



Historic England

Annual Report Highlights 2023–24

Historic England is the public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England's spectacular historic environment.



A year of **Better Places**

We want everyone to enjoy our historic places forever. This year we worked with communities and partners to secure brighter futures for our heritage.

Making an impact with our High Streets Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) Programme

We completed our four-year HSHAZ Programme, securing more than £220 million of investment for over 60 places across England. Running alongside was a HSHAZ Cultural Programme which 1.5million people participated in, including 60,000 people celebrating the high street at a Hi! Street Fest event.

£113.2 million additional funding triggered

As the Round 2 Heritage Action Zone Programme concluded, our grants totalling over £4 million supported the preservation and restoration of 65 heritage buildings and encouraged 30,000 people to engage with local heritage.

Introducing our National Blue Plaques Scheme

To help highlight the importance of heritage everywhere, we unveiled our inaugural blue plaque honouring Daphne Steele, the first Black matron in the NHS.

Counting the benefits of heritage

Our *Heritage Counts* study on the health benefits of engaging with local heritage found that cultural heritage gives an economic value of £515 per person, and a staggering £29 billion worth of wellbeing across England.

“
80%
of participants reported a new-found sense of pride in their high street following the HSHAZ Cultural Programme
”



Robert Steele, Daphne Steele's son, takes in the blue plaque honouring the life and work of his mother. It was erected in February 2024, on Hillside Court in Ilkley, West Yorkshire, formerly known as St Winifred's Nursing Home.



Morecambe Landladies, Morecambe. Pictured as part of Everyday Heritage Grants, which celebrates working class histories and the historic places that make up everyday life.

A year of **Inclusive Opportunities**

Our work brings communities together by discovering and celebrating local heritage, as well as helping to protect the unique character of historic places.

Achieving reputational excellence

We are now proudly ranked second out of 80 organisations in the RepTrak benchmark index, a measure of reputation among public sector bodies in the UK.

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£868,803

awarded across 56 Everyday Heritage Grants which aim to preserve working class history

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Marking overlooked histories

Our History in the Making initiative is helping young people mark underrepresented historical events across the North of England, from the Roman era multiculturalism of Hadrian’s Wall to the diverse history of Sunderland’s musical past.

Finding Missing Pieces

We launched our Missing Pieces Project which invites contributions to entries on the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) to help improve our understanding of what makes places special – contributions increased by 71% year-on-year.

Making progress at home

We were listed as a top 75 UK employer by the Social Mobility Employer Index and progressed to the highest level of Disability Confident Leader status.

A year of **Planning, Listing and Conservation advice**

We're creating positive change and securing sustainable futures for more of our historic places, with expertise, advice and investment.

Safeguarding at-risk spaces

This year we helped save 203 sites and removed them from the Heritage at Risk Register, including Bourn Mill in Cambridgeshire, Tolpuddle Old Chapel in Dorset, and a rare Victorian electricity substation in Wimbledon.

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6,800

entries saved from the Heritage at Risk Register since it started in 1998

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Protecting our history

We added 277 new places to our National Heritage List for England of protected historic sites, including Barkway Carriage Wash, Northwold Manor, The Dome in Doncaster and Darlington's Railway Tavern.

Targeted advice

17,000 Development Advice cases were responded to, helping provide guidance on heritage preservation and responsible planning.

Tackling graffiti with Artificial Intelligence

We're working with Canterbury Christ Church University to use Artificial Intelligence to identify and catch criminals from their graffiti tags. The pioneering technology matches styles and analyses paints to establish where they were purchased.



A rare, Victorian electricity substation at Sunnyside, Wimbledon. This was saved and removed from the Heritage at Risk register in 2023.

A year of **Climate Action**

We're leading the way in ensuring heritage plays a role in the fight against climate change impacts.

Setting the course for sustainable heritage

We worked with the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) as well as the Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) to develop goals, actions and targets in support of heritage at risk.

Climate Change advice

The now published Climate Change Historic England Advice Note (HEAN) was in consultation during 2023–24. This will guide decision making on enhancing energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions in historic buildings.

Championing Net Zero

We launched our first Climate Change Staff Training Programme with a *What is Climate Change?* online course and galvanised colleagues through our Historic England to Net Zero Champion Scheme.

Spreading the message

Our promotion encouraged tens of thousands of visits to our online *Your Home* guidance, helping to advise owners on how to make older properties more energy efficient.

Forward thinking about retrofitting

We released local data on the retrofitting skills needed to help achieve net zero by adapting England's historic buildings to our changing climate. The 86,500 new workers per year needed to retrofit traditionally constructed buildings could also benefit regional economies.

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£12 billion
revealed by our **Retrofitting Skills Report** as the estimated annual economic output that could be generated by retrofitting England's traditionally constructed buildings
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Chippenham Hall, Chippenham, Cambridgeshire. Solar panels have been installed in the garden.

A year of **Stewarding National Collections**

Making sure our National Collections are maintained and more accessible to everyone.

Celebrating our archives

We've continued to make more of the Historic England Archive, the biggest national collection of records about the historic environment.

A recent addition is a new collection of over 200 public-contributed images from the *Picturing High Streets* project.

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14 million

**photographs, plans, drawings
and documents in the
Historic England Archive**

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Working collaboratively

A Leeds Caribbean and African Centre 40th anniversary event celebrated a selection of photographs released from the Historic England Archive to mark 40 years of the centre as a community hub. The Archive also collected oral histories at the event, including inspirational stories from people featured in the photos and from within the Leeds and broader Black British community.

Thriving in Shrewsbury

Following the restoration of the world's first iron-framed building, the exhibition space, Shop and Café at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings continue to go from strength to strength.

Caring for the nation's heritage

We continue to support the National Heritage Collection of more than 550 heritage land and building assets at over 400 sites across England and 500,000 historical artefacts, cared for and operated by the English Heritage Trust under a licence from us.

Operating without subsidies

For the first time, the English Heritage Trust operated subsidy-free this year, with a total expenditure of £148.1 million.



Reflections of Carnival Mural, next to Leeds Caribbean and African Centre, Chapeltown, Leeds. Their 40th anniversary community event included photographs from the Historic England Archive.



Historic England staff attending one of the Unconference sessions in York.

A year of **Developing Historic England**

We're moving history forward. We continue to adapt, add value and deliver on our Future Strategy.

Getting together

We successfully completed the Staff Unconference during autumn 2023, showcasing an innovative approach to collaboration and idea-sharing among staff.

Encouraging mindfulness

We made the Calm app available to all our 1,000+ staff and their dependents, to positive feedback and high engagement.

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86%
of people we asked this year feel that Historic England's work benefits society
”



Historic England

“We intend to make further progress in our journey towards our Vision of a historic environment that everyone can connect with and learn from, and that we are proud to pass on to future generations.”

Duncan Wilson CBE, Chief Executive



Front cover: The wildflower meadow in front of the Main Mill at Shrewsbury Flaxmill Maltings. Back cover: Lincoln High Street Heritage Action Zone. All images © Historic England Archive.

More details can be found in our full Historic England Annual Report & Accounts 2023–2024, available at historicengland.org.uk