

markets  
Armagh volunteering museums pride  
listed buildings Glasgow red kites  
historic parks industry mills archives  
family boats streets heritages canals  
cathedral  
shipyards textiles fun theatre factories  
culture community architecture fashion  
libraries Portsmouth bats cobbled streets  
schools natural landscapes Durham  
railways history castle statues  
world heritage site old buildings

# 20 years in 12 places

Improving heritage, improving places, improving lives



## Introduction

**The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was established in 1994 to sustain the UK's heritage by investing in projects that will have a lasting impact on the communities and areas in which they are located. Since then, it has allocated more than £6 billion to nearly 40,000 projects.**

To celebrate this achievement, and to mark its 20th anniversary, HLF commissioned *BritainThinks* to conduct research in 12 locations across the UK. The aim of the research was to understand, from a public and local stakeholder point of view, the cumulative impact of HLF investment.

Within this overarching aim, the research had two key objectives:

- To understand awareness of and engagement with local heritage
- To understand awareness of HLF funding in local areas, and perceptions of the impact of that funding both on residents and on the community in which they live

To achieve these objectives, research was conducted with random samples of local residents, rather than with individuals who have had close levels of engagement or participation in HLF funded projects – for example, through volunteering.

**To explore full research and data, go to [www.hlf.org.uk/20years12places](http://www.hlf.org.uk/20years12places)**

**Join in discussions on Twitter using the hashtag [#20years12places](https://twitter.com/hashtag/20years12places)**

## Key findings

**The research re-affirms that heritage is positively linked to local quality of life:** Eight in ten (80%) of those we spoke to think local heritage makes their area a better place to live, rising to 89% of those who are most involved with heritage. Furthermore, 81% say heritage is important to them personally, and when asked to rate the impact that local heritage sites have on their personal quality of life *half* (50%) of residents give it a score of 7 or more out of 10.

**The research tells us why:** Residents see heritage as having a range of benefits that – crucially – map on to the key criteria they use to assess local quality of life. Heritage is seen as:

- Supporting local pride and encouraging social cohesion.
- Making local areas more visually attractive.
- Providing opportunities for leisure activities – particularly for families.
- Supporting local economies, by promoting tourism and creating employment opportunities.

**And the research shows us how people relate to heritage:** The research shows us that people can connect with heritage in two ways. Firstly, they can connect with it in transactional terms: when a heritage project is thought about in terms of the practical benefits it brings, (for example, supporting the local economy). Secondly, they can connect with it in emotional terms. Where the connection is emotional, heritage has a deep, personal resonance, and tells people something important about themselves, their family or their community. Through this emotional connection, heritage can provide a route map to help us to better navigate the world, and is able to deliver the benefits of strengthening local identity, encouraging local pride and fostering social cohesion. Importantly, both forms of connection are present to some degree in most people's relationships with any given local heritage project.

**People think heritage has improved in recent years:** 64% of residents say local heritage has improved in the time they have lived in their area

and 69% say that HLF investment in their local area has been good or excellent use of Lottery money. But it is interesting to note that amongst the public this improvement is most marked, not necessarily in places where funding has been greatest, but where residents perceive it to have been well used, offering good value for money. This suggests it is how the money is used, rather than how much money has been invested, that matters. These points were supported by stakeholders, many of whom made a direct link between National Lottery funding and a perceived improvement in local heritage.

### **So what does good use of money look like?**

Local residents think that heritage projects, whilst conserving a valued aspect of the past, need to be fun as well as educational, should provide lots of ways for people to get involved and must appeal to people outside a narrow interest group.

### **Participation in heritage continues to be unequal:**

Inequalities in engagement with heritage identified in other pieces of research remain a problem, with ethnic minority residents, those from social grade DE, and younger people less likely to be involved with local heritage.

### **But the research also contains clues for ways to tackle these challenges:**

For example, the participation gap across different social groups is narrower for some types of heritage project – parks, townscapes and projects which involve people in activities – suggesting these can be used to generate wider interest in heritage.

**Moreover, there are also indications that when heritage does reach those traditionally less involved, it can have a more powerful impact on them than others:** For example, people from social grade DE are more likely to say that local heritage is important for their personal sense of identity.

**So the research provides a clear rationale** for continuing to invest in heritage, and to keep searching for ways that connect heritage projects to local needs and aspirations. **Improving heritage, improving places, improving lives.**

## **It is now 20 years since HLF began distributing the funding for The National Lottery's heritage Good Cause. This milestone felt an important moment to take stock of what the public now think about heritage and the projects HLF has supported.**

In 2013 – one year ahead of the Lottery's 20th birthday – HLF commissioned research company *BritainThinks* to undertake a study that would gather, in as fair and representative way as possible, public perceptions about Lottery funding for heritage across the UK.

With £6billion awarded to nearly 40,000 projects, this was no small task – and the research can only tell a small part of the story. But we wanted to directly hear the views of the public. What difference has Lottery funding made over the last 20 years, to them, and to the places where they live?

### **How the research was done**

We began by selecting the places where we would do the research. We didn't want to simply pick places where we imagined the impact of funding had been greatest. Instead we wanted to construct a representative sample across the full breadth of towns and cities in the UK. We did this by starting with a full list of every place with over 10,000 inhabitants in the UK – **a set of towns and cities that covers over 85% of the UK population.**

We then randomly selected 12 of these places, making sure we covered the full range of population sizes, all four countries of the UK and each of the English regions where HLF operates. The places selected in this way were Armagh, Bradford, Durham, Exeter, Glasgow, South East London, Manchester, Newark-on-Trent, Peterborough, Pontypool, Portsmouth and Shrewsbury. **All had important heritage and were places where HLF funding should have made a difference over the last 20 years. But had it?**

To answer this question, we then carried out a mix of different research activities. In each place we undertook desk research to understand how the area has changed since HLF's inception, and carried out a survey of around 350 local residents. Furthermore, in six of the 12 places we undertook interviews with stakeholders working in organisations such as local government, universities, business groups, tourism bodies and the community and voluntary sector. In the same six places we also ran a series of workshops with a representative mix of local residents, in which we talked about what heritage means to them, if and why it is important, and what their knowledge and awareness is of both heritage and HLF funding in their area. **In these ways, we heard the views of around 4,300 people.**

What we learnt has been reassuring in some ways, surprising in others and presents some challenges for the future funding of heritage.

Find out more about how the research was done on our website:  
[www.hlf.org.uk/20years12places](http://www.hlf.org.uk/20years12places).

### **How people feel about where they live**

The research confirmed findings from similar surveys about local quality of life, indicating the great majority of people (85%) believe their area is a good place to live. However, only just over half of people feel this strongly, and it varies substantially by social group and size of place. For example, nearly everyone (95%) living in small urban areas (Shrewsbury, Durham, Exeter in our research) agrees theirs is a good place to live, as do over eight in ten of those in both



The research shows that this heritage makes an important contribution to residents’ perceptions of their local area and their quality of life. For example, eight in ten (80%) of those we spoke to think local heritage makes their area a better place to live – rising to nine in ten (89%) amongst those who are most involved with local heritage. Furthermore, 81% say heritage is important to them personally, and when asked to rate the impact that local heritage sites have on their personal quality of life, half (50%) give it a score of 7 or more out of 10.

The chart below shows that there is also a correlation between being satisfied with the heritage on offer in a local area, and agreeing that it is a good place to live. This correlation isn’t strong – and shouldn’t be seen as indicative. However, when set alongside the findings of the workshops, in which participants talked about the significance of heritage in their lives, it supports the idea of a link between heritage and positive perceptions of local areas.



So how does heritage have this impact? Our participants identified a range of benefits of heritage that – crucially – map on to the four key criteria that people use to assess local areas identified above:

- Heritage has a positive economic impact, by promoting tourism and creating employment opportunities.
- Heritage supports local pride and encourages social cohesion. For example, in Armagh we spoke to people who described the city’s Mall as offering a valuable, non-denominational space that all residents can use together. We also heard from local stakeholders who described the effectiveness of local history projects in promoting cross-community understanding.
- Heritage makes local areas more visually attractive. For example, in Shrewsbury participants placed enormous value on the beauty of the town’s streets and buildings.
- Heritage also provides opportunities for leisure activities – particularly for families.

“It 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, Armagh**

## How people connect with heritage

The qualitative research showed us that people connect with heritage in two ways: in emotional and in transactional terms. Where the connection is transactional, heritage is thought about in terms of the practical benefits it brings to individuals or the community – for example, providing families with a fun day out or creating jobs (a summary of qualitative research is available online: [www.hlf.org.uk/20years12places](http://www.hlf.org.uk/20years12places)).

However, where the connection is emotional, heritage is thought of in terms of conserving or discovering an aspect of local heritage that is special, or has personal meaning to residents. Where heritage has this type of resonance, it can provide a route map, helping people to understand where they are from, and what this tells them about themselves. For example, we saw heritage playing this role in Glasgow where residents were immensely proud of the city's distinctive industrial history, which they felt sets the city apart from other places and speaks of its unique history, people and culture.

These two ways of connecting with heritage are by no means mutually exclusive. Indeed, participants in this research thought about the vast majority of heritage in both ways, and there is a sliding scale between heritage that is seen as having primarily transactional resonance, and heritage that is thought about as having primarily emotional resonance. One example of local heritage that residents connected with in both ways is the Big Pit museum in Pontypool. Many of the people we spoke to there have family members who had worked in the mines. For them, the stories that are told in Big Pit are intensely personal, and the museum itself is a symbol of the strength of local people (both physically and in terms of their character). But they also thought of the museum in transactional terms: they valued its role in drawing tourists into the area.

Despite this, the research did also find that residents are more likely to connect in an emotional way with smaller, locally-focused projects. We also found stronger emotional connections with local heritage in areas where identity has been, or remains, contested.

“When you're 18 or 20, you kind of forget about it. Once you have your own family, you start remembering it and think, 'Oh, let's go again'”

**Workshop participant, Pontypool**

“You talk about shipbuilding in this part of the world and you'll get a fearsome debate in every pub and every corner of the street. There's a real genuine connection to that because it's telling a story of who we've been.”

**Stakeholder, Glasgow**

## Perceptions of change and the impact of HLF funding

Although people are generally positive about their local areas, their perception of change is much less positive, which is in line with the findings of other research. Fewer than half (42%) of residents feel their area has improved over the time they have lived there, and less than a fifth (18%) think things have got much better. One quarter (26%) feel things have got worse. Again, this is not evenly distributed, with people from social grade AB more likely to be positive.

Within this overall picture it's interesting – perhaps surprising – that a higher proportion of residents feel that local heritage has improved, with just under two thirds (64%) perceiving a positive change. The stakeholders we spoke to, who agreed that local heritage has improved, supported this perception.

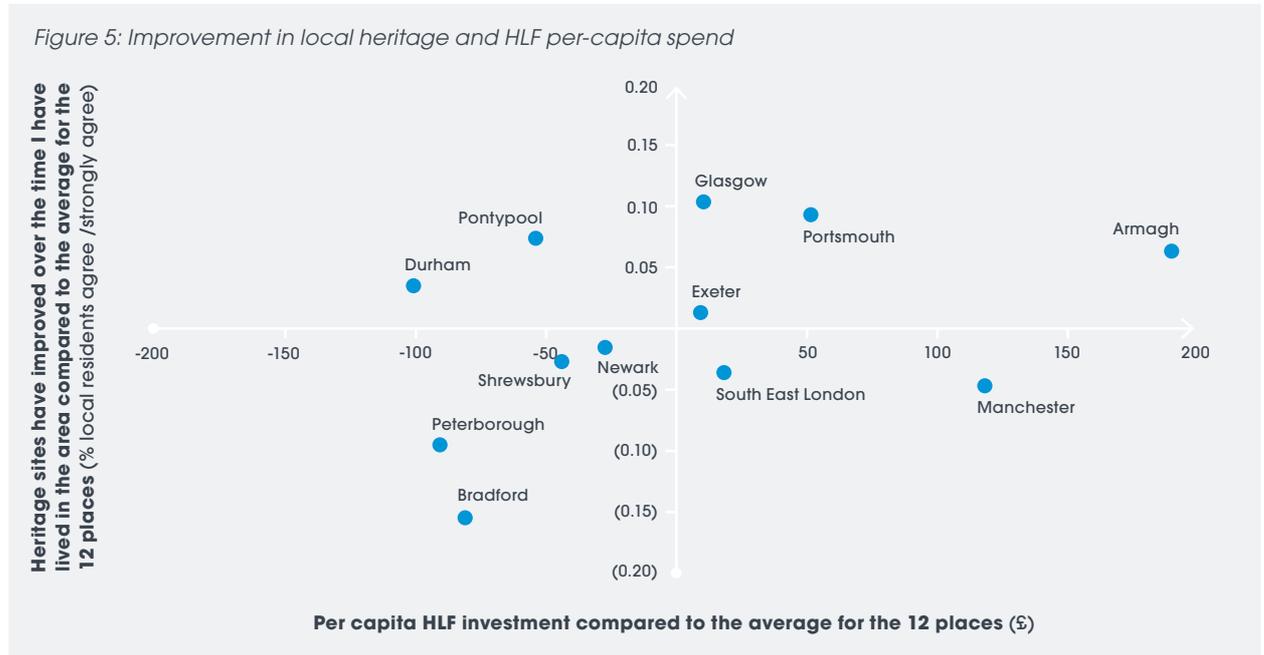
Many stakeholders credited HLF investment for this change, and there are also indications in the quantitative research that the two are linked. Firstly, we found very strong overall support for HLF funding. Seven in ten (69%) local residents rate the HLF projects in their area as a good or excellent use of Lottery funding, and less than one in 10 (8%) feel these projects were a poor use of money. Amongst regular Lottery players – those who have effectively paid for these projects – this level of endorsement is higher: three quarters (76%) believe the value for money to be good or excellent.

Going beyond these basic findings, when we combine some of the results, it is interesting to see that, firstly, there also appears to be a slight correlation between the perception that a local area has improved and the perception that local heritage has improved.

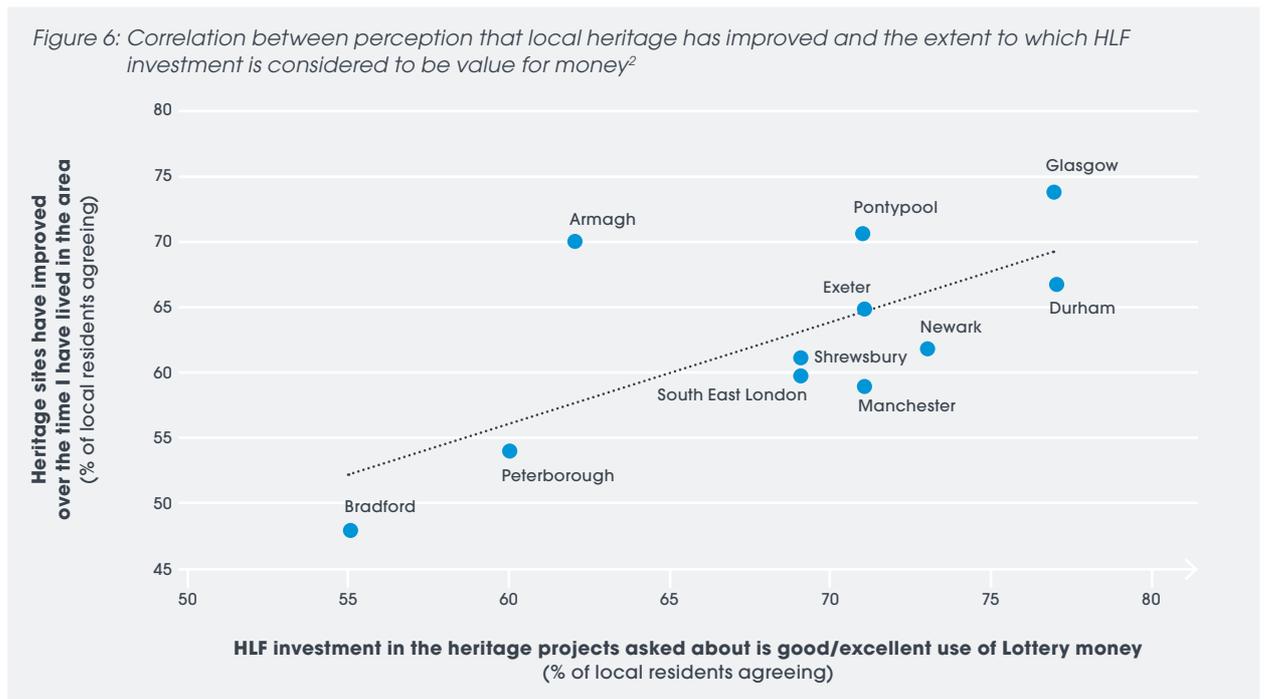
Figure 4: Correlation between improvement in local area and improvement in local heritage



There is also a positive, albeit weak, relationship between the amount of per capita funding HLF has provided in each area and perceptions of change in local heritage provision.<sup>1</sup>



However, a powerful link can be seen between the extent to which local residents perceive that HLF investment in their area has offered value for money – basically whether they feel Lottery funding has been well-used – and their perceptions about the change in the quality of local heritage. From this we can see, as we would hope, that heritage is seen to have improved most in places where Lottery funding also received the greatest endorsement. In other words, it is not the absolute amount of funding that an area receives that is important, but how well it is used and whether it matches local needs and opportunities.



1 Per capita figures are based on HLF investment in completed projects in each research location

2 Figures for Portsmouth not included due to a change in the wording of questions following the Portsmouth pilot research.

Of course, this raises the question of what 'value for money' means to the public. Our qualitative work has the answer. One exercise in the workshops, and one of the questions in the local stakeholder interviews, asked people what they felt are the criteria for a 'good' heritage project. Both groups had clear, and shared, criteria. They said that a 'good' local project should have the following attributes:

- It needs to be fun
- It should provide lots of ways for people to get involved
- It should be educational
- It must appeal to people outside a narrow interest group
- It should conserve a valued aspect of the past
- Projects should be sustainable, both in terms of the quality of the work and being financially sustainable
- If it involves conservation, the work must be done sensitively

## So what now?

Putting all this together, we think it's clear that the investment made in heritage over the last 20 years, raised through The National Lottery, has made heritage an important and valued factor in local life right across the UK. It has kindled an interest and enthusiasm in heritage that was always there, but where the potential to enrich people's lives remained somewhat nascent, until Lottery funding supplied a means of development, improvement and financial support.

Less positively the impact we found varied by place and by people, along similar lines to the big picture findings about how people view their own quality of life in the UK today. Whilst life in big cities is improving for many, and life remains good in rural areas and in smaller towns and cities, there is a type of place – caught between these – where optimism is thinner on the ground. And the research also highlights that the inequalities in access and involvement with heritage which have been documented in previous research have not gone away – with younger people, those from social grade DE, and black and minority ethnic residents all less involved than others.

We think that, to a large extent, part of the answer to these issues has to be to continue investing – especially in those places that have had less funding from HLF. These are the places where we can expect the returns, in terms of improvements to local quality of life, to be greatest.

In some cases, though, we have to acknowledge that perceptions – of both heritage and place – have not improved, despite substantial per capita HLF funding. It is tempting to view this as a different causality – that the trajectory of place has overshadowed improvements in heritage. But this will not do. Instead, we believe that we have to take on the responsibility of re-doubling efforts to connect heritage with local community needs and aspirations, and investing in what local people want to see from heritage Lottery funding.

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It was interesting, in this respect, to compare the overall research results with the results in Bradford where, although the quantitative results were not the strongest, the stakeholder interviews and, especially, public workshop demonstrated an unbridled enthusiasm and pride in local heritage. In other places there may be a need to consider the extent to which heritage is seen, strategically, as instrumental in planning and developing a place. HLF is planning more work in this area, in conjunction with the RSA.

Within all of this, continued effort is needed on the 'missing people' dimension – those who tend to have benefitted least so far. And the research does suggest some clues for how this work can continue. For example, the participation and awareness gap between social classes is much narrower in the cases of parks, townscapes and activity projects – suggesting these types of project might be prioritised to generate wider interest across social groups.

Furthermore, the research suggests the scale of the rewards from reaching those who are less engaged with heritage will be great. We found that heritage can have a more powerful impact on them than it does on those already involved. For a start, those from social grade DE are more likely to say that heritage is important for their own sense of personal identity than are ABs (61% compared with 54%). They are also more likely than ABs to agree that visiting heritage has increased their understanding of other cultures (75% compared with 71%). Interestingly, this matches results from previous HLF research that looked at the social benefits of volunteering on heritage projects.

Finally a continuing message for the heritage sector is that the public often has clear ideas about how heritage could be better communicated – residents identified a lack of awareness as one of the key barriers to engagement. Everyone involved in heritage needs to get better at promoting what heritage has to offer.

Find out more about the 20 years in 12 places research on the HLF website:  
[www.hlf.org.uk/20years12places](http://www.hlf.org.uk/20years12places)

“There’s plenty for people to do if you look for it. But you really have to go looking for it, the information just isn’t there for people.”

**Workshop participant, Bradford**

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