

# Social impact of participation in culture and sport - written submission



1. The Heritage Alliance is pleased to submit evidence to the Commons Select Committee [inquiry into the social impact of participation in culture and sport](#).
2. The Heritage Alliance is England's biggest coalition of heritage interests, bringing together well over 100 mainly national organisations supported by over 7 million members, friends, volunteers, trustees and staff. From historic buildings and museums to canals, historic vehicles and steam railways, the Heritage Alliance's diverse membership owns, manages and cares for the vast majority of England's historic environment and forms a key part of the cultural sector.
3. Of the Inquiry's five major themes we have focused our answers on health and diversity as that is where work some of our new work has developed in recent months. Last year the Heritage Alliance held a debate on the health effects of heritage at the Waldorf Hotel. I would urge you to [listen to that debate here](#). Which explores evidence and cases studies in detail. Experiencing heritage, whether through work, visits, volunteering or just through everyday life has numerous health and mental benefits. Yet there is much work to be done between sectors, especially the NHS, on how these benefits can be maximised.
4. Following that debate we did a small survey on heritage and health to gather further evidence and responses have informed our answers below. Many of these responses echoed the Committees' stated desire to 'join up' the Government's currently separated departmental efforts.
5. **Existing evidence on Heritage**
6. Before turning to the questions, we will set out some key pieces of research on the topic.
7. Scientific research carried out by the National Trust has found that natural and historic places have a powerful effect on all of us. In the '[Places that Make us report](#)' the National Trust set out to understand the depth of people's connection with place. This is the first piece of research of its kind and has revealed that meaningful places generate a significant response in areas of the brain most commonly associated with positive emotions; demonstrating the strong emotional connection between people and places.
8. The research revealed for the first time that key areas of emotional processing in the brain are activated by a place deemed to be special by an individual, supporting the feelings of a deep visceral connection.
9. It also identified areas in the brain that responded to a place with personal meaning and demonstrated that the brain generates an automatic positive emotional response to such

places. This response to special places was found to be much higher in the amygdala (a key area in the brain known to process emotion) than our response to meaningful objects, such as a wedding ring or photograph.

10. Therefore, it can be concluded that significant places are more likely to contain greater emotional importance than objects. Areas in our brain involved in emotional processing respond more strongly to significant places or places with meaning, to evoke powerful emotional reactions, indicating that places can be more than just physical spaces. These emotional reactions have an impact on us physically and psychologically.
11. The research also found that places also encourage behavioural responses that have the potential to benefit others as well.
12. A real sense of belonging and self-identity is evoked by places that are meaningful. 8 out of 10 describe their place as being part of them (86%) and 58% agree that they 'feel like I belong' when visiting this place.
13. This feeling can be shared with others as 75% agree that they would like to pass on their love of their place to significant others and there is also a desire to share the connection they have with the place with others (79%). The results indicate that places support us in four areas; mental wellbeing, nostalgia, security and survival.
14. For many, this manifests through a strong desire, and need, to protect these places for future generations with 61% saying that they do try to protect the place that is most important to them. 92% agree that they would be upset if the place was lost. This is strongest amongst those whose meaningful place is rural (95%) compared to urban (91%) places.
15. [Heritage and the Economy 2017](#) also looks at some of the non- financial research on the impacts of heritage on page 14. It notes that a study by Simerica in 2014 estimated the well-being value of visiting heritage sites to be equivalent to £1,646 per person per year (Fujiwara et al., 2014). This is the amount of money that would have to be taken away from a person to restore them to the level of well-being they would have had, had they not visited a heritage site. This figure is more than participating in sports or the arts. Visiting a historic town or city was found to be the most beneficial.
16. The report also cites research by VividEconomics and the National Trust which estimates that for every £1 spent on parks services in Sheffield, £36 of benefits are generated for local residents (VividEconomics, 2016). The methods used in this research involved combining evidence on health and other benefits of urban parks and green space and presenting it in a financial reporting statement: a 'natural capital account'.
17. [Heritage and Society 2017](#) notes that Research undertaken by Age UK which identifies various factors and their contribution to well-being (as a percentage out of 100%) revealed that engagement with creative and cultural activities including heritage, makes the highest contribution of 5.75% to one's overall well-being out of all other factors (Age UK, 2017). A separate study found that people who participate less often in heritage activities have lower life satisfaction and poorer physical and mental health and that people who reported lapses

in visits to heritage sites also reported the greatest declines in physical health, mental health, and life satisfaction.

18. In 2015 the Heritage Counts report '[Caring for the Historic Environment](#)' noted that the Heritage Lottery Fund commissioned a three-year study to measure the impact of participating in heritage projects. they found that volunteers in HLF-funded projects reported higher levels of mental health and well-being than the general population or general volunteering population. This was most marked in terms of their ability to 'play a useful part in things', an indicator that combines a measure of self-worth with social connectedness. One in three (35%) volunteers report an increase in self-esteem and confidence in their abilities.
19. Many others will doubtless have drawn the inquiry's attention to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing [report on practice and research in the arts in health and social care](#), which made recommendations to improve policy and practice. One response to our heritage and health survey noted that its 'recommendations could be applied to enhancing the connection between heritage and health. We believe the following suggestions could prove particularly effective: 1. A DCMS-led cross-governmental strategy to support the delivery of health through culture and heritage projects. 2. Arts Council England and HLF funding for partnership projects between health and heritage organisations. 3. Research on the impact of heritage and health projects to better understand their benefit and to build an evidence base of qualitative and quantitative data. 4. A national network of professionals spanning heritage and health environments to foster debate and knowledge exchange, inspire action on collaboration, empower projects and to provide resources'.
- 20. Which programmes best demonstrate the positive social impact that participating in sport and culture can have on the five central themes of this inquiry?**
21. An interesting example of cross sector working is Human Henge. This is a ground-breaking project about archaeology, mental health and creativity. Through a programme of participant-led activities, 32 local people living with mental health problems and on low incomes, come together for fun, therapeutic adventures. Accompanied by curators and artists, archaeologist Professor Tim Darvill, and musician and creative facilitator Yvette Staelens, they explore the monuments, features and layers of meaning in the Stonehenge landscape, enabled through the participation of English Heritage and the National Trust.
22. Suffolk Mind and the Churches Conservation Trust used £3.6m from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to restore and rejuvenate the redundant medieval church, [St Mary at the Quay](#), into a Wellbeing Heritage Centre for everyone in the community. The work of Suffolk Mind is explored in much more detail in the audio of our Heritage and Health debate above.
23. Programmes highlighted in responses to our heritage and health survey included:
24. [Landmark's 50 for Free scheme](#) which offers 50 free stays in Landmarks for charities, educational and not-for-profit organisations.
25. The Help for Heroes collaboration with the Canal and River Trust in the [Heritage Heroes scheme](#). This two year programme offered wounded servicemen and women, and veterans

the opportunity to gain new skills and qualifications to help them make the most of life outside the Armed Forces and has had dramatic positive impacts in some cases.

26. [Icon's Conservation in the Community award](#) which marks the valuable efforts and excellence achieved by volunteers on conservation projects. It is presented to a project involving a professional conservator that has increased the learning of new skills by volunteers and benefited communities in accessing cultural heritage. In 2015 the award was given to Resurrecting the Coffin Works, the Birmingham Conservation Trust's rescue of a Victorian factory in Birmingham. The project combined high conservation standards with excellent community engagement and public access where none previously existed. The project provided volunteers with an opportunity to gain new skills, greater confidence and to learn about conservation. The factory now offers a range of events, ensuring the site's continued contribution to the community's wellbeing and education. The restored building adds to the character of its setting, improving quality of life in the area.
27. The Restoration Trust has delivered many collaborative projects between heritage and health organisations to help improve peoples' mental health through engagement with heritage. Case studies can be found on their website: <https://restorationtrust.org.uk/>.
28. [Change Minds](#) is a transformative archival adventure for people from North Norfolk who live with mental health conditions and are on low incomes, carers, volunteers and staff.
29. [Point of Ayr Then and Now](#), is centred on the former Point of Ayr colliery, the last deep pit in North Wales which closed in 1996. One elderly gentleman recorded said talking about the pit and volunteering on the project had lifted his spirits and 'brought him back to life'.
30. HLF funded [Inspiring Futures: wellbeing and volunteering](#): Manchester Museum's 3-year programme volunteering, training and placement programme across 10 heritage venues in Greater Manchester is an exemplar in partnership working to tackle wellbeing inequalities.
31. [Herts Health and Wellbeing Board](#) is developing initiatives such as museums on prescription for Herts residents.
32. **How can access to cultural and sporting professions be improved to enable greater diversity? How can the Government build a pipeline of talent?**
33. The heritage sector relies on volunteering. The latest results from [Heritage Counts 2017](#) show that 6% of all voluntary work undertaken in England is in the heritage sector. The sector simply could not function without those volunteers. However, it does mean that young people from wealthier backgrounds are able to volunteer in advance of getting a job while others cannot not afford to do so as easily.
34. The fact that the sector is often low paid – especially for entry level jobs will be a further disincentive for those who are not from wealthy backgrounds.
35. Historic England is rolling out its [positive action traineeships](#) for the sector after a pilot within Historic England itself. However, the cost of funding will be a barrier to smaller organisations. Government could consider funding this type of placement for small charities.

36. Responses to our heritage and health questionnaire noted that ‘Local Heritage is the common theme linking diverse communities with any area. It is a common heritage to all groups, regardless of their own individual heritage, since it is the heritage of where they live... working together to understand and appreciate this heritage, including the contribution of new arrivals, will be a great force for community cohesion, co-operative working to preserve that common heritage (such as voluntary working groups), and thus promote the mental and physical wellbeing of all groups’.

37. A finding from the Heritage2020 diversity workshop was that the sector needed to look at recruitment practices and particularly the sector's focus on academic qualifications. This is being/has the potential to be addressed through Apprenticeships. (e.g. the Historic Environment Trailblazer). Further Government support for apprentice type schemes is the best way to address diversity and ensure that the heritage sector can help meet its skills shortage domestically.

**38. Why has the Government not co-ordinated its efforts more effectively?**

39. The fragmented nature of the cultural sector has made a co-ordinated approach more difficult than in other more uniform industries. There is also a split between Government departments. For example, should social prescribing of the health benefits of being involved with the heritage sector be driven by DCMS or the Department of Health? Similarly, the mental health benefits of having a beautiful well-designed environment have not been incorporated into the National Planning Policy Framework by the ministry of housing.

40. Responses from our Heritage and Health Survey on this topic included:

41. ‘Better information needed from DCMS to heritage organisations on what info they need on heritage/ Health benefits - rather than expecting us to initiate contact with case studies etc. I'm not aware of any guidance on this’

42. ‘Potential for interdisciplinary working in this area; appetite from heritage sector to understand more; but possibly the practical application of academic approaches needs some sort of interface’.

43. ‘Importance of connecting with the health sector to make the case for heritage. Importance of collecting convincing evidence that includes both quantitative and qualitative data on the benefits of heritage to wellbeing’.

44. In respect of diversity issues, it may be slightly easier to present a joined-up approach across the cultural sector by providing a general tool kit to help organisations begin their thinking on the issue or use as best practice policies.

**45. Where are the examples of departmental best practice and how could it be shared?**

46. Feedback for the recent Twitter #HeritageChat on Diversity, [which has been storified here](#), highlighted the civil service as an example of good practice that could be shared more widely. As the heritage sector is often under resourced, having access to toolkits of example

policies, for free, which are kept up to date would be very helpful. A central page of resources as a minimum could help drive engagement for time poor smaller organisations.

47. [Government Science & Engineering](#) did a programme of work to highlight the profession. In particular, [the GSE story](#) - a visual showcase of the important role that government scientists and engineers have played across the centuries. This helps explain the profession to those who might not otherwise have considered it.

48. [ACE's creative case work](#) is a re-imagining of the Arts Council's approach to diversity and equality, setting out how these areas can and should enrich the arts for artists, audiences and our wider society. This might provide an interesting model for other sectors.

**49. Has the sport sector been better for social mobility than the arts? If so, why?**

50. It is difficult for us to do a comparison without an understanding of the sports sector.

**51. How can museums, galleries and other cultural venues boost access and social impact?**

52. There is already much work on going to address these issues. Our debate linked to above gives examples of how museums in Kent are working with the NHS to improve mental health. In terms of diversity, financial constraints often mean that collecting to engage with more diverse audiences is difficult given the current funding situation – especially local authority museums which are facing especially difficult funding challenges. See the recently published [Why Collect? report](#).

53. In terms of access to careers, as mentioned above entry level jobs are often low paid and some parts of the sector have seen redundancies in recent years. One respondent to our heritage and health survey stressed the need for sustainable careers in heritage noting that 'the number of people I have seen become redundant and depressed shows heritage in this sense is bad for your health'.

54. Respondents to our survey suggested that volunteering could be recommended by doctors and that GPs surgeries health centres and hospitals could be encouraged to display leaflets and posters to broaden participation and the access to health benefits. Multiple responses suggested that this needed central backing rather than being left to individual trusts and groups.

55. One respondent to our heritage and health survey noted that the Government's approach to health in the past had focused on disability. They suggest 'Dementia Friendly training for staff and volunteers to enable visitors to be welcomed appropriately' and 'providing accessible venues for people with learning disabilities/autistic spectrum rather than just those with mobility issues'.

56. The Heritage2020 project is considering using YouTube or similar channel to spread messages from 'heritage ambassadors' to diversify perceptions of what heritage is and therefore who is attracted to being involved (particularly professionally).

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21 February 2018

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