Heritage Places: interim evaluation reports

15/09/2026

See all updates

Explore our progress and what we've learned about inspiring pride in place through engagement and investment in selected towns, cities and regions across the UK.

Attachment	Size
PDF View Heritage Places Year One Interim Report.pdf as PDF(2.65 MB)	2.65 MB
PDF View Heritage Places Year Two Interim Report.pdf as PDF(3.18 MB)	3.18 MB
PDF View Heritage Places Year Two Case Study Annex.pdf as PDF(434.05 KB)	434.05 KB

As part of our Heritage 2033 strategy, we'll invest at least £200million through the Heritage Places strategic initiative to boost pride in place, connect people with heritage and help it have a stronger role in local regeneration plans.

We're currently working with local partners in 15 Heritage Places from Neath Port Talbot to North-East Lincolnshire. They are all actively involving their communities in decisions about what they want to achieve and celebrate about the heritage in their area.

Evaluators will produce annual reports on Heritage Places until spring 2027. In spring 2024 we commissioned ERS Research and Consultancy (which later became Fortia Insight) to evaluate the first year of the strategic initiative. The year two review was completed in March 2026.

Key findings

The reports show clear progress in laying the foundations for long-term impact, although this looks different in each place. Local context matters: variations in capacity, existing strategies, relationships with us and geographic scale have led to differing paces and approaches across the places.

So far, many places are building the capacity of local authorities and organisations to better manage heritage and make it central to local renewal. This includes strategic planning, building partnerships, skills development programmes and public activities engaging a wide range of people with heritage.

The year one report found that:

- The strategic rationale for Heritage Places was strong and our commitment to long-term investment was praised.
- Our flexibility and openness to different leadership models was welcomed. However, some places found the application processes too rigid, creating challenges during development.
- Support from our engagement teams has been critical to fostering local ownership and is highly valued by local lead partners in Heritage Places. But clearer roles, expectations and responsibilities would support more effective work. (This point was also noted in the year two report).

The year two report additionally identified that:

- Although projects on this scale are complex, our long-term commitment and flexible approach are enabling Heritage Places to create change driven, designed and delivered by communities. Local organisations are embedding inclusive practices and community grants are encouraging wider participation in heritage.
- There are promising signs that projects are boosting pride in place. Connecting people with local heritage stories and sharing what matters to them is highlighting what makes places unique, while visible heritage activity in public spaces is bringing people together.
- Cross-sector partnerships and networks are helping organisations to align their resources, expertise and ambitions to achieve greater local impact. But pressures on capacity and resources limit the pace of change.

Recommendations

In year one, the evaluators suggested that we:

- sustain the long-term commitment under Heritage 2033 and embed learning into future place-based initiatives
- continue investing in inclusive and collaborative development, engaging a broad range of local partners and communities
- monitor the progress and delivery models of projects from the first nine places to ensure they align with our vision while allowing for local flexibility
- clarify timeframes, particularly whether Heritage Places projects may reach their goals after 2033, when the strategic initiative comes to an end

The review of year two produced many similar findings. The consultants recommend we maintain the long-term, flexible nature of Heritage Places while strengthening support for delivery as the strategic initiative matures. They also identified wider lessons for future place-based initiatives, where we should:

- devolve more decision-making to local partnerships
- allow enough time for both scoping and delivery
- recognise that progress will vary between places
- design programmes that reflect different local contexts, identities and capacities
- use leadership models that combine local authorities' strategic influence with the grassroots knowledge and connections of voluntary and community organisations

Next steps

These insights and recommendations provide a strong foundation for reflection and improvement as we continue supporting our Heritage Places.

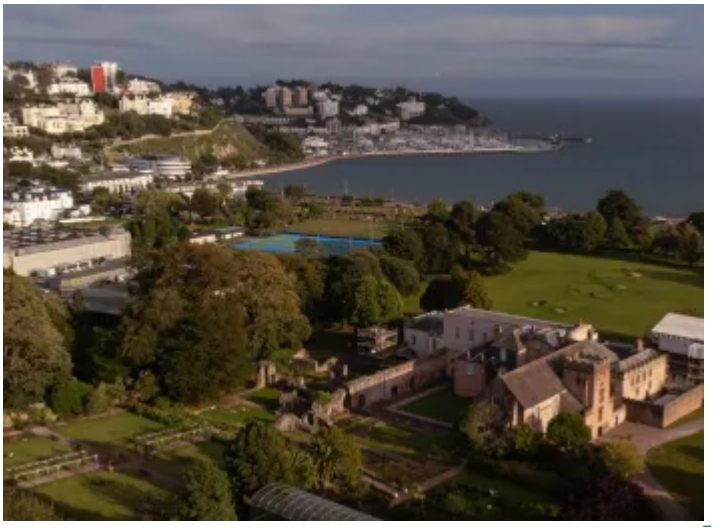
Find out more

Read the full Heritage Places evaluation reports in the PDFs attached to this page.

Our research and evaluation

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.

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Torquay on the South Devon coast, with Torre Abbey in the foreground.



oost local economies and pride in place

Heritage Places grant acknowledgement requirements