Our strategy development research

02/03/2023

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Insights into heritage sector priorities and wider public attitudes have helped shape our strategy for supporting the UK's heritage.

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PDF View Strategy development research as PDF(686.91 KB)	686.91 KB

In summer 2022 we commissioned consultants Britain Thinks to deliver a piece of research with heritage organisations and the wider public.

We used the results of this research alongside the survey on our website to develop and refine our new strategy. This has helped ensure that our strategy is rooted in a clear understanding of public and stakeholder views and their priorities for heritage.

Conducting the research

A survey of over 2,000 people was designed to give us a high-level view of the UK public's perception of and attitudes to heritage. This was supplemented by an online discussion group and workshop to add depth to these findings.

Workshops with heritage organisations across the UK examined the operating environment, key challenges, opportunities and priorities as well as geographic differences.

Public perceptions

The research found strong public interest in a broad range of heritage types and experiences. Initial associations with heritage are limited to visiting historic sites, such as museums, garden and historic buildings. However, on prompting, people's interest is much broader.

There is also strong public awareness of the benefits of heritage. This included meaningful individual experiences and wider benefits such as:

- the importance of preservation for future generations
- connecting with the past
- providing learning opportunities

While there is a high-level interest in engaging with heritage, cost is cited as the main barrier. This may be driven by the view that heritage is primarily associated with visiting a site in person, rather than a digital or low-cost activity.

Sector insights

Organisations working with heritage feel they are operating in a complex and demanding environment. Key challenges included:

- the climate crisis
- the cost of living crisis
- training and maintaining skilled staff
- continuing to address inequalities and increase the diversity of their audiences and workforce
- a lack of available funding

Despite this, people were optimistic and felt that interest in heritage has increased in recent years. Workshop participants were also positive about how broader political shifts placed their key challenges at the top of the public and government agenda.

Priorities for heritage

The public and heritage organisations were quite well aligned in terms of their priorities for heritage.

Protecting at-risk heritage, including **intangible and cultural heritage** and **nature and landscapes**, was seen as urgent and important.

Further priorities included:

- driving local benefits and appreciation of heritage
- equality, diversity and inclusion
- skills and employment

Find out more

Download the full strategy development research report from this page, and explore our new 10-year strategy, Heritage 2033.

We regularly conduct research to discover what is happening in the heritage sector, and we evaluate our work to better understand the change we are making. Read more of our insight.



Roman Baths, Bath © 2017 aroundworld/Shutterstock.



The ruined folly at Mount Edgecombe in Cornwall, looking out over Plymouth Sound

Our strategy engagement findings