



# Historic England – Listing audience reach events

## Boston engagement summary

### Why did we select Boston?

The purpose of this exercise was to gather opinions from three communities regarding the National Heritage List for England, targeting a wider and more diverse audience than might usually engage in this topic.

Boston is a port and market town in Lincolnshire and has one of the oldest conservation areas in the country. Boston was selected as the suburban location for this engagement as it has an interesting demographic makeup. The town has a significant Eastern European community and a higher proportion of people with disabilities than the national average. Importantly, the town's lack of integration between communities was of interest to us and informed the decision to target our engagement in Boston.

Recently, the Council undertook a review of the conservation area, following reports that many buildings had fallen into a state of disrepair. This was something which certainly came through in some of the conversations that the team had with stakeholders in Boston.

### Engagement methods

**Promotion** – Social media advertising was used to promote the engagement in the local community. This allowed us to target residents based on location as well as priority groups, maximising the potential for these audiences to engage, and the adverts invited recipients to fill out the online survey or attend our workshops. Overall, 4,279 people engaged with the social media adverts, across all three locations. Boston was the most successful social media campaign, with 69,350 people reached and 1,666 click throughs.

Stakeholder groups were also written to, inviting them to attend the workshops and take part in our online survey. These stakeholder groups, including formal and informal community groups, provided an effective means of promotion, as there was the possibility of the information that we provided being dispersed further throughout the group's networks. The Historic England website was also used to promote the engagement, which included a link to the online survey.

**Workshops** – Five online workshops were held across a week, which included two for Boston, held on 1 November between 18:30-20:00 and 3 November between 13:00-14:30. The workshops included information about Historic England and the Listing process, as well as discussions about heritage in the local area, and specific examples of heritage within Boston that had been highlighted by those who signed up to attend. There was also a



discussion on how communities felt Historic England could best protect these places, and the importance of how places are used.

**Online survey** – An online survey was developed with the Historic England team, which covered the same topics as the presentation outlined above.

### **Feedback response rates**

For Boston, the response rates were:

- 24 people filled out the sign-up survey
- 7 people attended the online workshops
- 43 people filled out the main online survey

Overall, Boston saw a consistent level of response to the engagement methods. The social media campaign for Boston was particularly well-performing, with more engagement than the other two locations.

The interest generated already from the earlier work on heritage by the local Council meant there was already a good baseline knowledge of Historic England. Some participants referred to buildings in the market square in disrepair, feeling frustration towards landlords. Some respondents highlighted that Boston is often forgotten in favour of other local destinations such as Lincoln.

### **Response themes**

**Protection of spaces** – Respondents from Boston highlighted the need to protect larger spaces as opposed to just individual buildings. This included discussions on the protection of the town centre and nature areas, which have importance to the local community as a whole.

**Understanding of Historic England** – There was an interesting split between those that filled out the sign-up survey, who had a limited knowledge of Historic England and their purpose, and those that filled out the main survey, who had a higher level of existing knowledge.

**Heritage as a shared experience** – This was a key theme for respondents from Boston, who viewed heritage assets as essential for shaping early experiences of communities, both as experiences in early life and as new members of a community.

**Learning more about Historic England** – People from Boston felt that social media, the Historic England website and partnerships with local government and community groups would be the most effective way to find out more about Historic England.

**Specific locations** – Boston, St Botolph's Church, Gala Cinema and the almshouses in the town centre were noted as buildings that should be preserved in the area. Respondents emphasised the need for restoring, protecting and preserving the town's buildings, reflecting the earlier work from the Council in the town centre. This is unsurprising, given that Boston town centre has previously struggled with underinvestment.