County Council colleagues: Heather Davis at the Museums service and Amanda Spavin and Laura Worden, Community Project Officers with their recommendations for activities and providers. The following have been commissioned: About Time Dance Company performed *Cotton*, a heritage dance piece exploring the roles of women and production processes in cotton mills on the historic Market Square and The Sewing Rooms will put on an *Age of Inspiration* social and wellbeing event for the most isolated older people. Both events involve students from the Carr Hill Secondary school in Kirkham. Also referencing Kirkham’s tradition of Club days we hope to develop more intergenerational and wellbeing opportunities. >>

Integral to taking forward the four themes will be the continued building of relationships and listening to Kirkham. The Hillside Heritage and Eco Skills centre and arts centre should provide the ideal environments and catalyst with a sustainable multi partnership programme of heritage based wellbeing activities. The evaluation of the programme will be essential to the learning and legacy.

### Conclusion

The Kirkham heritage, health and wellbeing programme is an opportunity to align with whole system approaches and collaborating with local people through creative and meaningful activities to bridge personal and community wellbeing ■

### The authors

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Andrew has more than 20 years' experience of working in regeneration

and community & economic development. He has worked up and down the country delivering major programmes and projects to improve town centres and neighbourhoods for the people that live there, working with them throughout the process. He is especially interested in health, nature & environmental, placemaking through good urban design and protecting our heritage (both built environment and cultural) from inappropriate development. He has been fascinated by History since school and studied Politics and Modern History at Manchester University, followed by a MSc in Environmental Management.

**Helen Shearn**  
*Consultant, Helen Shearn Associates.*



Helen is a specialist consultant in arts, heritage, health and wellbeing, with

over 25 years combined experience evaluating, producing and championing multi partnership programmes developed through her consultancy, Helen Shearn Associates with colleagues FVD Consulting, Toby Williamson and Eva Cyhlarova, her previous roles as Head of Arts Strategy and arts manager at South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust (SLaM) and as a registered Occupational Therapist. Helen was also a secondary school Head of Art, after graduating with a BA Honours degree in Fine Art, artist in residence and art teacher.

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The Restoration Trust 2021 *Creatively Minded and Heritage*. Baring Foundation [https://cdn.baringfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/BF\\_Creatively-minded-Heritage\\_WEB-lr.pdf](https://cdn.baringfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/BF_Creatively-minded-Heritage_WEB-lr.pdf)

### Webpages

Kirkham Futures, more information at: <https://www.kirkhamfutures.org/plans/health-and-wellbeing-programme>

<https://www.kirkhamfutures.org/post/new-events-programme-looks-to-boost-kirkhams-health-and-wellbeing>

Kirkham Treasures <https://kirkhamtreasures.co.uk/>

# Lost and Found: Treasures in the Archive

A successful online digital heritage wellbeing project.

This COVID-19 inspired project showcases the potential of online heritage engagement to improve individual wellbeing for diverse participant audiences.

## Background

*Lost and Found: Treasures in the Archive*, a project developed by Wessex Archaeology, was conceived as a response to the Coronavirus pandemic as a means of supporting the mental wellbeing of individuals unable to participate in person with our activities.

A digital pilot project conducted in April 2020 with a small group of individuals with mental health conditions showed the

potential of a digital wellbeing offer, and this enabled the design of a full project supported by Historic England's COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund.

The project took a facilitated heritage-themed engagement programme online to create an interactive digital museum. Its aim was to generate stimulating activities in which participants could connect to a community, thereby promoting a sense of wellbeing and social interaction otherwise denied to them by lockdown restrictions.

Without realising it at the time we were researching the viability of digital engagement with heritage themed activity to improve individual wellbeing. >>

The project took a facilitated heritage-themed engagement programme online to create an interactive digital museum.



An image of a 'digital flower' created as part of project participants' homework. Image by T Yeates and Tom Westhead, © Wessex Archaeology

### Project Configuration

The programme was delivered online over five sessions as an inclusive participatory experience affording learning opportunities, social connection, creativity, decision-making and curation. A common format was adopted:

- **Week 1. What is in the Box?** Four archive objects revealed to the group prompting mystery and/or debate as to their purpose or origin.
- **Week 2. Curate.** A follow up discussion about the objects led by experts and group shortlisting of two objects to add into the digital museum.
- **Week 3. Create.** Group taken through the process of 3D scanning of the chosen objects.
- **Week 4. Become the Expert.** Exploring how the chosen objects should be explained in the digital museum.
- **Week 5. Legacy.** The final session showing the chosen objects realised as virtual objects and shown as they will be in the Interactive Digital Museum.

Participants in the programme remotely selected artefacts held by Wessex Archaeology in its stores for the production of an online, interactive digital museum exhibition ([The Museum of the Lost and Found | Wessex Archaeology](#)).

The filmed sessions were facilitated by the Engagement Team and Research staff at Wessex Archaeology. Creating a psychologically safe online community was a paramount design consideration and was achieved by a welcome session comprising group introductions and familiarisation with the digital platform.

Managing the end of the programme, often the point at which participants experience a dip in wellbeing, was done by holding a celebratory event a few weeks afterwards. This helped to cement the social connections that had been made and to explore future opportunities to remain connected with heritage. Groups were kept small, about five people, to avoid participants being lost in the crowd on-

screen, to encourage engagement and to maximise any wellbeing impact.

### Participant criteria

Participant recruitment was achieved via establishing trusted relationships with partner organisations located in Wiltshire, Sheffield and the Midlands. Each group comprised volunteers from these diverse referral organisations: The Richmond Fellowship; Salisbury District Hospital, Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living; Carers and ex-carers Support Group, Headway Brain Injury Charity; Sheffield Mind; Sheffield Young Archaeology Club; and Braidwood School for Deaf Children. The sample size (n) was 41 comprising 29 adults (male – 11; female – 18) and 12 children (male – 7; female – 5).

### Evaluation methodology

A mixed-methods approach was adopted for the evaluation of this project comprising: attendance and monitoring data; digital feedback forms sent out at the end of each session; reviewing recordings of the sessions;

feedback sessions with the group leaders; reflective verbal feedback post project; verbally recorded case studies; staff feedback; and evaluation of the amount of engagement and the quality of the experience. Open questions enabled the qualitative evaluation to adopt reflexive thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes.

The quantitative data for psychological wellbeing impact was captured via an adapted version of the UCL Museum Wellbeing Measures Toolkit. This mixed-methods approach afforded significant fidelity in accounting for the effectiveness of the course and allowed better understanding of what was working, or not working, for the participants.

### Evaluating the impact of the programme

The online digital questionnaire generating the data for evaluation was completed by 59% of the 41 participants and showed high levels of satisfaction with the course design, content and facilitation (Chalmers, 2021). >>

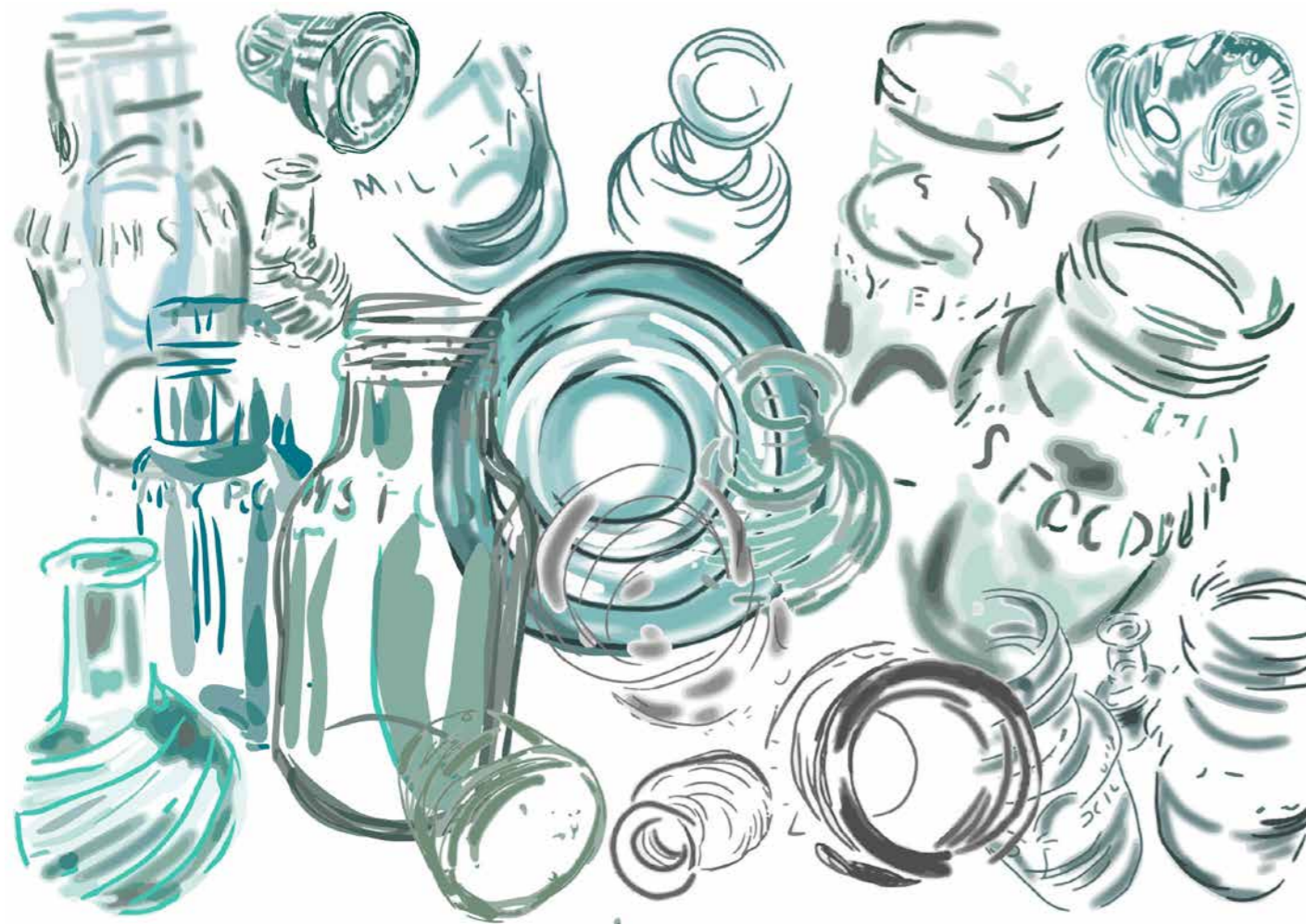
**Below left:** Experts discussing archive objects. Image by Tom Westhead, © Wessex Archaeology



**Below right:** Seal artefact selected for the digital museum. Image by Tom Westhead, © Wessex Archaeology







**Above left:** An image on the theme of glass, produced as part of project participant's creative homework.  
© Lesley Self

The evaluation results indicate that the project was effective in achieving its stated aims and intended outcomes across the different demographic groups for wellbeing and engagement, with building social connections, promoting learning and boosting confidence as key themes. The creative homework element in the programme design was an unexpectedly significant factor in the success of the course. There were no drop-outs and participants attended the majority of the sessions indicating that an online digital intervention offers an accessible and effective alternative to in-person activities.

### Conclusions and recommendations

This project arose out of the immediate crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of isolation and a deterioration in the mental health and wellbeing of individuals. The evaluation results show the potential of digital online projects in combatting such issues.

Creating psychological safety for participants by ensuring inclusivity and confidence in using digital platforms is a key design consideration for online wellbeing initiatives. The recording of sessions and the creation of an online museum introduces the idea of digital curation and the extension of beneficial effects in terms of access to heritage for



**Above right:** Flint artefact selected for the digital museum.  
Image by Tom Westhead, © Wessex Archaeology

those unable to physically interact with it. This legacy aspect of a digital engagement project is worthy of further exploration.

Online wellbeing interventions are not, however, the panacea for all participants. Interfacing with others online was not universally straightforward, or comfortable, and there may be value in feeding back to companies developing digital engagement platforms the experiences of the therapeutic user community. A few participants expressed regret in being unable to handle the artefacts and Thomson et al's (2012) research on artefact handling in a hospital setting with a comparison group that accessed pictures instead is instructive here.

The inclusion of 'homework' is believed to have been a significant aspect of this project. In addition to maintaining an engagement link between the live sessions, it provided an opportunity for participant reflection and creativity based on the sharing of personal objects to stimulate talking points that were readily shared with the group. Given this and the relative novelty of digitally delivered, heritage-themed interventions to improve wellbeing, further research in understanding how such online programmes are effective would be beneficial. >>

Three recommendations for study are:

### 1) Realist Review to understand the causal mechanisms.

The authors believe the sample size and the richness of the qualitative data makes the project suitable for a realist review (Pawson and Tilley 2004) to explore in greater depth how this intervention impacted the participants. Realist research regards programmes as theories incarnate and seeks to analyse an intervention in terms of the context (the necessary conditions for change to occur), mechanisms (the active ingredients that generate effects), and the outcomes (what changes) and their interactions to develop causal explanations to explain what works for whom, in what context and why. This context-mechanism-outcome (CMO) configuration could contribute to the development of a programme theory to inform or test the design of similar projects.

### 2) Application of Self-Determination Theory to evidence efficacy.

The evaluation identified themes of confidence, socialisation, decision-making,

learning and a sense of pride. Ryan and Deci's Self-Determination Theory (2000) identifies three basic human needs, namely autonomy, competence and relatedness: these clearly relate closely to the outcomes of the project. The theory might provide an interpretive lens with which to demonstrate the efficacy of this type of intervention to funders.

### 3) Potential synergistic effects of heritage activity and creative expression.

A creative element was incorporated in the programme design via the 'homework' tasks and the evaluation recorded the positive benefits of its inclusion. Creative art activity is a design feature of two ongoing 'social prescribing' pilot projects led by archaeological organisations; York Archaeological Trust ([Archaeology on Prescription – York Archaeology](#)) and Wessex Archaeology ([Well-City Salisbury | Our Work | Wessex Archaeology](#)). Further research into how the combination of heritage activity and creative expression in a wellbeing programme can complement, or magnify, each other is warranted to understand the potential synergies and benefits ■

### The authors

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Giles has responsibility for developing the Wessex organisation's public benefit capability, and a doctoral student at the University of Bath conducting research in evidencing the social value of heritage engagement to policy makers.

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Leigh has 20 years of experience as a practitioner in designing and facilitating heritage and creative art-based wellbeing programmes across a broad spectrum of participant groups.

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# Heritage, landscape and wellbeing in the Lincolnshire Wolds

Understanding how the interrelationships between historic and natural environment contribute to wellbeing.

Nowadays we take it for granted that our physical and mental wellbeing is significantly enhanced by spending time in nature. The pandemic has focussed people's interest in being outdoors, especially in their local green spaces, and 'green social prescribing' emphasises the health benefits of nature-based activities. At the same time, we have begun to accumulate evidence that engaging with heritage has similar benefits (Reilly *et al* 2018), though much of this is focussed on formal visitor attractions and participation in community heritage projects. >>

Fig 1: The 'fieldscape' of the Lincolnshire Wolds is largely a result of Parliamentary enclosure between c 1760 and 1850.

## The interaction of natural and historic landscape

However, the contribution to wellbeing outcomes of the wider historic landscape has been less appreciated, despite a range of initiatives (Darvill *et al* 2019).

This is because in environmental policy landscape is often still equated exclusively with nature. For example, the government's *25 Year Environment Plan* (HM Government 2018) aims to 'conserve and enhance the natural beauty of our landscapes', while heritage is represented only as specific features, such as Scheduled Monuments. In a similar way, intangible aspects of heritage such as 'sense of place' are recognised as 'cultural services' in ecosystems approaches but often 'the material role that the historic environment plays in shaping the natural world is not considered' (Fluck and Holyoak 2017).

In contrast, the European Landscape Convention (ELC) defines landscape as 'an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors'. And since all parts of the English landscape have been

inhabited or exploited by people for millennia, we cannot understand the landscape in the present, or plan a sustainable future, without knowing its history. The concept of 'natural beauty', as used in the designation of 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty' (AONBs), may in policy terms include landscapes which have been shaped by human activities, but is it clear to the wider community which we wish to engage that this includes historic features? If landscape is indeed a matter of perception, then we in the heritage sector need to raise awareness of its historic dimension.

To ensure that landscape policy embraces the historic as much as the natural environment we need to demonstrate that the historic character of a landscape can contribute to wellbeing just as much as nature.

This has to involve not only promoting understanding of landscape archaeology but also demonstrating that, while they may be separated in policy terms, the natural and historic environments are in reality entangled in ways that add value to each other, resulting in enhanced benefit to people's wellbeing. For example,

places we perceive simply as 'nature', such as woodland or heathland, are actually the result of human management over long periods of time, without which they would have a very different character. Conversely, human-made features of the historic landscape, such as hedgerows or drystone walls, often have thriving ecosystems which would not otherwise exist.

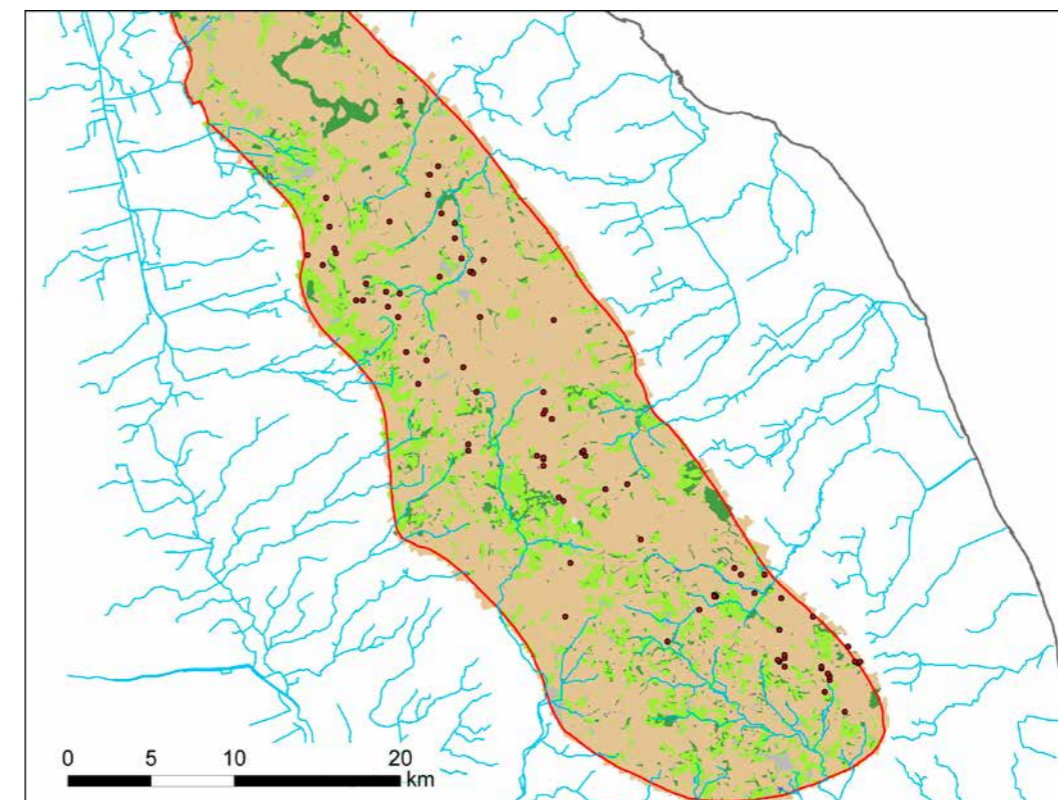
## The historic landscape of the Lincolnshire Wolds

The Lincolnshire Wolds are the highest range of hills in eastern England, running from the Humber to the edge of the Fens. They differ from other chalk landscapes in having a complex topography extensively modified by glaciations, which have given rise to plateau hill-tops and steep-sided valleys.

In the Lincolnshire Wolds an AHRC-funded networking project, led by Historic England, under the Landscape Decisions Programme has been working to understand the inter-relationships between heritage, nature and wellbeing in the landscape, as a prelude to planning a larger project that could research and promote the area's (relatively) under-appreciated archaeological heritage.

The intersection of cultural heritage and natural environment is immediately evident in the Wolds' designation as an AONB despite it being a landscape of intensive arable agriculture, with inevitable pressures on wildlife and biodiversity, and field patterns that are largely a product of Parliamentary enclosure (Fig 1). Nevertheless, the AONB has a variety of important habitat types within a landscape of diverse terrain and impressive vistas.

Similarly, for the historic environment, the superficially regimented agricultural landscape contains a host of historic features, visible and buried, ranging from Neolithic long barrows to medieval village earthworks and post-medieval farmsteads, as well as intangible aspects like the area's connections with the poet Tennyson. Such features contribute to the diversity of Wolds habitats, with designated earthworks managed in pasture and extant long barrows often topped by trees (Fig 2), while conversely what we know about the archaeology of the area is connected to the affordances of modern land-use, for example through the potential for arable fields to reveal cropmarks and artefact scatters (Fig 3). >>



**Fig 2 (far left):** 'Cromwell's Grave' (centre) is an extant long barrow covered by a clump of trees that is highly visible in a landscape of limited woodland, and with a name that shows the kind of stories such monuments can accrue.

**Fig 3 (left):** Map of long barrows in the Lincolnshire Wolds National Character Area in relation to watercourses and modern land-use (brown = arable; light green = pasture; dark green = woodland), showing the relationship between monuments and arable land.



Fig 4: A footpath crossing the earthwork remains of Orford Priory in the valley of the Waithe Beck.

### Appreciation of historic landscape and wellbeing

One question for the network is how improved public understanding of the heritage of the Wolds could lead to greater enjoyment of the landscape and therefore wellbeing. Does understanding the history of a place enhance the health benefits it provides, for example by offering a sense of connection to the past or by enhancing local distinctiveness and a sense of identity?

In this respect the Lincolnshire Wolds appear similar in terms of terrain and modern land use to the Yorkshire Wolds, across the Humber, but their deep history is very different; the Lincolnshire Wolds have a distinctive concentration of Neolithic long barrows that is not found in Yorkshire but lack the extensive Iron Age square barrow cemeteries that are characteristic of the Yorkshire Wolds. Such historical differences frame landscape narratives that contribute to establishing the roots of a Wolds identity (in either region) but also raise questions about how different trajectories arose and what was happening in periods that remain less well

understood for this area. Hence historic environment research can contribute to building narratives that are relevant to local identities, not simply to academic or heritage management objectives.

### Establishing the links to wellbeing

Tensions and difficulties nevertheless emerge when thinking about the historic landscape and wellbeing.

Research agendas focussed on new discoveries may downplay the importance of synthesising and promoting what is already known. A recent survey of long barrows in the Wolds (Drury and Allen 2020), although undertaken primarily for management purposes, has provided a unique opportunity to review all the recorded sites and think about their landscape value and further promotion. And, as noted, while upstanding barrows and settlement earthworks help to punctuate the regular appearance of the modern fieldscape, much of the Wolds' early history is represented by buried archaeological features that are no longer visible on the ground;

their direct contribution to people's perception of the landscape is therefore limited and their significance needs to be communicated in other ways.

It is also important to remember that local communities and visitors may have different perceptions and expectations; residents may feel more local place attachments rather than a general Wolds identity, for example.

### Enhancing the wellbeing benefits of walking in historic landscapes

Because the Lincolnshire Wolds lack major heritage attractions and the infrastructure to cope with large gatherings, promoting the values of the landscape as a whole and distributing visitors is important. Walking is already a key component of the visitor offer, with numerous self-guided walks available and a regular walking festival.

One way to improve recognition of the historic landscape's contribution to wellbeing could be to enhance the heritage information in these walks, for example translating aerial mapping evidence or online HER records into a narrative for each route (Fig 4). If combined with nature activities that reinforce the value of re-walking the routes at different times of year, and the ability for walkers to feed back their experiences in the form of text or photos, we could develop a more interactive resource that helps make connections between historic and natural environment.

More formally, this kind of approach could also be used to deepen historic landscape characterisations (HLCs) by allowing communities and individuals to record the values they attach to particular locations and HLC types, starting to address an aspiration of HLC that has largely yet to be realised (Swanwick and Fairclough 2018, 31-3). Identities are complex and multiscaled; the benefits of the Wolds landscape need to be accessible to residents and visitors alike. Building the evidence for the therapeutic value of landscape as both nature and heritage therefore requires a diversity of views and values ■

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## **RESEARCH** magazine

### Editor

Colum Giles

### Designer

Vincent Griffin

### Web design

Robin Page

### Managing Editor

Robin Page

Previous issues of Historic England Research can be viewed online at: <http://bit.ly/HEresearchbackissues>

ISSN: 2058-1858

Product Code: HE0068

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