‘20 years in 12 places’ – New research reveals UK’s



School children exploring the heritage of the Painted Hall in Greenwich

To coincide with 20 years of investment into the UK’s heritage amounting to over £6billion, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) commissioned BritainThinks to conduct in-depth research in 12 towns and cities representative of the UK population. The aim was to better understand the public’s view of that National Lottery investment and to see to what extent it had made places better to live and work in or visit.

Key findings

- 80% think local heritage makes their area a better place to live
- 64% think heritage has improved in recent years in terms of how well it is looked after and what it has to offer
- 50% answered 7 or more out of 10 when asked to rate the impact local heritage sites have on their personal quality of life
- Strong support for heritage investment with 76% of regular Lottery players rating the HLF projects in their area a good or excellent use of Lottery funding
- Heritage plays a powerful role in bringing people together and helping to improve perceptions of quality of life
- Benefits of heritage seen as both transactional and emotional, encouraging local pride and fostering social cohesion

Deborah Mattinson, founder director of Britainthinks, commented: “What’s fascinating is that we found that investing in heritage is making people happier about where they live and that heritage is firmly at the heart of shaping and improving local quality of life across the UK.

“The research also showed that people react to heritage not only because of the practical benefits it brings, but also in emotional terms. In those places where heritage has a deep, emotional resonance, it provides a way of helping people better understand where they come from, their family and their community. This really matters in the UK today. People’s satisfaction with where they live is perhaps rather high as they are so proud of their home towns and cities.”

The research tells us why heritage matters to people:

- People see heritage as having benefits that directly relate to the things they consider important to improving local quality of life. 93% think it is important to the UK, 85% think it is important locally and 81% think it is important to them personally. We are told this is because heritage :-
- delivers economic benefits, drives tourism and creates good jobs
- makes places more visually attractive
- provides leisure activities and things to do, particularly for families
- instills local pride and encourages better social cohesion

Size matters

- Nearly everyone (95%) living in small urban areas (eg Shrewsbury, Durham, Exeter in our research) agree their place is a good place to live
- 84% agree from very large urban areas (eg Glasgow, Manchester, Lewisham/South London) and 87% agree in rural towns (Pontypool, Newark, Armagh)
- The least content are those living in large urban areas (eg Bradford, Peterborough and Portsmouth in our sample) where 72% agree

Deborah Mattinson continued: “People feel less positive in certain places. Whilst life in big cities seems to be improving, and remains good in smaller towns and cities, the research suggests there is a type of place – caught between these – where optimism is thinner on the ground. The research also highlights that old inequalities have not gone away. Younger people, those in social group DE, and black and minority ethnic people are still all less involved in heritage than others. Inequality remains one of the key challenges in modern Britain. The good news is that the research demonstrates that heritage can play a powerful role in bringing people together and helping to improve perceptions of quality of life.”

Heritage inequality challenge

- The research reveals that public parks, townscapes and those heritage projects which involve people in activities can be used to appeal to wider audiences and different social groups and work well to improve the quality of life of those people
- When heritage does reach DE social groups (who are traditionally less involved), it can be more important for their personal sense of identity than to AB social groups
- The research highlights the need to continue to strive to marry local heritage to local needs and aspirations to achieve the greatest impact on quality of life

Seona Reid, Interim Chair of HLF, commented: “This research is reassuring but also throws out some big challenges for us all. At this 20-year milestone, we wanted to hear people’s views about what difference our investment was making. It is heartening that the research shows heritage playing an important role in improving places for people, but it also uncovers the need to invest more in the kinds of heritage projects that bring people together and contribute most to well-being and quality of life. It’s given us a great steer for the next 20 years.”

Head v heart – what can heritage do for us?

The qualitative research showed us that people connect to heritage both in transactional and emotional terms. When transactional, heritage is considered in terms of the practical benefits it brings, such as giving families a fun day out or creating jobs. What is sometimes underestimated is the emotional connection. This is when heritage is thought of as conserving an aspect of local heritage that is special, or has personal meaning and is a legacy for future generations.

We saw heritage playing this role in Glasgow where people were immensely proud of the city’s distinctive architecture and industrial heritage, which they felt sets the city apart from other places and speaks of its unique history, people and culture.

Another example of both head and heart connecting through heritage is at Big Pit museum in Pontypool. Many local people have family who had worked in the mines. For them, the stories that are told at Big Pit are intensely personal and the museum itself is a symbol of the strength and resilience of local people. They also thought of the museum in transactional terms and highly valued its role in drawing tourists into the area and creating jobs.

Workshop participant, Pontypool: “My father and grandfather spent most of their working days down there, and I feel very proud to be a part of it!”

Heritage in better shape

- 64% felt that local heritage has improved – a perception that was supported by the stakeholders, many of whom credited HLF investment for this positive change
- There was strong support for funding with **69%** rating the HLF projects in their area as a good or excellent use of Lottery funding with the figure rising to **76%** when regular Lottery players, who have effectively paid for these projects, were asked

Loyd Grossman, Chair of Heritage Alliance, said: “This report powerfully highlights the many benefits of heritage from personal and family happiness through to economic growth and community cohesion. It also demonstrates a great deal of public support and appreciation for HLF funding and emphasises that it is not just the biggest projects that create the most good. The most successful projects are the ones that clearly meet local needs and aspirations. The message that I receive most strongly is that we need to continue to explain how heritage enhances all our lives and the vital contribution it makes to our local and national well-being.”

Seona Reid, continued: “The public has clear ideas about how heritage could be better explained. We all need to get the word out about what heritage has to offer – not just economically but in terms of overall ‘happiness’ too. It’s also interesting that the improvement perceived is not necessarily in places which have received the most Lottery money, but where people think the money has been used well. We found that people preferred heritage projects that were fun as well as educational, and wanted funding for projects that would attract a more diverse range of people to get involved. The research gives us a sound rationale to keep on investing - maybe the next 20 years will see heritage and happiness becoming even more closely linked.”

Helen Grant, Minister for Tourism, said: "Britain has such a rich and proud heritage - it is synonymous with our national identity and who we are. It's great to hear that our iconic buildings and fantastic cultural attractions also have a positive effect on our wellbeing too, making people happy. But not only does it make us proud Britons happy but it also puts smiles on faces of millions of overseas visitors too who are coming to experience the best of Britain in record numbers, boosting local economies up and down the country."

The 20 years in 12places page **includes a UK summary report, an essay of the main findings, research slides, reports for each place with films plus more detail on the methodology. Follow us on Twitter -** #20Years12Places**.**

Notes to editors

20 Years in 12 Places - methodology

The research included talking to and questioning over 4300 people. The randomly selected towns and cities chosen were a mixture of size and type typical of the UK so while interesting results have been uncovered in each place, the overall results are designed to reflect the UK as a whole. Quantitative research and desk research was carried out in all 12 locations with in-depth interviews and public workshops carried in 6 of the places*.

The places selected were:

- Armagh
- Bradford
- Durham
- Exeter
- Glasgow
- South East London
- Manchester
- Newark-on-Trent
- Peterborough
- Pontypool
- Portsmouth
- Shrewsbury

‘20 Years 20 Places’ event - HLF is hosting an invite-only round table discussion on **17 March** at the Royal Academy of Arts, London. Deborah Mattinson from Britain Thinks will outline the research findings and many high profile opinion formers and heritage leaders will be participating in the discussion. The following people will be at the event and available for interviews:-

Deborah Mattinson – Founder of Britain Thinks

One of Britain's leading commentators on public opinion, Deborah writes and broadcasts about the mood of the nation. Deborah has more than 20 year’s experience of providing clients with research based strategic advice. In that time she has worked with global businesses, major charities, international governments and senior politicians. BritainThinks website.

Dame Seona Reid DBE FRSA is currently interim Chair at Heritage Lottery Fund. She is a Scottish arts administrator who was director of the Glasgow School of Art from 1999 to 2013 and former director of the Scottish Arts Council from

1990 to 1999.

Loyd Grossman OBE – Chair of Heritage Alliance, an organisation which unites independent heritage organisations in England, acting as an independent advocate for the sector.

Professor/Lord Richard Layard (will be actively present at the event) - a British labour economist, currently working as programme director of the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics. His early career focused on how to reduce unemployment and inequality. Following research on happiness begun in the 1970s by economists such as Richard Easterlin at the University of Southern California, he has written about the economics of happiness. His main current interest is how better mental health could improve our social and economic life and he is Founder of Action for Happiness which helps people take practical action to improve mental well-being and to create a happier and more caring society. He co-edited the 2012 World Happiness Report.

20 Years 12 Places - Local flavours - Improving heritage, improving places and improving lives

Sandy Toksvig, Comedienne & Chancellor Portsmouth University: “The new Mary Rose Museum is one of the most exciting history projects ever to open in the UK. It is so wonderful to see the crew that fated the ship honored in such a wonderful way. As you walk through the length of the ship you don’t just see what life was like for a Tudor seaman, you feel as though you are experiencing it as well. At last the men of the Mary Rose can stand tall and tell us their story. It is a privilege to hear it.”

Selection of interview quotes

Stakeholder quote - Armagh: “It (heritage) promotes social cohesion through people becoming more aware of their own identity and empowerment. I think I’ve seen small projects do that very successfully over the last five years, particularly the oral history projects.”

Stakeholder quote - Armagh “People who have lived in Armagh for all their lives” “they were bought up here and think of everything as normal and they don’t recognise that actually it’s rather exceptional.”

Workshop participant - Bradford: “Heritage is about the physical spaces but it’s also about things like the language, different ways of doing things.”

Stakeholder quote - Bradford: “Nearly 6,000 listed buildings means that the regeneration of the city cannot ignore the heritage of those buildings and preserving the heritage of those buildings is absolutely crucial to the success of the city.”

Stakeholder quote - Glasgow: “The Lottery’s impact on funding has been pretty dramatic – prior to that, the city depended on direct funding from central and local government. The arrival of the Lottery made an enormous difference to the capacity of the city to protect its physical heritage assets.”

Stakeholder quote – Glasgow: “Heritage is fundamental to the people that live here. It’s part of their identity. It’s absolutely key part of the DNA of the people of the city. You talk about shipbuilding in this part of the world and you’ll get a fearsome debate in every pub and on every corner of the street. There’s a genuine connection to that because it’s telling as story of who we’ve been.”

Stakeholder quote - Glasgow: “There’s a tremendous pride in the history of the area, even if they’re from Govan or Carlton or wherever. They want to see it look better and be maintained properly. A huge part of that is the heritage and the history. Heritage is very important – the look and feel of a place is key to how people feel about themselves.”

Workshop quote - Glasgow: “I initially thought of older buildings and historical monuments. That’s what I would call the ‘prescribed way of thinking’ about heritage, the dilapidated castle or country home. But really, the city’s heritage is also things like the dark, dry humour of the people that live here.”

Stakeholder quote - Pontypool: “Heritage gives people a grounding: you need to know where you’ve come from in order to know where you’re going. It also gives people ownership of their area. These softer benefits are more important than the economic benefits – which I see as a bonus.”

Workshop applicant quote - Portsmouth: “Whenever I walk around I learn something new. You read about the dockyard or the naval heritage and you start to learn a little more about Portsmouth itself. My kids enjoy coming here and are always asking questions, which I learn from as well.”

Workshop quote - Portsmouth: “Tourism is massively important here. A lot of local people leave during the summer to get a break from all the tourists!”

Stakeholder quote - Portsmouth: “It gives the public access to previously inaccessible buildings and it provides opportunities and activities for local families bringing the use of local buildings back to communities.”

Stakeholder quote - Portsmouth: “Funding for heritage has permitted Portsmouth’s big attractions to develop and success. Without the investment in heritage, Portsmouth wouldn’t have the attractive product it has today. It wouldn’t be able to compete on a national and international level.”

Stakeholder quote - Shrewsbury

“The heritage in the area is very strong. There’s great architecture and that creates a vibrancy and feel-good factor around the place.”

Workshop participant - Shrewsbury: “I would open a place for children – for educating them through play, stimulating their history interest. Something the kids enjoy; it’s them that will be carrying it on.”

Further information

For Heritage Lottery Fund, please contact Alison Scott - Press Office on tel: 020 7591 6032 mobile: 07973 613 820 / 07989 535 527.



Durham Cathedral



sts pride and tourism



Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum



city’s heritage makes it a better place to live

Heaton Park, one of the projects in Manchester featured in the 20 Years 12 Places research



helps make us happier

The new Civil War Centre, set to open this summer, is the latest heritage project in Newark



s make us happier

Mary Rose Museum and HMS Victory



View of the Horniman Museum

South East London's heritage makes us happier