

Review of the 2016-17 membership year

The 2016-17 membership year saw progress in each of the action areas that trustees had agreed the Forum should focus on, notably:

1. **'Filling the Gaps' in heritage science research** to take forward the National Heritage Science Strategy and as a basis for identifying new partnerships and collaborations with scientists and researchers in other domains.

- NHSF used its blog and an online survey to 'crowd-source' contributions from the heritage science community of its knowledge of research that addresses the gaps identified in the 2009 evidence report 'The role of science in the management of the UK's heritage'.
- Through its 'Resources' working group, the Forum is starting to address issues of capacity in the heritage science sector, by understanding the challenges and opportunities facing those at the start of their research career as well as career progression paths in this highly inter-disciplinary field.
- The interim results of the 'Filling the Gaps' work were shared at the major research strategy summit held in Stirling in November, in partnership with Historic Environment Scotland. The summit featured contributions from invited speakers on the themes of interdisciplinary research and public engagement with heritage science research, as well as inviting contributions from the c.80 attendees on research priorities for the future.

2. **Supporting Open Access to heritage science research** to maximise its impact and increase engagement with it.

- NHSF published its position statement on Open Access to heritage science research publications and research data at an event in September themed on 'Opening up heritage science research' at which Chi Onwurah MP (Shadow Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy) and Martin Poulter (Wikimedia UK volunteer) were invited speakers.
- The Forum has agreed to award a number of grants to support the Gold Open Access publication of heritage science research, meaning that articles will be made available instantly online and freely available without subscription charges (or charges to authors).
- Work in this area is being enhanced by partnership working with Wikimedia UK to give people the skills to edit, enhance and add to heritage science content on Wikipedia. A first pilot workshop was held at the British Library in March with further events due to take place across the UK in 2017-18.

3. **Strengthening sustainable networks** within the heritage science community by promoting collaborative approaches to projects, to the use of equipment, and to the development of research proposals.

- Forum members have continued to add information on equipment and facilities to the NHSF kit-catalogue. The online database provides information on equipment that is used for heritage science research and can be used to show which organisations have expertise in using equipment, where there is potential to enter into agreements to share or loan equipment, and to support partnership working between organisations.
- A checklist has been prepared that includes information on the areas that organisations may wish to consider when sharing or loaning equipment as a further aid to facilitating collaboration.

4. Ensuring the sector speaks up with a coherent voice; developing stronger links with the bodies determining the research agenda and shaping the funding environment.

- NHSF has, with input from its members, raised issues affecting the heritage science sector in responses to numerous consultations including:
 - the Industrial Strategy Green Paper
 - the evidence review of the Heritage Lottery Fund and NHMF
 - the white paper ‘Success as a Knowledge Economy’
 - the House of Lords Science & Technology committee inquiry into the relationship between EU membership and UK science.
- The Forum has collected evidence of the funding that has supported heritage science research in recent years (particularly EU funding) and has shared this with members.
- Trustees have taken a lead in building relationships with key individuals and organisations in the changing research landscape, notably UKRI and AHRC.

The Forum has continued to communicate with its members and increasingly with a wider network of people interested in heritage science through its newsletter, Twitter and Facebook accounts, and its Blog. This has been substantially enhanced by the launch of a new website in March, at www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk.

Looking forward to the 2017-18 membership year, the primary area of focus will be to secure a future pipeline of research funding.

Trustees have agreed to build on the strategic areas identified in 2016 of,

- Strengthening the infrastructure to support future research;
- Widening the scope of partnerships with other fields of research and;
- Opening up heritage science research so that more people engage with and contribute to the research agenda.

It plans to do this by:

- Leading a refresh of the National Heritage Science Strategy on behalf of the sector. NHSF will use the ‘Filling the Gaps’ research and will work with the sector to both identify future gaps in research and to align the Strategy to wider national initiatives so that we can demonstrate more clearly the impact that heritage science has on society.
- Strengthening relationships with key sector bodies such as the Research Councils and emerging UK Research and Innovation, and work in partnership with other organisations in the sector towards a positive outcome for heritage science post-Brexit.
- Building stronger links with industry to benefit heritage science research and innovation. NHSF will bring together industry, heritage and academic partners to identify where collaboration has enhanced the impact of heritage science research, how greater value can be achieved by working together, and what mechanisms are needed to facilitate a growth in collaborative working.
- Continuing to support open access to heritage science research by promoting the Forum’s Gold Open Access publication fund more widely and by developing the partnership with Wikimedia UK so that more people have the skills and knowledge to play an active role in improving access to heritage science via Wikimedia platforms. It will investigate the challenges surrounding opening up access to heritage science data, and the role that NHSF could play in improving access to, and re-use of, heritage science data.
- Scoping the research needed to explore the barriers to becoming a heritage science researcher and better understand the career paths of heritage scientists as a first step towards strengthening future infrastructure for heritage science research.