Digital skills projects will support resilience and



Butterfly Conservation. Credit: Ben Hanson

£1million DCMS funding will drive digital innovation and enterprise, provide answers to organisations' most pressing concerns and empower collaborative work.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has made digital skills more necessary than ever before. Over the last 12 months, The National Lottery Heritage Fund has been raising digital skills and confidence across the UK heritage sector through our National Lottery funded Digital Skills for Heritage initiative.

The initiative is now expanding thanks to an additional £1m from The Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage.

> "This £1m boost from the Culture Recovery Fund will ensure that staff and volunteers have the skills they need to keep caring for the past and conserving for the future through the sector's reopening and recovery."
>
> *Caroline Dinenage, Minister for Digital and Culture*

Responding to the sector's needs

Through Digital Skills for Heritage we have been discovering how we can best support the sector. We surveyed over 4,000 staff, trustees and volunteers from heritage organisations across the UK to uncover current digital skills, attitudes and needs.

Twelve new grants have been awarded to organisations who will respond to these needs and help the sector move into a more resilient, creative future.

Total funding of £1,473,500 comes from both The National Lottery and DCMS and is divided into three areas:

Driving innovation, enterprise and business planning

Charity Digital Trust has received £249,800 to help small to medium sized heritage organisations use digital to drive business resilience and success. They will deliver free training and events to at least 500 UK organisations later this year.

Responding to the sector's concerns

A total of £435,300 has been awarded to three separate teams at Arts Marketing Association, University of Leeds and The Heritage Alliance.

They will work together to research and answer the heritage sector's 100 most pressing digital questions in a range of free online learning resources, available from June 2021.

Topics will include digital engagement, creating content, recovery planning and digital leadership.

Empowering collaborative work

> Two people nearby boat wreck
>
> Archaeological dig visit. The Theatre, Shoreditch. Credit: MOLA

£788,400 will go to building eight networks to support communities of practice, pooling resources and expertise around particular heritage areas. The networks will open up heritage topics to a wider range of people, bringing with it new understanding and increased relevance.

Volunteers, community groups and staff members will learn new skills so they can build strong, valuable networks.

The eight projects

- The Audience Agency, Golant Innovation and The National Archives will work through the Digital Archives Learning Exchange network to open up community access to and engagement with a wide range of archives.
- Big People Community will create a sustainable online archive of Pan-African heritage in the UK.
- Butterfly Conservation will improve the flow of wildlife conservation data between volunteers, record keepers, researchers and conservationists.
- First Choice Homes Oldham will record and share the heritage of Crossbank and Summervale House Tower blocks, due for demolition in April 2021.
- Gawthorpe Textiles Collection will create an open access resource to map the UK's textile heritage.

- Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) will collaboratively develop audience data and use it to test new ways of engaging people with archaeological work.
- The National Trust will build on their Queer Heritage and Collections Network, drawing LGBTQ+ heritage from across five museums into a new online hub.
- Wikimedia UK will help organisations share their heritage on global open knowledge platforms, with a focus on increasing representation of marginalised people and subjects.



Digital Skills for Heritage poster for the announcement of grant to Wikimedia UK (2021) by Katie Crampton (WMUK), CC BY-SA 4.0.

Supporting the sector’s recovery

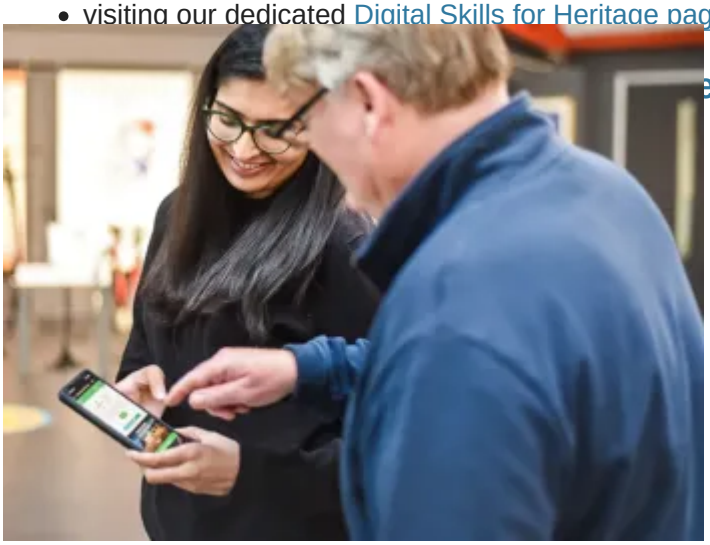
Caroline Dinenage, Minister for Digital and Culture, said: “I have been really impressed by the innovative ways that heritage sites and projects have already pivoted online during the pandemic. This £1m boost from the Culture Recovery Fund will ensure that staff and volunteers have the skills they need to keep caring for the past and conserving for the future through the sector's reopening and recovery.”

Josie Fraser, Head of Digital Policy at The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: “Digital plays an essential role in keeping people connected to heritage. This funding from DCMS recognises its crucial value and allows us to expand our work, responding to what organisations have told us they need most – digital innovation, enterprise and collaboration skills to improve how the sector operates.”

Find out more

Put digital to work in your organisation. Stay updated about these projects and other Digital Skills for Heritage news and opportunities by:

- signing up to our newsletter and selecting the ‘digital’ preference
- visiting our dedicated Digital Skills for Heritage page



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Minder Kaur Athwal, a trustee at the Digital Skills for Heritage-supported Heritage Trust Network. Credit: Sarah Hayes.



Cold War Steve vs the RPG, Photomontage commissioned by Birmingham Museums Trust, Cold War Steve / Christopher Spencer CC0 1.0. Modified by Michael Gimenez to include the guide authors’ faces, CC0 1.0.



