

HERITAGE ALLIANCE PRESS RELEASE



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Heritage sector calls for all political parties to put the past at the heart of their plans for the future

New Heritage Manifesto includes VAT cuts on repair, disincentives for demolition and a new National Retrofit Strategy to meet net zero

Ahead of the next UK general election, the **Heritage Alliance**, England's coalition of 200 heritage organisations, has today published its [2023 Heritage Manifesto](#) demonstrating how heritage provides solutions to a range of public policy challenges and setting out a vision for the sector under the next term of government.

Heritage is a £36bn industry, our most popular cultural export and our favourite national pastime. Heritage is at the heart of communities from urban centres to the countryside - 80% of people think local heritage makes living in their area better. Throughout the twin challenges of the pandemic and cost of living crisis, support for heritage has been both critical and a sound investment. Yet challenges remain, with volunteering and visitor numbers yet to recover, specialist skills becoming increasingly endangered, and a national retrofit challenge to meet climate change priorities.

The Heritage Manifesto has been collaboratively created to draw attention to the key policy measures needed to ensure the future of our shared heritage. It urges all major political parties to adopt a five-point plan to not only protect it, but to maximise the benefits it can create for communities and the environment. The Heritage Manifesto represents the views of the Heritage Alliance's 200-strong membership, covering the breadth of the sector from science to creativity, from museums, railways, and gardens, to shipwrecks, canals, and theatres, from archaeological sites to places of worship and so much more.

The Heritage Manifesto sets out five key priorities for all decision makers:

1. Support community cohesion and put heritage at the heart of regeneration by:

Investing in and empowering councils and communities to protect and make the most of heritage locally. This should include support for targeted regeneration schemes, removing permitted development on demolition, incentivising reuse of historic buildings, and embedding culture-led regeneration and community ownership in future housing and community strategies.

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2. **Embed the historic environment in nature recovery and net zero strategies by:**

Ensuring Environmental Land Management schemes provide robust long-term funding to land managers of at least £4.4bn a year (which includes delivering heritage outcomes on an equal footing), reforming Energy Performance Certificates, and bringing forward skills training, funding, standards, and advice in a National Retrofit Strategy.

3. **Reform the tax regime to promote long-term sustainable growth by:**

Equalising VAT on repair and maintenance with newbuild, simplifying and reducing the burden of business rates, and continuing support for the Listed Places of Worship Grant Scheme.

4. **Harness cultural learning and skills at every age and help our workforce thrive by:**

Encouraging youth visits to heritage sites in the curriculum through subsidised entry, implementing cross-subsidised shared apprenticeship schemes, reforming the Apprenticeship Levy, and offering unsponsored and conservation skill-oriented visas for heritage.

5. **Futureproof heritage institutions at both a national and a local level by:**

Ensuring the adequate funding and continued stability of arms-length heritage bodies, protecting the 20% share of Lottery funding for the National Lottery Heritage Fund, supporting statutory Historic Environment Records with ringfenced investment in local authorities for heritage expertise, and supporting proposals for a National Centre for Archaeological Archives.

Launching the Heritage Manifesto, **Lizzie Glithero-West, Chief Executive of the Heritage Alliance**, said:

“Heritage is our greatest national asset and plays an important role in solving many of the challenges we face as a nation from climate change to wellbeing. It is the backdrop to our lives and a provider of prosperity. Our manifesto sets out a number of practical areas in which any future administration can make a tangible difference and ensure we use and don’t lose our heritage. Support for heritage is an investment, not a bail-out. We strongly urge all parties to adopt these measures in their manifestos.”

Dr Ingrid Samuel OBE, Chair of the Heritage Alliance and Heritage Director of the National Trust, said:

“This Manifesto is the product of collaborative working and combined thinking between heritage organisations across the breadth of our sector. It presents a coherent and comprehensive overview of what matters most in supporting our heritage to thrive, benefitting both people and place. We urge all political parties to take note.

Dr Ben Cowell OBE, Director General of Historic Houses, said:

“Most heritage in this country – including most of the heritage that is open to public access – is independently owned and managed. The Heritage Alliance’s manifesto is stalwart as ever in its defence

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of those unsung heroes of heritage – the owners, managers and custodians who do so much to keep our precious buildings and landscapes in good repair.”

Richard Parry, Chief Executive of the Canal & River Trust, said:

“The Heritage Manifesto sets out how the nation’s much-loved heritage, including centuries-old canals which are in day-to-day use by millions of people, can meet government policy objectives around nature recovery, net zero strategies and much more.

“The Manifesto is launched as government has just announced damaging real-term funding cuts for our historic canal network and all its vital heritage structures. It is therefore a timely reminder of the partnership role of government which, unless it provides realistic funding, will turn the clock back on one of the nation’s greatest heritage regeneration stories, and leading to the loss of substantial public benefits.”

Peter Hinton, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) said:

“CIfA is pleased to support the Heritage Alliance manifesto which champions the contributions that our sector can make to Government agendas. We hope that the next Government will successfully deliver improvements to critical infrastructure for heritage by delivering a National Centre for Archaeological Archives and seek more positive integration of archaeology and the historic environment into environmental management and planning policy – both places where the historic environment can contribute to positive outcomes for people and places.”

Steve Oates, Chief Executive of the Heritage Railway Association, said:

“Heritage is rarely at the forefront during the run-up to a general election, but when it underpins so much of our society and economy it certainly deserves more of the spotlight. This manifesto document makes a strong case for better supporting the heritage sector and recognising the £36.6bn impact it has on the UK economy.

“I really hope that the next government takes this on board and unleashes more of the massive potential that heritage focused industries have.”

Read the full Heritage Manifesto [here](#).

****ENDS****

NOTES TO EDITORS

For all inquiries, please contact **Max** at comms@theheritagealliance.org.uk. If discussed on twitter, please tag us at [@heritage_ngos](https://twitter.com/heritage_ngos).

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About The Heritage Alliance

The Heritage Alliance is England's largest coalition of heritage interests. We unite 200 organisations representing over 7 million staff, volunteers, and members. These range from large organisations such as English Heritage and the National Trust, to small local organisations and specialist bodies. Our members cover the breadth of heritage from science to creativity, from museums, railways, and gardens, to shipwrecks, canals, and theatres, from archaeological sites to places of worship and so much more. Between them, over 7 million volunteers, trustees, members and staff demonstrate the strength and commitment of the independent heritage movement. The Heritage Alliance is ready to put our resources and expertise at the disposal of all decision makers to secure the best future for England, built on its invaluable past.

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