

Dr Simon Thurley CBE appointed as new Chair

25/02/2021



Credit: Chris Ridley

The Prime Minister has appointed Dr Simon Thurley CBE as Chair of The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Heritage Memorial Fund.

Simon will take up the three-year post on 1 April 2021, succeeding René Olivieri, who has held the position of interim Chair since 2019. René has played a critical role in steering the organisation through the pandemic, including distributing the £50m Heritage Emergency Fund and substantial Government funding.

Leadership in the heritage sector

Between 2002 and 2015 Simon was chief executive of English Heritage, responsible for the National Heritage Collection of 420 sites including Stonehenge and Dover Castle and the National Heritage Protection system, including the listing of buildings.

For five years from 1997 he was director of the Museum of London, the world's largest city museum, and its archaeological unit, MoLAS. For eight years in the 1990s he was Curator and Surveyor of the Fabric at Historic Royal Palaces, leading various projects including the Restoration of the Privy Garden at Hampton Court.

"It is a great privilege to be appointed as Chair at a critical time for the heritage sector."

– *Dr Simon Thurley*

Personal passions

Simon takes a keen interest in nature and has been patron of the London Parks and Garden Trust since 2004. He played a role in setting up the Canal and River Trust, where he was a trustee until 2015. He is a trustee of the British Library and the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, an organisation which awards funding to projects that enhance arts education and participation, improve access and increase diversity across the arts, culture and heritage sectors.

Simon is Provost of Gresham College, London's oldest higher education establishment, founded in 1597 to give free public lectures in the City. As a historian he has written 13 books including a history of English Architecture, *Building England*, and the story of heritage protection, *Men from the Ministry*.

In 2011 he was made CBE for services to heritage. He is married with two children and lives in Norfolk.

Protecting and celebrating heritage

Simon said: "It is a great privilege to be appointed as Chair at a critical time for the heritage sector. The National Lottery Heritage Fund will play a vital role in helping organisations rebuild and thrive following the COVID-19 pandemic and I look forward to playing a part in that.

"I also look forward to learning more about the extraordinary breadth of work The National Lottery Heritage Fund supports, from conserving natural habitats to protecting and celebrating heritage at the heart of our communities.

"My career has been shaped by a strong belief in the power of the UK's heritage to positively contribute to people's lives and the places where they live, work and visit. To have the opportunity to chair The National Lottery Heritage Fund, which shares this vision, is an honour."

Contributing to the UK's post-COVID recovery

Ros Kerslake, CEO of The National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "I am delighted to welcome Simon Thurley as our new Chair.

"Simon will join us at a pivotal time, as the UK's heritage sector emerges from one of the greatest crises it has ever faced. Heritage has the potential to make a substantial contribution to the UK's post-COVID recovery, making communities better places to live, boosting local economies, creating jobs and supporting personal wellbeing.

"Through his depth of knowledge and leadership experience in our sector, he will make a major contribution to helping us deliver on our ambitious agenda to support the heritage sector through this to a stronger and more resilient future. Investing in our heritage is for the benefit of everyone in the UK.

"I would like to extend grateful thanks to René Olivieri who as interim chair since December 2019 has played a critical role in steering The Fund over the last challenging year."

René Olivieri said: "I am proud to have held the role of interim Chair since December 2019. My time in this position has been defined by the coronavirus pandemic and the incredible response that my colleagues at The National Lottery Heritage Fund have coordinated to support the heritage sector at this crucial time.

"Within a short space of time we delivered a £50 million Heritage Emergency Fund that helped struggling heritage organisations when they needed it most, as well as distributing significant Government funding.

"I offer my congratulations to Simon Thurley and look forward to seeing The Fund lead the heritage sector's recovery under his guidance."



[times with refocused priorities for 2021-22](#)

[We're backing the heritage sector to adapt and thrive again](#)