New Heritage Index highlights potential for areas to



Dundee City Centre Glynn Satterley

Published today by the independent RSA think tank, in collaboration with the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the Heritage Index reveals which areas enjoy the most physical heritage assets; how actively residents and visitors in those areas are involved with local heritage; and – by comparing the two - shows where there is potential to make more of heritage.

Covering England, Scotland and Wales, the index spans 329 local authorities and brings together over 100 data sets ranging from nature reserves, heritage open days, archaeological groups, blue plaques, heritage volunteering and participation data, pubs that have been listed as community assets, and even EU-designated local foods such as Cornish Pasties or Melton Mowbray pork pies.

Chief Executive of HLF, Carole Souter, said: “We hope this new index will help communities to better understand their heritage; identify its potential; and capitalise on what make their areas distinctive. We hope it will encourage debate about what heritage is and how it is best recognised and properly exploited in local plans.”

Communities Minister Marcus Jones said: “Britain has a history envied across the world and it’s great to see that – through the Heritage Index – communities can now discover how to make the most of that history to drive growth in their local area. What’s more, I would encourage local people to use the protections provided by community rights to list their local heritage assets and ensure that the next generation can continue to enjoy our past.”

Heritage, Place and identity

The Heritage Index is part of a wider RSA and HLF collaboration looking at Heritage, Place and Identity, which will reach its conclusions next year. The Index will remain open during this time, so that if organisations can identify other national data relating to heritage assets or activities that are not yet included, they can be added to a revised edition, planned as part of the final report on the wider project.

The launch of the Index comes at a time when many areas are set to make challenging decisions about where to focus their resources, with certain areas preparing for increased devolved powers from Whitehall. The RSA and the HLF will spend the next six months examining how heritage can play a greater role in developing local economic, cultural and social strategies.

What does this mean for HLF?

Building on 21 successful years of National Lottery investment in heritage and following the publication of the Heritage Index, HLF will:

- Encourage partners and other organisations to add to the Heritage Index by making available any further relevant nationally available data sets relating to heritage assets or activity. HLF will continue to build the Index for the duration of the wider research project with a view to publishing a second edition in Summer 2016
- Call on those designing heritage projects, including as part of preparing funding applications to HLF, to use the Heritage Index to understand the heritage of their place and the extent of local engagement. This will inspire better projects, and highlight different routes and opportunities for projects to be successful
- Use the Heritage Index to inform its development and outreach work, encouraging new projects and promoting the availability of Heritage Lottery funding across the UK
- Call on HLF projects and the wider heritage community to support the Community Right to Bid (2012), nominating heritage land and buildings for recognition by their local authority as ‘Assets of Community Value’. In addition, HLF will work with DCLG to ensure that future editions of Heritage Index includes these listed heritage assets

The Heritage Index

Top of the rankings

Whilst there are some predictable outcomes in the rankings – for example the City of London and Kensington and Chelsea top the physical heritage asset chart - there are some surprises too. There are strong concentrations of heritage assets in places like Hastings, Southend-on-Sea and Barrow-in-Furness, which also feature in the top ten assets listing.

In terms of activity, it’s Scarborough, South Lakeland (in the Lake District) and Norwich that take the top three spots – alongside more traditional heritage hot-spots like Oxford and Cambridge.

When scores for assets and activity are taken together, Scarborough comes third overall in England – with Norwich and Worcester also showing a strong combination of physical heritage and heritage activity, in the ‘top ten’ overall combined scores.

Heritage potential

The Index also highlights areas where heritage assets could play a much greater role in helping their area thrive and succeed as a place.

Areas showing potential in this way include Islington in London, Bury in Lancashire, and Dudley in the Black Country; and Newport in Wales and Moray in Scotland. Many of these places are home to a remarkable concentration of historical assets such as canals, railways, listed buildings or museums but overall heritage activity levels are below average, indicating substantial scope to build greater participation and make more of heritage for local communities and economies.

The index revealed:

- **No correlation between heritage scores and deprivation or prosperity:** When comparing the combined 'overall' heritage scores of all 325 English districts against the Index of Multiple Deprivation – the RSA found there to be no correlation. Several places were found to be rich in local heritage and involvement despite being relatively poor communities, including Hartlepool, Portsmouth, Burnley, Newport and Dundee, and rural areas such as Barrow-In-Furness in Cumbria and Ceredigion in West Wales.
- **Coastal areas are doing well:** 10 of the top twenty 20 districts in the England Heritage Index have a coastline. RSA researchers found that coastal areas such as Cornwall, North Devon, Scarborough and the Lincolnshire coast have been able to capitalise on heritage assets by generating high levels of activity.
- **No heritage 'divide':** A dynamic heritage scene exists equally in the cities as the countryside. While towns and cities have the densest concentrations of listed buildings and industrial history, rural areas contain an abundance of natural heritage. Similarly the north-south divide is also very narrow – with the index revealing that within each region there are pockets of strong heritage assets and activities.
- **Strong impact on well-being:** Comparing the RSA's analysis with ONS statistics on well-being, in areas which scored highly for activity (rather than assets) in the Heritage Index, residents on average tended to report higher levels of well-being.

Commenting on the Heritage Index, RSA Associate Director, Jonathan Schifferes said: "A comparison between local areas' heritage should generate a healthy debate about how to make the most of heritage. Today we have an unprecedented amount of data available relating to heritage - but many local communities struggle to access information and put it to use. The Heritage Index helps - showing relative strengths and weaknesses across a broad definition of heritage, letting us see where strengths could be consolidated and capitalised upon; or areas where under-performance might be addressed. While we appreciate that local heritage can often difficult to quantify and record, what's important is building public awareness about what's valued and why - what's missing and what should be there. The goal is a shared and richer understanding of what makes a place unique."

Case studies

Reading – making history go digital

Reading has seen an unprecedented push to get the personal stories and images of residents online. With funding from HLF, Reading Museum and other heritage partners worked with social media site Historypin to upload more than 4,000 artefacts into a digital archive, with each item pinned to a street or building. Local volunteers helped build the profile,

attracting and online audience of 125,000 and helping build new offline connections among 2,000 people who participated. (Source: Pinning Reading's History Evaluation Report.)

Liverpool – a diversity of heritage assets

Liverpool is the top scoring city in England, outside London. As a trading port, the legacy of maritime and mercantile prosperity is evident in the 380 buildings listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Liverpool was instrumental in applying new technologies to docks, tunnels, canals and railways. Hosting flows of people from around the world gave Liverpool the first Chinatown in Europe. The Mersey and the coast also link Liverpool to nature, with extensive protected areas for marine wildlife. The strength of natural heritage assets, alongside activity to remember and celebrate cultures and memories are what propels Liverpool's overall heritage index score. (Source: UNESCO's Liverpool page).

Measuring intangible heritage

The Heritage Index goes beyond the traditional measures of heritage. While it's easy to count listed buildings and measure national parks, we've worked to include several innovative measures of how we understand the strength of local history assets and activities. We've used the open data release from Companies House to count businesses which have been continuously trading for 75 years. Rural Surrey shows a strong historic business community. As a measure of the heritage of local cuisine, we've also counted all the 59 food and drink products given protected local status by the European Commission. With just 20,000 residents, Orkney in Scotland benefits from protected beef, lamb and Cheddar.

Worcester v Wychavon

A good example of how the inclusion of activities in the Index makes a difference is to look at two neighbouring areas in the West Midlands – Worcester and Wychavon. Worcester scores amongst the very highest of all local authority areas in the Assets Index – coming fifth – because of very high scores for the number of its historic listed buildings. museums, archives and artefacts and, especially, the economic history domain where it is the top performer due to its combination of canals, a designation for a European Route of Industrial heritage and two historic railways. But when it comes to the Activity Index, the city does much less well – suggesting the investment and engagement of people with local heritage is well below what we might expect for such a well-endowed heritage place. Worcester is actually in the bottom half of all local authorities in England on the activity ranking, at number 170.

Wychavon, on the other hand, is more consistent across the assets and activities indices – within the top quartile on both. Worcester's big lead on assets is still enough to put it in the top 10 of the overall Heritage Index – but the wide gap between its assets and activities scores also means that we see it appearing as the 26th local authority with the greatest opportunity to make more use of its local heritage.

Oxford v Cambridge

The competition between these two rivals is as intense in the Heritage Index as academia. Oxford outscores Cambridge in both the assets index (4th v 6th) and the activities index (5th v 7th) – but Cambridge comes top in the overall index. How can this be?

The explanation – see technical report for further details – lies in the way the model has been constructed to take account of the distribution of assets and activities across authorities. In some cases – historic built environment assets and natural heritage activities for example – the frequency distribution across authorities has a very long tail: a few

authorities score very highly indeed. Most notable is the City of London which has an asset score on historic buildings which is over 100 times higher than the average. The authority which comes second, Westminster, has a score that is only 6% that of the City (remember, the scores also contain a weighting for land are and residential populations as well – the City's small, dense area and low residential population are big factors in its score as well as its history as the oldest part of London).

In the model, a local authority area is given an extra boost to its score if it does well in sectors, assets or activities where local authorities, on average, tend not to do well. In other words, scores are calculated in a way which accounts for the size of 'winning margin'.

Returning to Cambridge, its assets score includes exceptionally high performance in the MAA sub-domain – a sub-domain where districts do not commonly score well. It is also scores well in terms of industrial heritage, which has a similarly skewed distribution, with few districts getting the highest scores. This 'super-scoring' only comes into effect once we combine assets and activities scores – and it's just enough to tip Cambridge above Oxford in the overall ranking.

Thames Estuary

Southend-on-Sea is in the top 20 of the overall Heritage Index, and in the top ten on the Assets Index. It's one of a number of Thames Estuary local authorities that the Index identifies as surprising heritage hot-spots. Rochford (20th) , Castle Point (26th) and Medway (54th) are all high scoring authorities in the Assets Index. In all cases, it's the landscape and natural heritage domain which has propelled these places towards the top of the Index – each contains large areas of land which has been afforded the highest levels of legal protection, in European and international law, for nature and wildlife importance. But three of these places – Southend, Rochford and Castle Point, also appear in the five areas of England where heritage opportunity – the gap between assets and activities – is greatest. Perhaps more projects aimed at linking local people with this internationally important natural heritage, are needed?

Dundee

Out-scoring Edinburgh, Glasgow, the Orkneys and the Highlands, Dundee is the surprise first ranked place in Scotland. We decided, for this initial Heritage Index 1.0, to use a consistent method across England, Scotland and Wales. This means we used exactly the same approach for weighting land area in all three countries, so that the scores simply a reflection of the size of an area – bigger places tending to have more heritage. In Scotland we could, arguably, have used a different approach given the huge land areas of some Scottish authority districts. Choosing a uniform approach across all countries was to the benefit of all Scotland's cities, when set against the Orkneys and Shetland isles in particular. But Dundee still emerges above both Glasgow and Dundee – scoring consistently higher than the bigger cities on parks & open space, industrial heritage and museums, archives and artefacts.

Heritage activity leaders

When we looked at how widespread heritage activities are across England, a couple of places came up repeatedly – Norwich, Scarborough and South Lakeland. In all of these places Heritage Open Days are a big feature in the local events calendar and there has been lots of initiatives to mark social history through the installation of blue plaques. Cultural heritage events, such as the July rushbearing ceremonies in the Lake District towns of Grasmere and Ambleside, feature strongly in South Lakeland. Tourism is also an important factor in the Index for Lakeland and Scarborough. Whilst for Norwich the high level of local authority funding in the historic built environment boosts its

score.

York

A wealth of heritage attractions and a vital role in English history doesn't guarantee places a top notch place in the Index. York, for example, comes a surprising 97th on the overall Index – it is in the bottom fifth on the Assets Index (though top fifth for activities). Largely this is the result of a 'doughnut' effect that we see in several other towns and cities, including St Albans and Durham. All are relatively large local authorities, extending beyond the boundaries of the core historic cities. This surrounding land has relatively little heritage interest – and since our Index calculates heritage density – the number of assets per square mile – this tends to drag down the results for these places.

Notes to editors

- Low heritage scores should not be interpreted as meaning an absence of heritage assets or activities. The index uses the size of a district (in land and population) to adjust scores. Scores should therefore be understood as the proportion of the district that is considered of heritage value by the indicators used
- Full details of the scores can be found on the RSA's website

Further information

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The historic streets of Norwich Peter Everard Smith

Has your area got heritage potential?