

Making the most of our heritage

**Heritage is a powerful force in the 21st century.
It stimulates economic growth and brings multiple
benefits to individuals and communities.**

At the heart of successful places, it provides a sustainable foundation for the renewal of local areas and is a significant contributor to UK tourism.

Heritage is highly valued for its own sake by people across all parts of society, so much so that it is integral to our quality of life.

It is key to understanding our national and regional distinctiveness, encouraging a sense of citizenship and building community spirit.

Heritage Link, the alliance of more than 75 independent heritage organisations in England, believes our heritage is a national asset that delivers wide-ranging public benefits.

**Our heritage could make an even greater
difference to national economic and social
wellbeing if government would...**

- provide a more coherent and efficient heritage protection system by introducing new legislation at the earliest opportunity
- restore levels of lottery support to heritage as an urgent priority
- remove fiscal deterrents to reusing older buildings, and continue the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme beyond 2011
- review Local Authority financing for heritage to deliver more effective and efficient services through skilled urban planners and historic environment teams
- promote the contribution that protection of the historic environment can make to a low carbon future and a more sustainable economy.

Tourism was worth approximately £86bn in 2007. Evidence from VisitBritain shows England's historic buildings are key motivators in attracting visitors

Building a new economy

There is a direct relationship between the quality of the places where we live and work and our economic prosperity.

Fostering our heritage stimulates the economy in a variety of ways. The importance of heritage to the tourism and leisure industries is well known. Equally important is the role that the historic character of buildings and areas plays in attracting start-up enterprises as well as international businesses. Far from being a brake on development, recognising and revaluing our heritage helps breathe new life into run-down areas, providing a basis for long-term economic success. In deprived areas, schemes to improve and enhance heritage assets can create confidence, attract investment, create new facilities for social enterprise and act as a catalyst to reverse economic decline.

Investment in conservation and sustainable reuse of buildings and landscapes is more labour-productive than many other forms of investment. Repair and maintenance, almost half of all construction value output in England, is typically undertaken by small businesses with locally employed staff. Since these contractors also tend to source their raw materials locally, their activity also supports construction product manufacturers and suppliers. Heritage-related enterprises help to diversify employment opportunities, especially in rural areas.

In an age of austerity, harnessing existing resources achieves a return on earlier investment. It makes sense to do all we can to get the most out of our heritage.

Heritage Link calls on the new Government to:

- provide a more coherent and efficient heritage protection system by introducing new legislation at the earliest opportunity
- require regional and local authorities to have regard to the economic value of heritage wherever sustainable development policies are pursued
- use Planning Policy Statement 15 to integrate heritage more closely into the national planning system
- support small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the construction industry in retaining and developing their skilled and specialist workforce including an expansion of apprenticeship schemes
- continue support for good environmental practices through DEFRA's Environmental Stewardship Scheme
- take positive steps to promote better care and maintenance of cultural assets, by
 - opting in to a reduced rate of VAT for the renovation and repair of dwellings in private ownership
 - pressing for further changes to VAT at European level to include the maintenance of historic buildings in particular
 - introducing targeted fiscal reliefs on the maintenance of historic buildings open to the public

Every year over 425000 people support our heritage in a voluntary capacity

The Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme which has invested £94m over eight year attracted four times that amount to the benefit of community projects

68% of Heritage Lottery Fund projects to date have been led by local community groups and voluntary organisations

Giving value for money

The UK heritage sector is characterised by a large number of active voluntary organisations and the huge army of heritage volunteers. Around two thirds of the historic environment is supported, managed or owned privately and by non-government heritage bodies. Heritage leads the way in promoting partnership working between public, private and charitable bodies in order to maximise benefits to the public.

Heritage charities and social enterprises strengthen local communities by encouraging philanthropy, self help and collective action. Over four and a half million of people are members of heritage organisations, or donate generously to heritage causes. Together, they build social networks that achieve economic, environmental, social and educational objectives. There is a positive link between the level of interest in the historic environment and the degree to which people feel connected to their neighbours and their local area.

Voluntary sector heritage groups are skilled at leveraging in additional funding to make the most of limited public-sector resources. And as well as financial partnerships, every year, nearly half a million heritage volunteers contribute many years' worth of their personal time. For younger people heritage volunteering can expand career choices; for older people it can increase longevity, improve mental health and maintain fitness levels.

As part of an increasingly vibrant third sector, heritage organisations can make a real difference to the lives of individuals and their communities but only if the current sources of public funding available to them are safeguarded.

Heritage Link calls on the new Government to:

- restore levels of Lottery support to heritage as an urgent priority
- remove fiscal deterrents to reusing older buildings, and continue the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme beyond 2011
- assess the impact on third sector heritage activity before making cuts in public spending for heritage
- include the impact on third sector bodies in Impact Assessments that relate to changes in policy
- support and encourage philanthropic giving in the UK
- create a supportive environment for volunteering for all age groups, including employee volunteering

For statistics see
www.heritagelink.org.uk

Heritage Open Days, the biggest cultural event in Europe, attracted nearly 1m visitors at 3500 sites in 2008, involving 35000 volunteers

More than 10 times as many people belong to heritage groups as belong to political parties

Empowering people

Millions of people visit historic sites each year for pleasure, inspiration and fun days out. Increased access and understanding of these sites is essential if all sections of society are to enjoy this vast resource and if future generations are to take care of it in their turn.

Heritage has a great deal to offer both formal and informal learners. Teachers see buildings and spaces as an educational resource that helps deliver the primary and secondary school curriculum. Visits to historic sites of all kinds by school groups can help to bring the past to life – whether at recognised heritage attractions or on the local high street. Educating children about their own and others' heritage helps them to develop as citizens and cultivates pride in the special aspects of where they live.

Enabling people to understand, value, enjoy and care for the historic environment is at the very heart of the citizenship ethos. The historic environment can inspire us to play a more active part in our immediate locality as well as in national and even global issues.

Heritage plays its part in driving local democracy and civic engagement. New research shows that those who live in places with a particularly historic character have a greater 'sense of place' than those who do not. Landmark buildings up and down the country are taken over and restored by local groups and social enterprises such as building preservation trusts and development trusts, to provide community facilities and enhance the look and feel of neighbourhoods. Local groups can also play active roles in enhancing our knowledge of the historic environment.

Caring for historic assets involves dedication as well as expertise. Professional and specialist skills are vital to maximising the benefits. Local Authorities need a highly trained and effective workforce to ensure the effective management of the historic environment. Too often, such skills are missing from local planning services. Investment in skills and people is needed to improve quality and efficiency and help realise heritage's full potential.

Heritage Link calls on the new Government to:

- review Local Authority financing for heritage to deliver more effective and efficient services through skilled urban planners and historic environment teams
- continue public support for cultural learning opportunities for children and adults in which heritage is an integral part
- develop meaningful community involvement in planning and heritage protection with investment in local authority and community training
- enhance capacity building for local community organisations



It takes up to 50 years for an 'energy efficient home' to recover the carbon expended in constructing it

Despite efforts to reduce construction industry waste, around 30bn tonnes is sent to landfill every year, the equivalent of almost 2 trillion aluminium cans

Responding to climate change

Making the most of our heritage assets will help us reduce the impacts of climate change and adapt to its most damaging consequences.

Older buildings play a crucial role in meeting the targets for moving to a low-carbon future. Private dwellings alone, a fifth of which were built before 1919, account for over a quarter of carbon emissions in this country. But older buildings themselves are not the problem. Changing people's behaviour is just as important as improving energy performance.

Re-using and recycling older buildings produces fewer carbon emissions and uses less energy. Their adaptation avoids loss of embodied energy, prevents landfill associated with demolition and waste materials, and avoids the high levels of carbon emissions and energy involved in new development. Repair, maintenance and improvement of traditional buildings is the low carbon option.

The impact of past periods of climate change can be demonstrated through the historic environment, while older traditions of construction and settlement location offer solutions for the future. Many older areas are themselves the products of a low carbon economy, providing examples of more sustainable patterns of living.

Parts of the historic environment will be threatened by climate change and some will need to be adapted to avoid permanent damage. It is possible to respond to the challenges of climate change and improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings without destroying their distinctive character and value.

Heritage Link calls on the new Government to:

- promote the contribution that protection of the historic environment can make to a low carbon future, shifting its policy and fiscal framework towards beneficial re-use and recycling of older buildings, with local and central Government leadership
- implement UK fiscal incentives to encourage better maintenance of the fabric of historic buildings
- adjust performance measures and guidance on energy efficiency so that they are based on actual rather than theoretical energy use in historic buildings
- support innovative energy efficiency solutions respecting the character of existing buildings through grant aid.



About Heritage Link

- Heritage Link brings together over 75 non-government heritage groups in England. It represents the non-government organisations which own, manage and care for the vast majority of England's heritage. They are supported by some 4 million members.
- Heritage Link's member organisations represent interests from specialist advisers, practitioners and managers, volunteers and owners, to national funding bodies and organisations leading major regeneration and access projects.
- the specialised knowledge and expertise built up by member organisations across a huge range of issues is a national resource; much of this knowledge is contributed on a voluntary basis though the heritage protection regime and other advisory roles for public benefit.

Heritage Link
Clutha House
10 Storey's Gate
London SW1P 3AY

Tel: 020 7233 0500
Fax: 020 7233 0600
Email: mail@heritagelink.org.uk
www.heritagelink.org.uk

Heritage Link is a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales no 4577804 and registered charity no 1094793.

