

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

English Heritage (EH) is the government's statutory advisor on the historic environment, with the role of championing and caring for historical assets. It plays a fundamental role in the maintenance and protection of historic properties, buildings, and archaeological sites of national importance; provides conservation grants, advisory and education services; and improves the understanding of the past through research and study.

EH requires economic evidence about the costs and benefits of maintaining and protecting heritage sites. This project generated some evidence on the benefits of maintaining and keeping open to the public two such EH sites. The stated preference questionnaires produced for these two sites can be adapted to other sites. The project also shows how the results can be used for other heritage sites managed by EH.

The two study sites chosen were Castle Acre Priory and Walmer Castle and Gardens in order to reflect the variation in the types of EH sites in terms of location, size, facilities, and popularity. The former is a smaller site based in Norfolk, while the latter is in Kent and nationally one of EH's top 20 sites. In each site, two different groups were identified: users (visitors of the sites) and non-users (residents of the local area, who have not visited the survey site in the last 12 months). A stated preference questionnaire (using the contingent valuation design) was used to interview around 300 people in each of the four groups (visitors and non-users at each site). The fieldwork was conducted between April and June 2014.

The results, i.e. the benefits of maintaining a heritage site, are expressed in terms of individuals' willingness to pay (WTP) to protect the site over and above what they currently pay for their entrance fee/membership fee/general taxes. Therefore, the results can only be used in similar decision contexts: to maintain a site and keep it open to public. They cannot be used for marginal improvements to the fabric and facilities of a site, which would not make a material difference to the sustainability of the site.

Table ES.1 shows the average willingness to pay results, which are expressed in different units, depending on the type of group. All results exclude protest responses, i.e. those who said they were not willing to pay not because they do not value a site but because they do not accept the scenario or do not want to take part in the survey for other reasons. About 5% (for Castle Acre Priory) and 7% (for Walmer Castle and Gardens) of respondents were identified as protestors, which are rather low (and hence good) results compared to other similar surveys.

Table ES.1: Willingness to pay to maintain the site (over and above what is paid already)

| Site and type of sample | Unit | £ value ^a |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Castle Acre Priory | | |
| Visitor - EH member | £ increase in membership fee per year | 2.14 (0-5) |
| Visitor - non-EH member | £ increase per ticket | 2.66 (0-9) |
| Non-user - non-EH member | £ increase in general taxes per year | 1.83 (0-8) |
| Walmer Castle and Gardens | | |
| Visitor - EH member | £ increase in membership fee per year | 3.99 (1-10) |
| Visitor - non-EH member | £ increase per ticket | 2.73 (0-7) |
| Non-user - non-EH member | £ increase in general taxes per year | 1.77 (0-6) |

a. The numbers in brackets are statistical confidence intervals and should be used in further analysis

b. For both sites: due to low sample size, estimation was not possible for visitors who purchased family tickets, and non-users who were EH members.

The statistical analysis of the responses shows that the results are valid and robust. Looking at all samples across the two sites show socio-economic group is a significant determinant of WTP, age and gender is significant for some samples, but not all. Respondents who are more likely to be visiting a site for its historic characteristics and those who are more frequent visitors are more likely to have a positive WTP than those who (also) visit to use gardens

and picnic areas. The historic characteristics of a site are also important for non-visitors: those who said they'd be interested in visiting the museum or taking the audio tour on site, are more likely to have a positive WTP.

The study produced two types of results: WTP evidence and preferences for actual and potential future visits. Such preferences can be used as inputs to site management planning. Future users of these results can apply the mean WTP estimates reported in Table ES.1 to other sites that are sufficiently similar to Castle Acre Priory and Walmer Castle and Gardens. Similarity should be based on site characteristics, as well as socio-economic and other observable characteristics of the visitors and non-users.

Alternatively, the 'value transfer function' can be used. This function shows the relationship between different factors and how they affect individuals' WTP. Only the factors that have a statistically significant effect on WTP *and* are possible to collect data for in other sites are included in this function:

- The value function for visitors includes: income of the visitors (data for individual sites are available from English Heritage Taking Part survey) and 'site' (whether the site being considered is like Castle Acre Priory or Walmer Castle and Gardens). While the site variable is a coarse grouping of different EH sites, this is the best that can be done to distinguish between EH's top 20 sites and others, given that only two case studies were surveyed in this study. This function applies to EH member and non-member visitors, as well as all ticket-type purchases.
- The value function for non-users also has two variables - income and age of the non-users. For individual sites, this information is available from census data for the local area from the Office of National Statistics, but also requires a definition of the local area for a given site. In this study, local area was defined to include the population in major towns / cities sufficiently close to the site, so that residents would know of the site but far away enough that they do not visit it (at least not in the last 12 months). It is also a good idea to limit the non-user population to those within the same County as the site. Alternative definitions can be tested.

The function has a linear form. Future users will need to insert the values for each variable relevant to their site. The spreadsheet attached to the report shows how the function can be used.

Overall, when choosing between unit and function transfers, the similarities of the two sites must be considered. If the two sites are similar (based on the characteristics looked at in this study), unit value transfer can be used. If the sites are dissimilar, and data on explanatory variables exists, the value transfer function may be a better option.

Based on the testing done in this study, using the mean (unit) WTP estimate is advisable for a visitor population and value transfer function is advisable for a non-user population. However, both can be used for both groups for sensitivity analysis.

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