Warrington Town Hall User Rept0n1x at Wikimedia Commons

Today, the RSA has updated its Heritage Index for 2016 - examining over 120 heritage metrics.

Moving on from 2015

Warrington played pivotal role in the English Civil War; is home to England's first industrial canal; during the Second World War it had the largest US Army Air Force airfield outside the US; and is the place where in 1987 Swedish furniture giant Ikea opened its first UK store.

So when Warrington came bottom of HLF and RSA’s first Heritage Index in 2015, local people were understandably disappointed with the result.

However, since then they’ve been working incredibly hard to understand how their local heritage could be better recognised – and celebrated.

On the up

Today, the RSA published its 2016 Heritage Index and the the town has climbed 44 places to be ranked 58th best local area for making the most of its heritage assets.

It’s an incredible achievement.

The Index

The Heritage Index is designed to help places identify, understand and maximise the potential of their heritage – just as Warrington has. It combines over 120 metrics, from historic buildings to local delicacies, revealing which local authorities are best at using heritage to foster a distinctive identity – and which could do better.

New measures have been added for 2016 to expand the definition of local heritage including an expansion of the list of protected foods to include North Wales’ Conwy Mussel; the addition of 140,000 ancient trees and 6,000 shipwrecks; and the inclusion of 6,000 historic local businesses.

A few highlights

- In England, Westminster and West Somerset join the top five, alongside the City of London, which remains in the top spot
- In Scotland, the Orkney Islands take first place in the overall Index
- Gwynedd, home to Snowdonia National Park, is at the top of the Welsh Index
- This year's Index includes data from Northern Ireland for the first time, with Belfast holding top ranking

If you want to find out more about this year’s Heritage Index, full details are available on the RSA website. Additional case studies are available on the Networked Heritage page.