

View of the Horniman Museum

Local heritage and historical sites make South East London a better place to live, say an overwhelming majority of residents in a new study.

Museums, parks, monuments and famous buildings are all important to local people, are a source of pride and also give the area a sense of identity.

These are some of the main findings in a study that reveals how there is a direct link between heritage and the quality of life.

Specialist research company, BritainThinks, conducted the in-depth study in 12 towns and cities representative of the UK population to mark 20 years and £6billion of investment in the UK's heritage by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). The report was commissioned to understand the public's view of heritage and National Lottery investment and to see to what extent places had been made better places to work, visit and live in. One of 12 locations was the South East London boroughs of Lewisham, Greenwich and Southwark whose residents gave a big thumbs-up to their local attractions.

The study quizzed people about a range of 10 heritage sites including the Cutty Sark and the National Maritime Museum, the Horniman Museum and Gardens, Southwark Park, Nunhead Cemetery and Eltham Palace.

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: “The results of this study show that a range of well looked after heritage attractions create a significant ‘feel good factor’ for local people. They see that heritage not only brings practical and economic benefits to their town but they also have an emotional reaction and pride in local historic sites.”

Key UK findings

- 80% think local heritage makes their area a better place to live
- 64% think heritage has improved in recent years in terms of how well it is looked after and what it has to offer
- Heritage plays a powerful role in bringing people together and helping to improve perceptions of quality of life
- Benefits of heritage seen as both transactional and emotional, encouraging local pride and fostering social cohesion

Key findings in South East London

- The wealth of heritage sites in South East London was viewed as a source of local pride by 79% of respondents. The same percentage said it was an important factor in attracting tourists to the area and 83% felt they made South East London a better place to live.
- Local residents were also appreciative visitors of local heritage. Some 72% had been to the Cutty Sark just ahead of the National Maritime Museum with 71% and 64% had been to the Horniman Museum and Gardens.
- An overwhelming 88% say they enjoyed their visits and 83% felt the historic attractions were well maintained.They also enjoyed the fact that heritage sites gave them a better understanding of local history.
- South East London residents were almost universally of the view (96%) that heritage was important to the country as a whole.
- Just over half of those interviewed (54%) had heard of the Heritage Lottery Fund and more than two-thirds felt that the money invested in the ten local projects (£60,648,417) was a good or excellent use of Lottery players’ money. Only 7% felt it was a poor or very poor use of Lottery funds.

Kirsten Walker, Director Collections Management & Special Projects at the Horniman Museum and Gardens, said:"Our founder Frederick Horniman dedicated the building and its contents to the people in 1901 for their 'recreation, instruction and enjoyment'. I am sure he would be as pleased as we are that so many local people enjoy visiting the Horniman Museum and Gardens, and discovering our inspiring collections, almost 114 years later.”

Kate Seeckts, Director of Development at Royal Museums Greenwich said: “Since the opening of the museum’s new Sammy Ofer Wing, the re-opening of the Cutty Sark, an innovative exhibitions programme, and now the new membership offer - which allows people to visit with their friends as often as they wish - we have watched our visitor numbers more than double. We are enjoying ever-increasing local support and interest in all that we do, and the enormous wealth of amazing stories we tell about our history bring people back to our landmark sites at the heart of Greenwich again and again.”

Please visit the 20 Years in 12 Places page to find out more – including a UK summary report, an essay of the main findings, research slides, reports for each place with films plus more detail on the methodology. Follow us on Twitter - #20Years12Places, @HLFLondon, @heritagelottery.

Notes to editors

The Cutty Sark in Greenwich has received a number of HLF grants, the largest of which was £25million in 2004/5 which supported vital conservation work and restored the last surviving 18th century tea clipper creating a unique visitor

attraction by suspending the vessel above its dry dock enabling visitors to view the streamlined vessel from below as well as at deck level.

The Horniman Museum and Gardens in Lewisham has received a range of HLF grants during the past 20 years to assist with renovations, improvements and the acquisition of artworks. The largest single grant of £9.9million improved visitor access and facilities, the display and conservation of the museum's collections, and the linkage between the collections and the gardens.

Southwark Park was restored and refurbished with the aid of a £2.7million HLF grant. This 25-acre Victorian era park is much loved and well used by local people. The facilities include a popular boating lake, a bandstand, sports pitches, children's play area, a café and art gallery. The survey found that 63% of respondents felt they received personal benefit from what Southwark Park had to offer.

A total of 360 residents of South East London took part in the research. Ten heritage sites that were drawn to their attention by the pollsters were: National Maritime Museum, Cutty Sark, Horniman Museum, Peckham Rye Park, Nunhead Cemetery, Eltham Palace, Southwark Park, Painted Hall at the Royal Naval College, Museum in Docklands, Lady Florence Hall 999 Club in Deptford. All have received Heritage Lottery Fund grants at various times over the past 20 years.

Further information

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'20 years in 12 places' – New research reveals UK's heritage helps make us happier