The heritage sector wants to collaborate and



The Big City Butterfly project worked with partners to improve the quality and connectivity of London's green spaces, boosting habitats and connecting the community with nature. Photo: Chris O'Donovan.

This summer, we surveyed hundreds of you across the heritage sector about the challenges you're facing and how you're adapting to thrive.

Between May and July 2025, we shared The Big Think, a three-phase UK Heritage Pulse study. The project, which posed questions about financial resilience, sustainable futures and ensuring the relevancy of heritage, drew responses from nearly 400 heritage sector professionals.

What we learned

We found a clear appetite for greater collaboration and entrepreneurialism across the sector, as well as a drive for reinterpreting heritage and reinventing how it's communicated.

You told us:

- there's much to learn from collaboration, with more than nine-in-ten of you believing that sharing data, tools and skills sector-wide should become the standard

- you want to prioritise working with local communities over aligning with broader sectors or interest groups, suggesting you feel that heritage organisations must be representative of the communities they serve
- 90% of you believe that your work becomes more relevant when it is co-created with your communities
- you tended towards the view that heritage must address inequality and exclusion in how it tells stories

Your insights show a heritage sector seeking to develop stronger bonds locally, regionally and nationally, through working together, sharing expertise and entrepreneurial approaches. You want to protect and improve access to heritage for all and you remain confident about the future of this work, while recognising the economic and relevancy challenges you face.

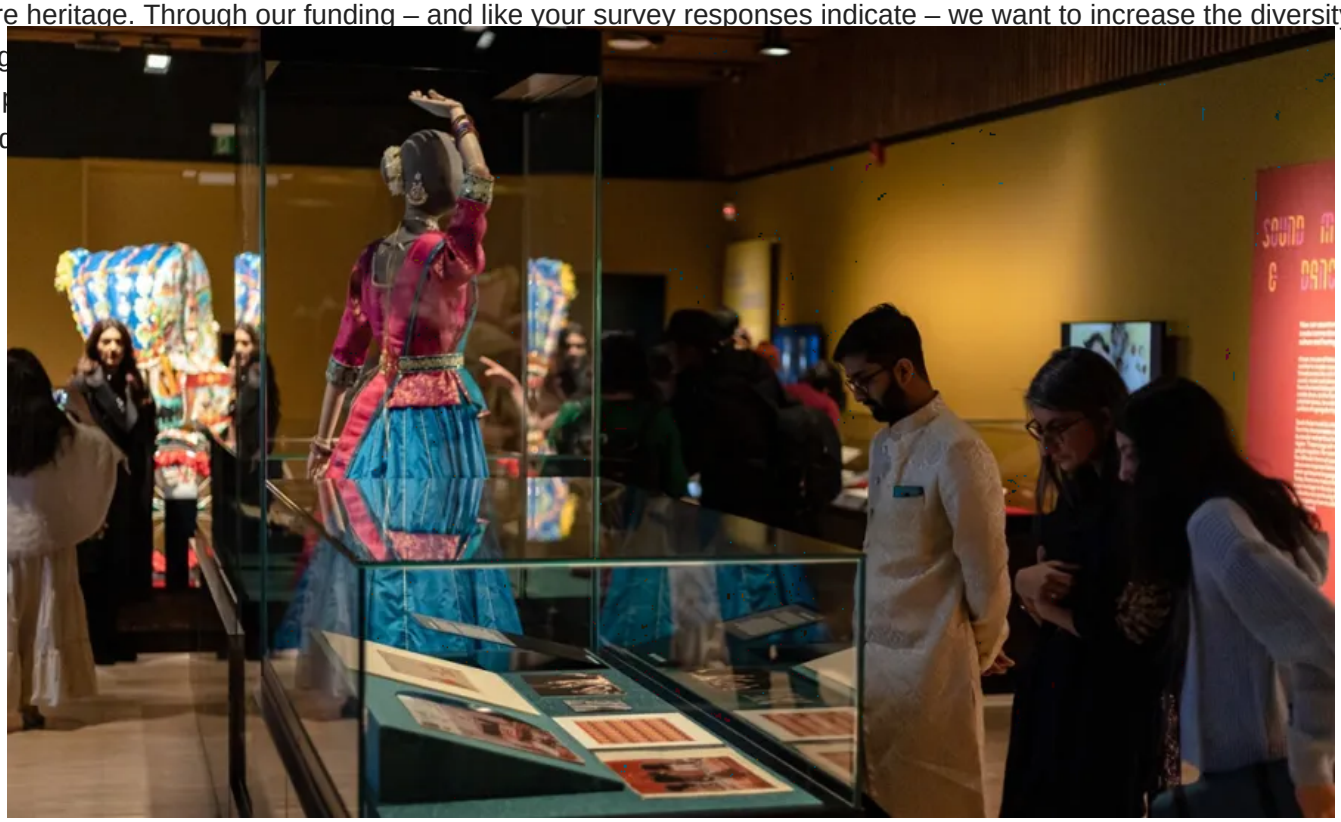
Keen to learn more? Explore the full results of the Big Think.

Supporting you to drive change

What you tell us through UK Heritage Pulse ensures that the decisions we make about funding and other sector support are grounded in the views and experience of those working in heritage.

The Big Think data suggests our priorities for supporting the sector are aligned with your needs and ambitions.

Inclusion, access and participation is one of the four investment principles that guide our grant making decisions under Heritage 2033. We ask that all applicants take it into account because we want to ensure everyone has opportunities to explore heritage. Through our funding – and like your survey responses indicate – we want to increase the diversity of heritag
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The South Asia Gallery at Manchester Museum was co-designed with community leaders, educators and artists. Photo: Tobias Longmate.

Collaboration is another element central to Heritage 2033. Like you, we understand the importance of working together and creating supportive networks if we're to achieve our ambition of bringing about benefits for heritage, people, places and the environment. Across many of our funding initiatives, including Heritage Places and Landscape Connections, we're supporting organisations to establish cohorts for knowledge sharing and learning.

More broadly, our open licencing requirement ensures that anything created with our funding that's in a digital format is freely and openly accessible, which encourages sharing, learning and innovation.

Our grants can support you to collaborate, to connect and co-create with your communities and involve them in the decisions you make and the stories you tell about heritage.

This summer, we announced £20million of investment to help communities rejuvenate and reimagine their green spaces , helping them share their natural heritage in innovative and accessible ways. The third phase of our Heritage Innovation Fund is supporting projects across the UK to roll out creative new ways of working. And we've recently been celebrating the lon o transfo of future



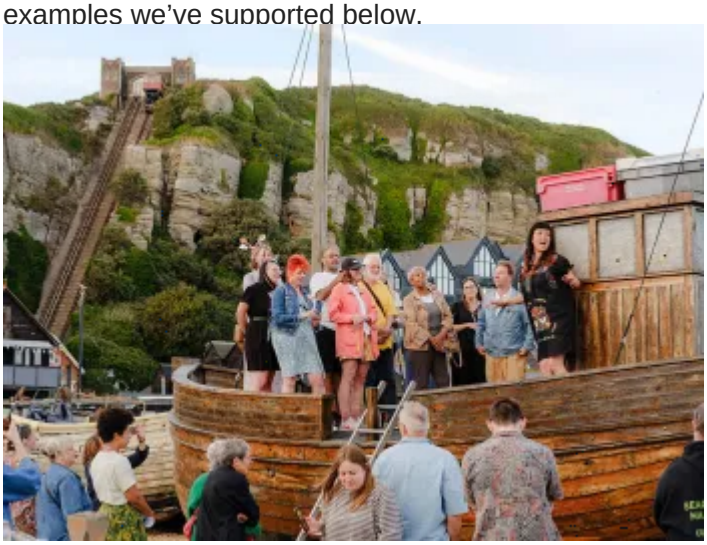
Barbara and Fiona, the community representatives on the Collections Development Panel at Preston Park Museum, Stockton. Photo: Preston Park Museum / Stockton Borough Council.

It's in these ways that, together, we're contributing to our Heritage 2033 vision for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future.

Further reading

UK Heritage Pulse is a collaborative research project in partnership with Historic England. If you'd like to take part in future surveys, register now to join our community.

Interested in how heritage organisations co-create projects with their communities? Take a look at some recent examples we've supported below.



Welcoming people aboard the Hastings fishing fleet. Credit: Euan Baker.



stings' fishing heritage alive

Credit: Black South West Network.



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The Europia team working on the Roma Heritage Project. Photo: Joanna Rajs.

Exploring and recording Manchester’s Roma heritage