



**Local Heritage  
Engagement  
Network**

# **Toolkit**

**No. 4**

**Why heritage  
matters: Key  
facts and stats  
for heritage  
advocacy**

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## Contents

**This document will:**

- **Break down the various reasons why heritage is important**
- **Give statistical evidence that shows how heritage is threatened**
- **Cherry-pick some useful statistics for a range of publications from within and beyond the heritage sector to support heritage's value**
- **Suggest purposes for which statistics might provide useful support**



## Heritage matters

At the heart of the purpose of advocacy for the historic environment is this simple message:

### **Heritage matters.**

This is true whether you wish to protect or enhance the historic character of your village, ensure appropriate archaeological expertise in your local authority, or ensure that your local museum thrives.

One of the most pressing challenges for heritage advocates is communicating this message to decision-makers who may not share a passion for the past, or may not be intimately aware of the range of valuable heritage work which is undertaken by voluntary and professional sectors and the range of benefits which arise from that action.

It may help to consider heritage in terms of the benefits it creates:

- Cultural benefits
- Social benefits
- Economic benefits
- Environmental benefits

In addition to these 'instrumental' benefits, heritage is also something which is 'visceral':

- People *care* about heritage, histories and connections to the past
- It is important to our identities and can shape our experience of the world around us.

Depending upon who you are trying to influence and in what context, there may be different reasons to emphasise different elements of these benefits. For example, for cash strapped local authorities, it *may* be more convincing to stress economic effects or value-for-money, than social or environmental benefits (although in most cases these things are not mutually exclusive). You should look for clues in local plans, strategies, and statements.



## Threats to heritage

Heritage is particularly threatened within the current climate of cuts of local government. This trend has been observable since around 2007, when staff in local government archaeology and conservation roles peaked prior to the advent of the banking crisis and subsequent recession.

*The following facts may be helpful in articulating these threats:*

- Since 2006 there has been a 32% drop in the number of full time equivalent (FTE) historic environment specialists providing advice to local authorities in England. (26% in archaeological advice, 35% in conservation advice)
- In the 12 months between July 2013 and July 2014 alone, the number of archaeological specialists dropped by 9.5% (in the same period conservation specialist staff levels dropped 2.4%)

([ALGAO/IHBC/EH 2014](#))

- Since 2010 the rate of development has been steadily increasing and is now higher than it was in 2007, but the staff levels in local authorities have continued to decline.

([DCLG 2010-2015](#))

- Spending on 'combined heritage' (including archives, heritage, museums and galleries, conservation and listed building planning policy, and archaeology) by local authorities amounts to less than half of one per cent of all local authority spending. Spending on all the sub-sectors within that total fell too, with the biggest proportionate drop being recorded in the conservation and listed building planning policy sub-sector, down from £44m to £36m (a 20.5% decline in just 1 year from 2010/11-2011/12).

(BOP Consulting 2013)



## Economic reasons why...

The historic environment is a contributor to the country's economy. It is a core driver of both national and international tourism and it is an extremely popular leisure activity. It is also capable of being a key contributor to the economic benefits of regeneration and urban planning. Spending on heritage services and conservation can therefore often be seen as an *investment* made on the promise of good returns. These facts all reflect on the need to have a strong system of protections, expert advice on heritage issues in planning, and public engagement in place-making.

*The following facts may be helpful in articulating these issues:*

- Every £1 invested in the historic environment directly contributes on average an additional £1.60 to the local economy over a ten year period.

[\(English Heritage Heritage Counts 2010\)](#)

- Total direct heritage-based tourism expenditure is estimated as £8.5 billion for heritage activities. This is equivalent to more than ¼ of all spending by international visitors.
- Visits to UK heritage sites are worth £1,646 per person per year.
- The heritage tourism economy is larger than the value added of the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry (£1.7 billion), the beer manufacturing industry (£2.4 billion), the paper and paper products manufacturing industry (£3.9 billion), and the construction of roads and railways (£2.8 billion).
- Direct employment generated by the heritage tourism economy means 134,000 jobs. Heritage-based tourism also has indirect effects, as the tourism industry demands goods and services from other UK-based industries.

[\(VisitBritain 2010\)](#)

- The historic environment is an important factor in businesses' decisions on location, as important as road access. It creates distinctive and desirable places, by attracting independent businesses. Historic areas also attract a

greater mix of businesses, such as bars and restaurants, encouraging people to stay in an area longer and to visit at different times of the day.

([English Heritage Heritage Counts 2010](#))

- In 2011 54% of overseas tourists to the UK visited historic buildings; in the Nation Brand Index Britain ranked 5 out of 50 countries in terms of being rich in historic buildings and monuments.
- 15% of domestic overnight tourism is heritage-related.
- Using willingness to pay methodologies – where users are asked what they would be willing to pay for a particular thing (like a visit to a heritage site, or adequate oversight in planning matters) heritage regularly shows very high scores in terms of perceived value to actual cost (scoring higher than many other public services). Even non-users of services regularly demonstrate ‘willingness to pay’.

(British Library 2004; MLA North West 2005; EFTEC)

- Houses in conservation areas sell for a premium of 23% on average. Even after all other variables are adjusted for a 9% premium still exists. The premium is lower in conservation areas deemed ‘at risk’.

([LSE for English Heritage](#))

- If time and donations are used as a proxy for value, heritage scores highly amongst other sectors: In 2013/14, 29% of people donated money to the cultural sector.
- 26% of people surveyed had volunteered some of their time in the last 12 months. 8% of these had volunteered in the heritage, museums, or library sectors. This equates to approx. 4.1 million people.

([English Heritage Heritage Counts 2010](#))

- The average local authority employed archaeologist leavers in 40 times their own salaries in private sector investment in development-led archaeology. This contributes directly to public benefits such as knowledge and understanding of a place.
- An estimated total of 5,940 people directly earning their living from archaeology in the UK and around 10% of these work in local government.

(Landward Research Ltd 2013)



## Cultural reasons why...

Heritage forms the backbone of British culture. People identify with heritage; whether museums, industrial heritage, castles, cathedrals, stately homes, the countryside, national parks, or historic towns and villages. It is what makes Britain great. Heritage is also a popular cultural activity. Beyond this, heritage is an important axis for the understanding of different cultures and minority groups in modern Britain.

*The following statistics may help to articulate these issues:*

- When asked why they were proud of living in Britain, 58.9% of people answered countryside and scenery (1<sup>st</sup> most popular reason), and 38.7% British History (3<sup>rd</sup> most popular). 19.5% of people cited architecture and historic buildings (7<sup>th</sup> most popular).

[\(DCMS – Taking Part 2013/14\)](#)

- 72.6% of people have visited a heritage site in the past year
- 52% of people have visited a museum in the past year
- These figures have increased steadily since 2006
- 43% of these visitors have visited sites *at least* quarterly

This means that more people visit heritage sites each year than attend football matches.

[\(DCMS Taking part survey 2014/15\)](#)

- 82% of British people think it is important to have a museum or art gallery in their local town or city.

[\(NMDC 2006\)](#)

- 87% of people think the historic environment plays an important part in the cultural life of the country

[\(Heritage Link et. al. 2004\)](#)

- 8 out of ten people believe that it is important to teach children about heritage.

(English Heritage/MORI 2000)



## Social reasons why...

The historic environment is much, much more than a resource for tourism and business. The social impacts of archaeology and history in our towns and villages are hugely important. The historic environment gives communities a local sense of history and helps develop a sense of community well-being.

*The following statistics may help to articulate these issues:*

- The majority of people in England believe heritage sites are important to local communities. The historic environment is valued for its contribution to our knowledge and sense of identity, and because it helps to make places feel 'special'.

[\(English Heritage – Heritage Counts Report 2014\)](#)

- Participating in heritage can contribute to people's personal development, and there is emerging evidence of a positive relationship between heritage participation, wellbeing and health.
- Having access to heritage has been calculated as having a positive impact upon well-being and life satisfaction equivalent to a gain in income of £1,646 per person per year.
- Well-being derived from museums is estimated to be equivalent of around £3,200 extra income per person per year.
- Participation in heritage has a much greater benefit than visiting alone and is more beneficial than participating in arts or sports.
- Certain groups of people such as those with longstanding illnesses, in 'blue-collar' occupations, those over 45, and those with children benefit derive higher wellbeing benefits from heritage participation.

[\(Fujiwara for DCMS 2014\)](#)

- There is widespread agreement that the strongest evidence for the benefits of culture for individuals is found in 'personal development': e.g. new skills,



new experiences, improved confidence, changed attitudes, education support.

(English Heritage – *Heritage Counts* Report 2005: p.65)

- A very large body of evidence now exists linking the natural (and to a lesser extent, built) environment to clinical measures of individual's physical and mental health. Some of these have made estimates of the financial savings that are, or could be, achieved within health budgets as a result of access to green space.

([Heritage Lottery Fund 2015](#))



## Environmental reasons why...

The historic environment can be perceived as an element of an inclusive landscape or townscape and relates to other important things such as community facilities, townscape, rural landscape, natural environment, and has impacts on climate change and green living. There is ample evidence for the benefits of natural heritage, open spaces, and nature on peoples health, happiness and wellbeing, and much of this is translatable to historic environment benefits, although such specific research is in shorter supply.

- Demolishing old buildings and replacing them (using new materials, which need to be produced, transported and constructed in the vast majority of cases is much less energy efficient than repairing and re-using the existing stock.
- 24% of the nation's total waste comes from the construction and demolition materials.
- Reusing historic buildings is one of the most sustainable types of building. Materials such as timber, lime mortar, clay brick, and tile, local stone, lead and copper are usually available locally and are more sustainable than modern alternatives.
- Restoring historic buildings creates more jobs per pound spent than new build construction as it is more reliant upon labour and requires less materials and machinery.
- Lime building is carbon neutral whereas cement is one of the most damaging carbon producing industries in the world (3% of global emissions)

[\(English Heritage - Heritage Counts report 2008\)](#)

- Regular opportunities to experience nature have a positive impact on mental and physical health, learning, and relationships with neighbours.
- Access to public green space increases walking

[\(National Ecosystem Assessment 2011\)](#)



## People care...

- Making your case for heritage does not need to be limited to consequential and instrumental benefits of heritage – i.e. which create benefits in other areas, whether jobs, health, skills, or productivity, underlying them all is that people care. Local authorities are capable of being moved by subjects of public interest – after all, they are democratic representatives!
- More than 9 out of 10 adults either agree (41.7%) or strongly agree (51.6%) with the statement 'It is important to me that heritage buildings and places are well looked after'.  
([DCMS – Taking Part 2013/14](#))
- Over 3 million people visited a Heritage Open Days event in 2014 making it by far the biggest mass participation event in the country.  
([Heritage Open Days 2014](#))
- A 2013 Britain Thinks report presents findings from qualitative research with the general public to understand perceptions of and attitudes to the roles and purposes of museums in society. This study, commissioned by the Museums Association, found a strong, positive emotional attachment to museums by both visitors and non-visitors, and a sophisticated understanding of how museums shape our future as well as our past.  
([Britain Thinks 2013](#))
- A MORI survey of 4,000 adults for MLA found that 82% of people think it is important for their local town or city to have its own museum or art gallery  
([MLA, 2004](#))
- The National Trust has over 4 million members. This is larger than all the main political parties combined.  
([House of Commons Research Briefing](#))



## Other sources of information and local statistics

The Museums Association publishes a series of facts and figures relevant to the museums sector specifically and can be found [here](#).

A Historic England factsheet on heritage can be found [here](#).

### Local specific research

There is a distinct advantage to having closely relevant statistics if you are advocating in a particular local area. Making an effort to seek out existing statistics or produce your own may be worthwhile.

Always be sure to check your council's websites for the details of their communities, culture, or heritage strategies and local development plan.

Example: [Medway Council Sustainable Communities Strategy](#)

Sometimes local councils will also publish reports or research on their websites.

Example: [Bristol City Council's Heritage and Localism Report](#)

Regional Heritage Counts reports are available [here](#).

As part of Heritage Counts 2014 Historic England published a spreadsheet which contains statistics on each local authority's data on designations, planning data, etc. This data allows comparisons with other authorities, tells you whether the authority has a heritage champion, and the online status of the HER. This can be accessed [here](#).

You may also want to consider creating your own data. There are many advantages to this:

- You can ask questions about a specific/place
- Your data should relate to a relevant demographic (i.e. local citizens, service users, etc.)
- You can tailor results to suit your argument's strengths

You will be able to find more details on conducting local research as part of campaigns in a forthcoming toolkit document.