



Historic England

# Using Heritage in Place Branding



## What is Place Branding?

Place branding is a holistic and strategic concept that focuses on developing, communicating, and managing the identity and perception of a place.

Place brands are based on perceptions of a place's strengths and weaknesses, including its reputation as a place to visit, study in, invest in or trade with.

It is often used interchangeably with the term 'place marketing'. However the branding of a place is more inclusive than destination marketing, as the main focus is not only the attraction of visitors but also the attraction of inward investment, businesses, people and talent (TBR *et al*, 2016).

“Over the long term, places with strong, distinctive identities are more likely to prosper than places without them. Every place must identify its strongest, most distinctive features and develop them or run the risk of being all things to all persons and nothing special to any.”  
Robert Merton Solow, Economist and Nobel Laureate

## Place Branding and BIDs

New research commissioned for Heritage Counts 2016 shows that place branding is not only a national, international or city based phenomenon. Local organisations, such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), are increasingly engaged in shaping the image and identity of their local communities.

Data generated by an online survey of BIDs demonstrates that BIDs are actively involved in place making – 83% state place making is one of their key activities (TBR *et al*, 2016).

## The Benefits of Using Heritage Place Branding

Research presented in Heritage Counts 2016 suggests that identity, place branding and heritage are becoming even more important in determining the future social and economic outcomes of our local places.

In the UK heritage is used in place branding at national and local levels and can highlight the unique character and distinctiveness of a place. It plays an important part in shaping peoples' perceptions and experiences of a place.

Heritage has the potential to form a key element of place brands by providing authenticity and credibility, signifying the culture of place, increasing attractiveness, and providing a competitive advantage. Heritage is often cited as a means through which greater substance can be delivered through place branding.

Heritage can provide an economic boost if used in place branding. The UK's national branding campaign, the GREAT Britain Campaign, identifies heritage as one of 12 'unique selling points' of the UK. As part of this advertising campaign in 2015/16 it is estimated that for every £1 spent overseas, overseas visitors spent £23 in Britain (NAO, 2016).

The *Visit Britain Holidays at Home are GREAT* campaign drew upon heritage as part of its UK place branding, generating £138 million in additional tourism spending in 2014 ([www.visitbritain.org](http://www.visitbritain.org), 2017).

“In order to be competitive, places are advised to build a brand that is befitting to the sense of place [and] to engage and develop meaningful initiatives that reflect identity. The essential role of heritage is obvious.” Robert Govers, 2014



© GREAT Britain campaign.com

## How to make the most of Local Heritage

A number of strategies can be utilised to make the most of local heritage. The examples below can be uniquely tailored to an area.



Canterbury – marketing the location through its heritage  
© Visit Kent 2017



Blackburn's Heritage Festival © blackburnbid.co.uk



London Bridge BID plan © teamlondonbridge.co.uk



Canterbury Medieval Pageant © canterburybid.co.uk

### Create 'destinations' through heritage

Heritage is used in Canterbury's BID to deliver its business plan priorities of a strong brand and a superb destination to enhance visitor spending and Canterbury's reputation.

Newcastle's NE1 BID successfully applied for £1.6 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund to redevelop and regenerate the city's historic Bigg Market. Home to 31 listed buildings the project aims to transform the economic fortune of the market by capitalising on the area's heritage.

### Create Heritage Festivals

Blackburn's BID has used heritage as part of a calendar of events, including the development of the Blackburn Heritage Festival as a grassroots celebration which links to the national Heritage Open Days annual activities.

### Revive forgotten heritage

This can cover any number of past aspects of a place's heritage. For example, Southport's BID has funded a contemporary lighting scheme for the trees, re-establishing a 1950s Southport tradition of tree lights.

### Promote Heritage Trails

Liverpool's BID employs a tour guide as part of a healthier workforce initiative. The guide leads heritage walks and points out local heritage and historical associations.

The London Bridge BID team delivers guided walks of the area for newly locating businesses, drawing attention to local heritage.

Blackburn's BID supports history walks, vintage bus tours and Heritage Lottery Funded 'Talk of the Town Guides' to help people explore and learn about the local area's heritage.

### Support local heritage events

Bournemouth's BID has supported events such as 'The Great Exhibition of Boscombe' in one of the areas many coastal market towns in an attempt to develop distinct identities through heritage.



Newcastle's refurbished Central Station © Kristen McCluskie, Ryder Architecture



Baron Trail, Lincoln © visitlincoln.com

## Help support regeneration of heritage assets

Newcastle's NE1 BID works with Network Rail and Newcastle City Council and has successfully applied for Regional Growth Fund funding to regenerate the city's Central Station, a Grade 1 listed building, and its surrounding area.

Southport's local BID and Sefton Council are working together to bring in new investment to conserve and improve heritage buildings and features of the town.

## Engage with local heritage organisations

In Lincoln the Cathedral is an essential part of Lincoln's identity and tourist offer, and Lincoln's BID works with the Cathedral at Board level.

The BID is also a key partner in the city's cultural strategy programme, having supported the development of a partnership as a response to reduced cultural investment by the local authority. Arts Council England and Visit England 'Cultural Destinations' grant funding has supported a three-year cultural programme delivered through the Lincoln Cultural Partnership

## Find out more

Further detailed examples of heritage being used by BIDs can be found in Heritage Counts 2016 Case Studies: [HistoricEngland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/2016-heritage-and-place-branding/case-studies](https://HistoricEngland.org.uk/research/heritage-counts/2016-heritage-and-place-branding/case-studies)

Additional information and research on heritage and place branding involving BIDs is also located in *Heritage Counts 2016 – Heritage and Place Branding*: [content.HistoricEngland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2016/heritage-and-place-branding.pdf](https://content.HistoricEngland.org.uk/content/heritage-counts/pub/2016/heritage-and-place-branding.pdf). A full reference list is also given in this location.

[HistoricEngland.org.uk](https://HistoricEngland.org.uk)

*Using Heritage in Place Branding* is edited by Marcus Ward, and produced by Historic England. Design and layout by Hannah Kennedy and Marcus Ward. © Historic England.

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