

Heritage Places: year 1 evaluation report

29/05/2025

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Explore the progress we've made and what we've learned during the first year of our strategic initiative.

Attachment	Size
Heritage Places Year 1 Interim Report.pdf	2.65 MB

We've committed £200million of long-term support towards boosting pride in place, revitalising local economies and connecting people with their heritage in towns and cities across the UK.

In October 2023, we announced the [first 9 of a planned 20 places](#) where we'll focus our funding. Each place has heritage needs, opportunities and potential. So far, we've invested over £3.8m, from Neath Port Talbot to North-East Lincolnshire.

In Spring 2024, we commissioned ERS Research and Consultancy to evaluate the first year of our Heritage Places strategic initiative. They interviewed and hosted workshops with grantees and spoke with staff to produce this report. ERS will produce annual evaluations until Spring 2027.

Key findings

The report shows that:

- The strategic rationale for Heritage Places remains strong, with progress aligning well to best practice in place-based working. The commitment to long-term investment is a standout feature.
- Local context matters. Variations in capacity, existing strategies, relationships with the Heritage Fund and geographic scale have led to differing paces and approaches across the 9 places.
- Our flexibility and openness to different leadership models has been welcomed. However, some 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. But some Heritage Places have indicated a need for clearer boundaries and more consistent facilitation.
- There is a need for clarity on timeframes, particularly whether Heritage Places projects may reach their goals after 2033, when the strategic initiative comes to an end.

Recommendations

ERS Research and Consultancy suggest 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 9 places to ensure they align with our vision while allowing for local flexibility.
- Strengthen consideration of local heritage infrastructure in determining the next batch of places, including collaborative capacity and convening mechanisms.
- Review and refine the grant-making process to ensure it more effectively supports place-based work during development phases.
- Consider re-profiling funding allocations across the initiative's lifespan to account for lower-than-expected demand in the early phase.

Next steps

These insights and recommendations provide a strong foundation for reflection and improvement as we work on supporting the first nine Heritage Places. They will also inform how we build relationships with the next locations to receive funding.

Find out more

Read the full Heritage Places year 1 evaluation report in the PDF attached to this page.

Heritage Places is one of the key strategic initiatives of our Heritage 2033 strategy and contributes to our vision for heritage to be [valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future](#).

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](#).

You might also be interested in...



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

£200million funding for Heritage Places will boost local economies and pride



Heritage Places grant acknowledgement requirements