

The logo for the National Heritage Science Forum consists of four colored squares arranged in a 2x2 grid: yellow (top-left), blue (top-right), green (bottom-left), and pink (bottom-right).

National Heritage Science Forum

Briefing Note: Culture and Heritage Capital Programme

Introduction

In January 2021, the UK Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) launched the Culture and Heritage Capital Programme (CHC).

This programme seeks to establish a standardised, consistent economic approach for calculating the value of cultural heritage assets. The hope is that this guidance will better equip people and businesses in the cultural heritage sector to assess the benefits of heritage assets and make business decisions accordingly.

This work is necessary because when heritage is only valued based on traditional economic techniques (i.e. with value tied to market prices, employment and GDP), its true and full value can become obscured. Heritage is attached to many other kinds of value besides economic, such as aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, and environmental value ([Historic England, 2021](#)). If fairer, more holistic methods of assessing the value of heritage assets were created and applied across the sector, this could have significant and positive implications for investment in and protection of the UK's cultural heritage assets.

Programme Timeline & Overview

January 2021: CHC Launch

At CHC's launch, DCMS published '[Valuing Culture and Heritage Capital: A framework towards informing decision making](#)'. This report sets out the aims, framework and future plans of the CHC programme.

At the same time, DCMS, in collaboration with other organisations, also released four other reports:

1. [Rapid Evidence Assessment: Culture and Heritage Capital Valuation Studies](#) – an overview of the literature available on valuing culture and heritage assets.
2. [Arts Council England: Culture & Heritage Capital](#) – research and guidance on Arts Council England's ongoing Economic Value of Culture project, aimed at helping arts and cultural organisations better demonstrate their social and cultural impact in economic terms. These documents include contingent valuation studies on galleries and theatres.
3. [British Film Institute: The value of digital archive film history](#) – a case study on the public value of Britain on Film which provides evidence on the benefits of online access to film heritage.
4. [Historic England: Heritage and the values of place](#) – a study assessing the value of local historic high streets, libraries and town halls to residents in eight medium-sized cities in England.

June – September 2021: AHRC Call for ‘Scoping culture and heritage capital research’

In June 2021, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) opened a funding call for an interdisciplinary project team to undertake a scoping study to review existing literature and identify evidence gaps in the area of culture and heritage valuation. The call listed 11 suggested evidence gaps as a starting point for applications:

1. Using heritage science to understand the relationship between degradation and value.
2. Discount rate and asset lives.
3. Time and culture and heritage capital.
4. The flow of services provided by culture and heritage capital and the benefits they produce.
5. Drawing the line between natural capital and culture and heritage capital.
6. Understanding the relationship value between culture and heritage assets that constitute an interdependent unity.
7. Applying non-use values.
8. Valuing the benefits of digital assets.
9. Developing more innovative ways of capturing value using technology and data.
10. Welfare weighting.
11. Applying values from one site to another.

[For more detail on the funding call and the eleven evidence gaps, see here.](#)

March 2022: Valuing Culture and Heritage Capital Conference

The Valuing Culture and Heritage Capital Conference took place on 11 March 2022. Talks covered the importance of CHC, initial findings from the scoping study, and other topics relevant to the theory behind cultural valuation and the implementation of the programme.

[View the conference recording here.](#)

[View the conference slides here.](#)

October 2022: Scoping report published

The report from the scoping study was published in October 2022. It presents an overview of the progress, challenges and future research needs of culture and heritage valuation. The report’s recommendations are organised into three tiers:

1. [Enhancing the theoretical debate](#)
2. [Addressing methodological challenges](#)
3. [Research capacity and capability building](#)

[See the full report here.](#)

October 2022 – July 2023: AHRC Call for ‘Research culture and heritage capital with an interdisciplinary team’

This AHRC call sought to fund a portfolio of projects to further develop the CHC programme based on the recommendations made in the scoping study.

Projects needed to address at least 1 of the following 7 research strands:

1. Developing a taxonomy of cultural and heritage capital services (associated stocks and flows).
2. Developing the link between methodologies that can measure why people value culture and heritage and economic techniques that can monetise value.
3. Defining and incorporating non-use values into social cost benefit analysis and cultural and heritage capital accounting.
4. Combining heritage science and economic valuation to articulate better the impact of care and sustainable usage of heritage assets.
5. Overlaps between natural capital and culture and heritage capital.
6. Triangulation of values using different valuation methods, research testing biases and ways to minimise them.
7. Valuation of digital assets.

The outcomes of the funding call were announced in June 2023, and projects have now started. For more detail on the research strands, [see here](#).

July 2023: New Reports Released

In July 2023, the [Culture and Heritage Capital Portal](#) was updated with three new reports:

1. [Using Economic Valuation Techniques and Heritage Science to Measure the Welfare Impact of Conservation, Repair and Maintenance of Culture and Heritage Assets](#)

This is a working paper produced by DCMS. It sets out a way of combining valuation methodologies and heritage science to estimate the cultural, economic and social impact of interventions that halt the loss or deterioration of culture and heritage assets.

2. [Choice Modelling and Methodology Development: Marginal Willingness to Pay for Museum Improvements](#)

This report details the outcome of research commissioned by DCMS to explore the usefulness of discrete choice modelling (DCM) when analysing options within culture and heritage business cases. The subject of analysis is the National Railway Museum.

3. [Measuring the Economic Value of Museums and Galleries Digital Offers: An Exploratory use of Contingent Valuation Techniques](#)

A report on research conducted to estimate the value of the digital content of galleries and museums in England.

Key Points for Heritage Science

Heritage science has been explicitly identified by the CHC programme as a discipline that can help address key knowledge gaps in culture and heritage valuation. As the CHC framework states:

Heritage science will play an important role within the Culture and Heritage Capital Programme to estimate the condition of physical assets, how this condition changes over time and how the condition affects the flow of benefits the assets produce.

One of the evidence gaps identified by the initial [2021 AHRC funding call for ‘Scoping culture and heritage capital research’](#) was **‘Using heritage science to understand the relationship between degradation and value’**. This referred to a need to understand how heritage science and economic methodology can combine to estimate the impacts of conservation, degradation and irreversible loss on the value of heritage assets.

Professor May Cassar from the UCL Institute for Sustainable Heritage provided more information on this in her presentation on **‘Heritage Science and Cultural Value’** at the March 2022 Valuing Culture and Heritage Capital Conference. [You can view the slides here \(pp. 75-87\) and the presentation recording here \(1:37:37-1:49:00\)](#).

The [October 2022 scoping study](#) includes several recommendations directly relevant to heritage scientists and the issue of degradation, deterioration and damage. Ultimately, it proposes that “a strand of research is established to understand better how degradation, deterioration and damage are reflected in valuations, and how this translates into social cost-benefit analysis (SCBA)”.

For more information, see the following sections of the scoping study:

- [‘Chapter 3: Understanding what change is acceptable’](#). This chapter discusses the relationship between economic values and damage functions, and technological innovations in heritage science that might contribute to heritage valuation.
- [‘Recommendations for future research and research infrastructure’](#) contains further detail on how heritage scientists can shed light on the relationship between change and value.
- [‘Appendix 3: Case study methodology’](#) is a selection of heritage science examples that demonstrate the complexity of cultural and heritage valuation decisions.

In light of the scoping study recommendations, the [2022/23 AHRC call for ‘Research culture and heritage capital with an interdisciplinary team’](#) suggested projects consider the research strand, **‘Combining heritage science and economic valuation to articulate better the impact of care and sustainable usage of heritage assets’**. According to AHRC, this research could involve:

- Developing relevant methodology from heritage science to understand the dose-response functions of different material types in different conditions to build a catalogue of deterioration rates for an illustrative selection of material types.
- Primary research to clarify the relationship between damage functions and an appropriate economic valuation methodology.
- Considering assets where the issue of ‘letting go’ and the practice of ‘adaptive reuse’ are most pronounced.

Projects have now commenced. Outcomes have not yet been published.

The [July 2023 DCMS working paper 'Using Economic Valuation Techniques and Heritage Science to Measure the Welfare Impact of Conservation, Repair and Maintenance of Culture and Heritage Assets'](#) is an example of work that proposes an approach for how economic valuation and heritage science might work together in the area of degradation, deterioration and damage.

All of the information above and any future outcomes of the CHC programme can be found at the [Culture and Heritage Capital Portal](#).

27 September 2023