Heritage sector is concerned about financial



[See all updates]

We surveyed organisations that manage and support all types of heritage across the UK. Explore what their responses reveal about current attitudes in our sector.

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PDF Gweld UK Heritage Pulse survey 2 - summary of findings as PDF(720.81 KB)	720.81 KB

Our second UK Heritage Pulse survey – which ran from 9 August–September 2022 – was designed in response to what the heritage sector told us was most important. It focused on organisational resilience, recruitment and staffing and environmental sustainability.

From the 223 complete and 24 partial responses to the survey, we learned:

> Heritage organisations are facing major challenges and have told us that the options available feel limited.
>
> *Tom Walters, Head of Research, Data and Insight at the Heritage Fund*

Organisational resilience

Heritage organisations are confident in the short term, but this drops off when looking further ahead. Increasing costs and the rate of inflation are impacting confidence levels.

- 92% of organisations are very confident their organisations will survive the next three months, but this falls to 61% when considering beyond six months. Only 47% feel they can confidently predict their financial outlook over the next 12 months, a fall of nine percentage points since our last survey.
- The fall in confidence is also making heritage organisations think twice about investing in areas such as maintenance, research and training.
- 45% of organisations are actively implementing or planning measures to deal with the current high level of inflation, but many are unsure how to respond.

Recruitment and staffing

The sector is concerned about adequately staffing their organisations, particularly when it comes to specialist roles, and reliance on volunteers is a risk factor.

- Only 54% of respondents said they're confident they can achieve required staffing and volunteer levels in the next three months. Confidence drops to 30% when looking more than six months ahead.
- More than half of organisations said recruiting for specialist staff had been a significant challenge.
- 80% of organisations work with volunteers, and while only 28% reported significant challenges with recruitment, anecdotal responses indicate a concern for the future.

One respondent said: "Volunteering is heading towards a crunch point in my view. Our organisation has had massive support from the generation which retired relatively young pre-millennium, on good pensions. This generation is now stepping back from activities due to age and there seems to be no one coming up behind them. I believe this is a sector-wide risk."

Environmental sustainability

Heritage organisations are committed to tackling the climate crisis, but there are significant gaps in skills, knowledge and resources to do as much as they'd like. They want more support from the Heritage Fund and our partners.

- 55% of organisations have someone who is responsible for environmental sustainability and 53% have an environmental sustainability policy. However, this varies significantly by organisation size.
- Only 37% of organisations have the resources or capacity to set and monitor environmental impact targets.
- 85% of organisations think major funders should enable the sector to 'go further on sustainability'.

Vital feedback

Tom Walters, Head of Research, Data and Insight at the Heritage Fund, said: "These results provide vital feedback at a critical time for the sector. Heritage organisations are facing major challenges and have told us that the options available feel limited. Thank you so much to everyone who responded to our survey.

“The Heritage Fund, our partners and supporters on this research project will use what you’ve told us to support heritage through the coming winter.

“The findings will also help inform the development of our refreshed strategy and our new 10-year vision, which we'll launch early next year.”

Find out more and contribute

Explore more of the findings in the PDF above.

Want more support on environmental sustainability? Join our webinar on 1 November at 2pm to explore the survey findings in more detail and share good practice and resources. It’s open to all UK Heritage Pulse panel members.

UK Heritage Pulse is a collaborative research project to collect the views and experience of the UK’s heritage sector and help influence our work. We are particularly keen to hear from more people in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Visit the UK Heritage Pulse site to register for future surveys and participate in quickfire polls and webinars.