

Migration Advisory Committee Shortage Occupation Lists

The
Heritage
Alliance

Consultation Response
May 2023

About Us

The Heritage Alliance is England's largest coalition of independent heritage interests. We unite more than 190 organisations which together have over 7 million members, volunteers, trustees and staff. The vast majority of England's historic environment, including more than half of rural England, is managed and cared for by Heritage Alliance members. The Alliance's specialist Skills, Education and Engagement Advocacy Group has fed into this response.

A1. What is the name of your organisation?

The Heritage Alliance

A2. What is your email address?

policy@theheritagealliance.org.uk

A3. How many organisations or members do you represent?

198

A4. Thinking of the organisations or members you represent, in general are staff concentrated in specific UK countries/regions or are they UK wide?

Concentrated in specific regions/nations

A5. And which region(s) or country(ies) are these organisations or staff concentrated?

England

A6. Thinking of the organisations or members you represent, please select all the relevant sectors they cover from the list below:

- Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
- Mining and Quarrying
- Manufacturing
- Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air conditioning supply
- Water supply, Sewerage, Waste management and Remediation activities
- **Construction**
- Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles
- Transportation and Storage
- Accommodation and Food Service Activities
- Information and Communication
- Financial and Insurance Activities
- Real Estate Activities
- **Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities**
- Administrative and Support Service Activities
- **Education**
- Human Health and Social Work Activities
- **Arts, Entertainment and Recreation**
- **Other Service Activities**
- Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods
- Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies
- We operate across all sectors
- Don't know

A7. Thinking of the organisations you represent and their number of employees, select the main size bands that they cover.

All sizes

A8. Are the majority of organisations that you represent roughly of a similar size in terms of the number of employees, (e.g. most SME's or most large organisations)?

No

Section B: Occupations in shortage

B1. Using the ONS toolkit below, please tell us about the jobs that the organisations you represent said were hard to fill in the past 12 months. You can provide up to a maximum of 5 occupations

Occupation SOC code and Job Title

1. 2452 Museum Archivists and Curators
2. 2114 Archaeologist, Archaeological Specialist
3. 2121 Conservation Engineer
4. 3121 Conservation Architect, Architectural Assistant
5. 2141 Building Conservators

B3. If known, approximately how many vacancies are there for the jobs stated?

We do not have precise numbers of job vacancies. However, the National Trust/Historic England's 2023 [Heritage and Carbon](#) report calculated that 290,000 conservation-skilled construction jobs need to be filled to address the retrofit backlog alone.

[Historic England estimates](#) that 89% of contractors working on traditional buildings are from mainstream construction companies and 75% of contractors have not undertaken any training specific to pre-1919 buildings, presenting the threat of damage to historic buildings due to a shortage of conservation expertise.

A 2022 Historic England report on Local Authority Historic Environment Staff Resources also found that the number of conservation specialists and archaeologists in planning authorities in 2006 was approximately 50% higher than it is today – representing over 400 FTE jobs.

Elsewhere, the 2021 State of the Archaeological Market LMI survey noted vacancies in the vast majority of archaeological employers amidst a competitive labour market. The survey highlighted that the number of organisations reporting sector-wide shortages of skills has doubled in the last decade, and the number of organisations buying in skills also almost doubled from 32% to 62%.

[THA not responding to remaining part B questions due to lack of datasets]

C1: Why are jobs which you have referred to hard to fill as reported by the organisations or members you represent?

There are approximately half a million listed buildings in England, with many more unlisted buildings of traditional construction which shape our sense of place. They require specialists for their proper conservation and, increasingly, their adaptation to modern energy efficiency standards. Unfortunately, there is currently a major shortage in conservation skills across the construction sector as higher wages in the general building sector are drawing conservation craftspeople away from heritage work.

The latest Historic England Report on [Local Authority Heritage Staffing](#) reveals wider trends in the decline of conservation expertise across the planning sector. Staffing levels are 2/3 of what they were in 2006, with substantial evidence of increasing skills gaps and widespread recruitment problems. Prior to the end of freedom of movement, EEA workers made up approximately [13% of the archaeological workforce](#) – a significant gap to plug if British workers are expected to fill these roles.

There has been a recent decline in the number of higher education conservation courses on offer in the UK, which is likely to increase skills shortages and gaps. Cuts to the Department of Archaeology at Sheffield University and the Department of Archaeology & History at the University of Chester are indicative of this decline. Previous closures include the prestigious V&A and RCA conservation postgraduate training programme and the Textile Conservation Centre at the University of Southampton.

Furthermore, the archaeological sector has grown by 70% in the last 5 years (FAME), and the construction-led archaeology sector, where most of the skills shortages are located, has almost doubled. Unprecedented demand for archaeological services has been created by large infrastructure projects (e.g. Crossrail and HS2) and a high rate of housebuilding. These large infrastructure projects have created significant pressures on what is a very small relative workforce which is not growing in line with demand.

C2. Which skills do the organisations or members you represent most commonly find hard to fill and why?

The hardest jobs to fill are those involving highly specialist skills or those which require a significant training and certification period. Some specialisms involve only a handful of experts who have trained for years usually through a PhD programme and then several years of practical experience. Small practices do not have the resource to carry out training given the tight margins they are working with. The level of demand side pressure also plays a role, with too few organisations competing for too few skilled employees.

Typically, heritage skilled jobs are likely to involve written reports, manual dexterity, technical knowledge, computer literacy and specialist equipment. The jobs listed above which require these skills are preceded by substantial training programmes to develop these skills, programmes which themselves are under threat as evidenced in question C1.

C3. What level of experience is required for these jobs and why?

As above, many jobs in severe shortage are those which require a high level of technical skill which cannot quickly be replaced. However, there have been shortages in jobs of all experience

levels in recent years. Some employers have expanded in-work training schemes for candidates with no experience, as well as fast track programmes for graduates.

In archaeology, many shortage areas, such as fieldwork staff, require an experience level of between RQF 3-6, but most entry level staff hold at least a Bachelor's degree. More specialist roles are now also in short supply, and these will usually be at levels between RQF 6-8. The 2020 [Profiling the Profession survey](#) found that 99% of archaeologists have at least a Bachelor's degree and 70% have a postgraduate degree. Some of the positions require particularly advanced computing or scientific skills such as an understanding of machine learning or carbon dating.

C4. In the past 2 years, COVID-19 and other changes such as the ending of freedom of movement on 31st December 2020 have often changed the way employers recruit. With reference to the past 2 years, what changes (if any) have the organisations you represent experienced when recruiting/finding workers?

Historic England's 'Skills Gaps Needs in the Heritage Sector' report (2019) estimated that 15,000 EU nationals were employed in the Heritage Sector before Britain left the EU – 7.4% of the workforce. In a [2019 survey of our members](#), we found that 29% employed over 20% of their workforce from the EU, and 15% employed over 50% of their workforce from the EU.

Following the end of freedom of movement, EU staff in the archaeology workforce decreased from 15% in 2019 to 11% in 2021, and 7% in 2022. The Institute of Conservation (ICON)'s 2022 [Labour Market Intelligence Survey](#) reported that 23% of conservation sector organisations were previously dependent on recruiting non-UK passport holders to fulfil conservation roles within their organisations, and 15% had faced Brexit-related challenges in recruiting workers to fill vacancies.

Historic England [recently found that](#) the proportion of local authority teams reporting problems in recruiting more than doubled between 2020 and 2022 (17% up to 37%), with the most frequently cited cause being a lack of applicants with the required skills.

Our members have told us that the loss of skilled EU workers has meant a huge loss of knowledge and expertise, and that staff vacancies have had a significant impact on remaining employee capacity and wellbeing. The sector has experienced difficulties finding applicants with the desirable level of skill or experience for many roles.

The two-way exchange of expertise and labour between the EU and the UK is extremely important to the heritage sector. Many heritage organisations and companies relied upon skilled EU labour and, while the sector invests in domestic training and retention programmes as much as possible, they still need EU staff to supplement current demand. In light of the

Covid-19 and cost-of-living crisis, the financial capacity of the sector to train new skilled labour has been diminished further.

Many tourism-based heritage organisations rely on some form of foreign seasonal staff, who should be considered in future consultations. The August 2019 ONS report on migrant labour force within the tourism industry estimated 238,000 temporary workers in the tourism sector (and this is likely to be an underestimation), and 11% of them are non-UK nationals. A [Historic Houses survey](#) showed that 25% of their members indicated that they employed 5 or more EU nationals in the businesses on their properties. For over 17% of respondents to the survey, seasonal workers made up 10-40% of their total workforce in peak seasons.

C5. Have the organisations or members you represent experienced difficulties with retaining staff in the past year?

CifA reports that many archaeological employers have offered significant wage increases (10% average) in 2022, with wage growth above UK inflation rates in 2021, 2020, and 2019. For example, Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) have increased the salaries of field staff 15-20% in the past two years.

CifA also notes that the industry has acknowledged a problem of poor retention rates generally, especially amongst women, and graduate fieldwork staff in their 20s and 30s due to a lack of progression opportunities and non-remote working patterns. Non-UK temporary workers have been less impacted by some of these conditions, and perhaps, as a result, have been relied upon to fill gaps in the workforce. While employers have acknowledged these issues (e.g. at a CifA Skills Summit event held in 2022) there are no quick fixes to some of the issues that are embedded in the structural model of development-led archaeological project work.

Some Heritage Alliance members have found that improving staff pay and benefits has increased retention, whilst others struggle to afford to raise wages in line with inflation and cannot compete with private sector pay. Many are facing long term recruitment freezes, redundancies, and even closures.

Many charitable organisations in the heritage sector rely on volunteering, where retention has also been an issue since the pandemic. Large numbers of volunteer roles were suspended during lockdowns and many volunteers chose not to return, retired from their roles, or returned to paid work or childcare as inflationary pressures kicked in for themselves and their families. There is an ageing demographic in the heritage workforce (voluntary and paid), particularly in traditional craft skills, mobile heritage, places of worship, and archaeology, so these organisations have been particularly affected.

Section C: part 2

C6. Which of the following steps have the organisations that you represent taken to overcome difficulties in filling vacancies for those hard to fill vacancies?

In the historic building conservation sector, several training and apprenticeship programmes have been set up. Examples include Trailblazer apprenticeships, grants dedicated to apprenticeships (e.g. those funded by ICON, the Institute of Conservation), and specific programmes like the Building Craft Programme set up by the Prince's Foundation, and ICON's Tru Vue Grants Programme to support continuing professional development in conservation of moveable heritage. ICON also works with partners to run internships that are fully funded and underpinned by professional conservation standards.

The government's Kickstart scheme, administered for the Heritage Sector by Historic England, provided a valuable source of new sector skills in the wake of the pandemic. The Alliance were successful in securing a Kickstarter placement for 6 months, who took on valuable cost-of-living project work and has now acquired the on-the-job training and skills to pursue a career in the sector.

In the archaeological sector, the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) reports that the sector has responded with an expansion in domestic training programmes and moved to improve pay and security for employees. For example, Wessex archaeology have sought to make all staff permanent, and the Museum of London Archaeology have set up a new training route for people with no formal archaeological qualifications.

The Heritage Alliance hosts a popular jobs board for heritage, archaeology and conservation roles, including opportunities for jobs of all levels across the UK and with flexible and remote working options. We have also collaborated with Built Environment Forum Scotland (BEFS) to produce a [Heritage Careers Guide for 2023-2024](#) to signpost resources for people starting their careers in the sector.

Anecdotally we also know that our members are also:

- Increasing the training given to existing workforce
- Increasing/expanding trainee or apprentice programmes
- Increasing salaries and offering bonuses where possible to do so
- Using new recruitment methods or channels
- Bringing in contractors to do the work or contracting it out
- Being prepared to offer training to less well qualified recruits

C7. How effective are each of the strategies mentioned in the previous question in managing hard-to-fill vacancies, and why?

Training programmes and apprenticeships schemes introduced in the heritage sector have increased the number of specialists, however they are still not enough to cover the national demand. In the archaeological sector, the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists notes that these measures have contributed to meeting 65% of the unprecedented job demand over the last four years, but the other 35% is being covered by EAA workers coming to the UK to fill the gaps. This rapid growth is beyond anything ever seen in archaeology, and large historic building restoration programmes (e.g. Palace of Westminster, Buckingham Palace, Clondon Park, Glasgow School of Art, Wentworth Woodhouse) are creating additional demand.

Cifa note that most archaeological contractors are small businesses who have not been realistically able to engage with government training programmes like Trailblazer. Additionally, many UK university archaeology students lack practical skills required to enter the jobs market due to archaeology being perceived and taught as a 'general interest' subject for many students, rather than a vocational career option.

The sector is working to increase opportunities to pursue vocational degrees, but this process has lagged demand. Archaeological skills shortages have persisted in the past 2 years despite the efforts of the sector due to Covid-19 compounding existing pressures. For example, during the pandemic the need to work in small teams to prevent infection led to a severe shortage of archaeological supervisor roles for ongoing development projects.

Those recruiting through visa sponsorship have found it to be complicated, expensive and time consuming. FAME has reported that some organisations have requested several sponsorship certificates only to have their request denied after months of waiting - a year later, an almost identical request is approved. There appears to be no consistency in how the requests are handled, leaving many to give up on the process. The lengthy process also does not allow for the responsiveness needed for commercial projects - some of which will be very time limited and pressured by development timetables. Moreover, larger requests for certificates seem to almost always be denied leaving most only able to employ 1-2 people through the visa system.

ICON's internships have been more successful. Since 2006, Icon has successfully managed over 125 full time, one-year internships in the full range of conservation specialisms (in moveable heritage) supported by hosts in public, private and charitable establishments across the UK. 96% of Icon interns are still employed or enrolled on training courses in the heritage sector. The Heritage Alliance have run several successful internship schemes including with the Oxford University's Crankstart scheme for low-income students, many of whom have gone on to secure careers in the sector.

C8. If you are a trade body or an association which represents businesses within a specific sector, to what extent has your organisation been involved in the development of training for the businesses you represent?

We are a small organisation with limited capacity and funding, so there is a limit to what we can provide. However, the Heritage Alliance's Rebuilding Heritage and Heritage Digital programmes were set up to respond to sector needs that emerged during the pandemic around financial resilience, commercial skills and digital capacity. The programmes provided training, advice, and support through: one-to-one and group coaching and training sessions, webinars, online resources and recordings of events across a range of themes including digital communications, fundraising, business planning and EDI.

The Alliance also regularly signposts training and development opportunities through our fortnightly Heritage Update newsletter, which includes a round-up of new courses and workshops. Elsewhere the Heritage Alliance contributes to the Historic Environment's Skills Demand Task Group which seeks to stimulate demand for heritage skills through identifying ways to help owners of heritage assets to better understand when they may need to use a heritage professional, as well as how to find the appropriate skillset.

C9. Why do you think these occupations should be on the SOL?

A lack of conservation and archaeological expertise in the construction sector will inevitably lead to -often unintentional - damage to our irreplaceable heritage. Many of these positions were historically filled by EU nationals and years of underinvestment in the training pipeline means they cannot easily be replaced.

Local Authorities are equally in dire need of improved capacity and skills to run the planning system effectively and ensure sustainable development. The inadequacy of heritage and planning resourcing in the public planning sector leads to uncertainty, delays, and extra costs to developers, as well as damage to heritage.

The SOL offers significant benefits which the current visa system does not. Many skilled workers are paid below the salary threshold and the SOL accounts for this. It also accounts for the significant burden of visa fees which many organisations cannot afford. The SOL is of particular value to small organisations which don't have the resources to replace loss skills or train up new specialist staff.

C10. What options would the organisations or members that you represent consider to fill those hard to fill jobs, if those jobs were not included on the SOL?

Our members would continue to attempt to fill shortages through the means outlined in question C6, but as stated under C7, many of them would be unsuccessful. As FAME point out, these mitigations are more effective in larger employers who are able to undertake them. Not being on the list will mean that work will continue by the larger employers, at the expenses of the smaller employers. Some organisations have already had to give up projects because they did not have the staff required to undertake the work.

C11. What impact (if any) would not having a job on the SOL have to the organisations or members which you represent?

Only three Tier 2 visas have been obtained for archaeologists, and none were granted while Tier 2 was capped. These visas were allotted to the highest paying jobs, and if that were to be brought back the SOL would be the only sponsor option for archaeology jobs. Immigration policies are constantly changing and it is difficult to know what the impact of not being on the SOL will be in even two years' time. The SOL is therefore a safeguard, not just for archaeology but for many small specialist heritage organisations to compete with the larger organisations.

ICON's 2022 Labour Market Intelligence survey concluded that whilst the conservation sector has proven to be remarkably resilient throughout the last few years, "there is a real risk that even a small reduction in the overall workforce could have significant impacts on the ongoing care of collections", and that "this risk is heightened by the understanding that some of these areas of practice have a low existing number of practitioners". This echoes the feedback we have heard from across the sector that skills shortages are posing an existential threat to the continued upkeep and conservation of heritage assets and collections across the UK.

For further information, please contact The Heritage Alliance.

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