



Responses to the ACE strategy consultation: 'Consulting on the next ten years.'

Over the summer of 2019 Arts Council England (ACE) consulted on its draft strategy for 2020-2030 (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/nexttenyears>).

This document summarises the responses that were submitted by NHSF.

Ch. 1: Proposed Vision and Key Shifts

'Our vision is for England to become a country where the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish, and where every one of us has access to a rich and remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences.'

NHSF's response agrees that the vision is bold, ambitious, clear; and that the Forum wants to help to realise it.

In terms of 'key shifts' in the vision, the Forum agrees that ACE should seek to widen the range of culture and creativity it supports, and suggests that widening the definition of culture and creativity enables increased collaboration both within cultural areas and with science and industry partners. We pointed out that interdisciplinary fields such as heritage science have great potential for contributing to wider cultural activities by providing new perspectives. They can also increase engagement: for example, heritage science can attract those to STEM who may otherwise be uninterested.

We agreed that there should be stronger support for individuals, including diversifying the talent pipeline and sustainable careers. We highlighted the research that NHSF has recently commissioned into opportunities and barriers in careers in Heritage Science and the key issues it identified including a lack of clear progression routes and a need to diversify entry routes. We pointed to the changes needed to address some of these issues that are identified in the Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK (such as a range of career pathways, including apprenticeships and postgraduate opportunities as well as a recognition of heritage science as an attractive career).

We agreed with the key shift to a 'stronger focus on partnership working to help creativity and culture build thriving communities'.

We noted that partnerships and collaborative working are essential to the highly interdisciplinary field of Heritage Science, and increasingly valued by arts and humanities research more widely (see AHRC delivery plan 2019, <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/strategy/ahrc-delivery-plan-2019/>).

We agreed with the shift to embedding children and young people across stated outcomes and principles.

We responded that early interaction with cultural activities is key to increasing engagement across different socio-economic backgrounds and cited the research commissioned by Historic England that shows the opportunities for heritage science to engage people with heritage through science <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/current/heritage-science/heritage-science-resources-for-the-national-curriculum/>

We agreed with the shift to increasing the focus on international working. Science and technology have an important role to play in the creativity and innovation that are vital to arts and culture. We referred to the recent UNESCO UK report on cultural heritage innovation that gives many examples of the contribution of heritage science internationally: <https://www.unesco.org.uk/press-release/cultural-heritage-innovation/>. International working has been and will continue to be necessary to support heritage science in the UK, particularly in the wake of Brexit as EU-funded projects contributed significantly to heritage science research. (For example, the EU Horizon 2020 project awarded €14.81m in grant funding to UK heritage science research from 2014-2017.) We identified that there is also a need to strengthen the physical and technical research infrastructure in the UK to produce excellent research for the long-term management of cultural heritage, understanding of it and engagement with it.

Outcomes:

Arts Council England's strategy for 2020-2030 is built around three outcomes and three investment principles. For each outcome four intended priorities have been set out, around which ACE based chapters 2-4 of the consultation.

Ch. 2: Creative People

- A. Ensuring more people, of all ages and all backgrounds, find, access and take part in a wide range of creative activities, both in their communities and online.

We noted that interdisciplinary collaboration can provide an opportunity to engage people in creative activities across a breadth of their interests and bring people to new activities. Strict categorisation of creative activities can mean that interdisciplinary projects can fall between funding programmes. In particular we encourage an approach to funding that will bring together creative and cultural activities from both the museums and the historic environment sectors.

- B. The creativity of pre-school children and their families.

No further comments.

- C. The creativity of 4-19 year olds both within and beyond the curriculum.

We supported the ideas that are already proposed in the draft strategy but in addition, suggested that ACE seeks opportunities to include cultural activities across the curriculum, including using heritage to make links to STEM.

- D. Help for people from all backgrounds to understand and access careers in the creative sector.

We support this proposal. Traditional career pathways may be relatively well understood, but interdisciplinary subjects like heritage science do not fall within general perceptions of 'arts and culture'. Widening the types of cultural activities that the ACE supports will help increase awareness of different career options.

Ch. 3: Cultural communities

- A. Place-based partnerships which deliver shared outcomes strengthen and connect communities and support inclusive growth.

The heritage science community is supporting the development of a research infrastructure for cultural heritage in the UK, including a distributed heritage science research and innovation infrastructure. The goal of this is to improve access to research between institutions, users of research (including those that do not traditionally have access to research), and to extend access to industry and SMEs.

- B. Cultural provision, including touring and distribution, that responds to the needs and aspirations of local communities.

No further suggestions.

- C. Place-based cultural education that is co-designed with young people and others and delivered through local partnerships of cultural organisations and education providers.

Whilst the Forum does not make a significant contribution to this area at present, it is one that we would like to support. As mentioned in responses to previous questions it is an area in which heritage science can make a contribution, as supported by the Historic England research into heritage science and the English national curriculum. We would encourage the creativity and cultural exploration to include exploration into scientific and technological insights to culture and heritage - and for young people to have significant input to this.

- D. Cultural initiatives that achieve health and well-being benefits people of all ages.

Interdisciplinary collaboration will help to develop best practice for health and well-being research. The Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK, 2018-2023, has identified a need for research projects that build a strong evidence base for other disciplines to relate to, creating a compelling argument for cultural activities as beneficial to well-being. This mirrors a need to develop a knowledge of strengths, weaknesses and gaps in research methodologies for health and wellbeing studies.

Ch. 4 A creative and cultural country

- A. Support for independent creatives that enables more people from all background to sustain careers in the creative sector.

No further suggestions

- B. Innovation and research and development, including the use of new technologies, to support new ways of creating and sharing cultural content.

The National Heritage Science Forum supports the development of a research and innovation infrastructure for cultural heritage. It has contributed to the mapping of the research infrastructure landscape (by UKRI) over 2018-19 and continues to work in partnership with entities such as the UK hub of the European Infrastructure for Heritage Science (E-RIHS.UK) to scope infrastructure needs and structures for delivery. We see this as an important method of enhancing UK research and innovation and connecting the distributed centres of research that currently operate in the UK. The Forum advocates a physical and digital infrastructure that will connect physical centres of research, expertise and collections.

Connected to this, there is also the need to consider the implications of and best practice for supporting Open Access and Open Data. Within heritage science, there is an awareness of existing

research that would benefit the industry but is currently inaccessible. Providing a means to accessing data generated from ACE projects may benefit further research. The Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK has recommended a sector commitment to Open Access and sustainable management of heritage science data.

- C. Ensuring the country's collections are dynamically managed, researched, curated and shared to the highest standards.

We support a commitment to Open Access to cultural collections where possible, to ensure research can be shared and built on. Facilitated sharing of tools and approaches to enable local projects to access expensive equipment will help to deliver this objective, e.g. SEAHA mobile heritage lab. We are interested in the potential to incorporate smaller museums, archives, and libraries, into a networked research environment, as suggested in the AHRC Delivery Plan 2019.

- D. International, national and local collaboration that harnesses and develops the best talent, expertise and ideas, and can open up new markets.

We suggest that ACE investigates interdisciplinary sectors or ways of working that can develop new ideas through collaboration. We suggest that there is a need to ensure the systems that support freedom of international movement are in place to support collaboration – and these are not linked to restrictive salary levels. We think it is important that interdisciplinary working is provided for in broader definitions of cultural activities, as they may otherwise fall through the gaps. Heritage science is intrinsically an interdisciplinary subject that benefits from the combination of academia, industry and heritage to work together and combine knowledge and skills from many different disciplines that improve the understanding, preservation and enjoyment of heritage. England has skills to export and valuable expertise to share – but it also has much to learn from international collaboration and we strongly support continued engagement with our international colleagues.

Investment principles

To realise the strategy, both Arts Council England and the organisations and people it invests in will need to change. In order to ACE and the sector forward, the new strategy introduces three principles that will apply to ACE investment, especially in relation to the National Portfolio. Over the coming months, ACE will be co-creating a framework for the identified investment principles. Currently, it is gathering early thinking about each principle and gathering thoughts and insights on these. Chapters 5-7 of the consultation cover these investment principles.

Ch. 5: Dynamism and environmental sustainability

Part 1: Opportunities and challenges for dynamic organisations

The opportunities and challenges that a dynamic organisation might need to respond to include changes in demographics; consumer interests and demand; competition; technology; funding/finance; legislation and/or best practice.

Would you suggest any different or new opportunities or challenges?

This sounds good but we are concerned that smaller organisations, in particular, may not have the robust evidence to draw on to demonstrate that they are a dynamic organisation. We are unclear how organisations will demonstrate dynamism and environmental sustainability (even given the characteristics identified below), although we support the ambition.

Part 2: Characteristics of dynamic organisations

ACE has identified four key characteristics that make up a dynamic organisation – culture, people, assets, and systems and processes.

1. Are there any other features of culture within a dynamic organisation that should be considered?

Dynamic organisations will be open to supporting interdisciplinary activity and seeking strategic relationships between cultural/heritage, business (industry) and research organisations.

2. Are there any other features of people within a dynamic organisation that we should consider?

A dynamic organisation is aware of the specialist technical skills and knowledge its members hold and invests in these appropriately. It gathers intelligence on the skills gaps within the organisation and in the wider sector and takes steps to ensure that these are met.

3. Are there any other features of assets within a dynamic organisation that we should consider?

We suggest that dynamic organisations demonstrate a willingness to share assets, either in a formal agreement or more informally (i.e. Open Access), with a clear understanding of the benefits and reasons for doing so.

4. Are there any other features of systems and processes within a dynamic organisation that we should consider?

Connected collections through distributed digital research infrastructure.

5. Do you think there is a missing characteristic?

No further suggestions.

Part 3: Frameworks for environmental sustainability

No selections made

Part 4: Application of the principles

Not answered

Part 1: Key areas

The ACE believes inclusivity and relevance should be considered in relation to:

- Programming – the experiences, exhibitions or performances on offer, how these are selected, developed and presented and who is involved in production and commissioning.
- Workforce – the people that work for the organisation.
- Leadership – people at director level and above within the organisation: those responsible for taking decisions.
- Governance – the board members or trustees.
- Audiences – the audiences, participants and visitors – who they are, and how they are engaged, involved and communicated with.

Would you suggest any new or different areas?

Networks – who the outcome is intended to benefit and how this will be shared; who an organisation seeks to partner with if it recognises but is not readily (immediately) able to address shortcomings in its own operation.

Please identify up to three key contextual factors that you believe should be taken into account as we develop this framework. Examples provided by ACE include type of organisation (including size of company, physical building) and where they are based (rural or urban).

1. Current workforce demographics
2. Academic discipline or field (as separate from and in addition to organisation type)

Part 2: Programming

Aim: to build on the work established around the Creative Case for Diversity so that the work produced, presented and collected reflects the diversity of contemporary England.

1. To achieve this aim, should the Arts Council change how it balances its investment across the range of organisations it supports?

No further suggestions.

Part 3: Workforce, leadership and governance

Aim: for all funded organisations to be taking active measures to diversify their workforces, leadership and governance to reflect the diversity of contemporary England, both across protected characteristic groups and all socio-economic backgrounds.

1. If this aim is to be realised by 2030, what progress needs to have been made by NPOs by 2025? List up to three ideas.

No further suggestions

Part 4: Audiences

Aim: for all funded organisations to reach audiences that reflect the communities they are based in and serve.

1. What types of active measures do you believe Portfolio funded organisations should be required to take in order to widen audience reach and remove barriers to engagement and access? Suggest up to three measures.

No further suggestions:

Part 5: Relevance

We want the organisations and individuals we support to be valued by their audiences and partners and to deliver a wider civic role within their communities.

How can organisations best respond to the interests and needs of their communities and stakeholders? Yes/No to each.

1. Ensure representation of those communities and stakeholders on their board - yes
2. Hold regular open meetings with people in the community to improve understanding of their interests and needs - yes
3. Involve the public in co-designing the programme - yes
4. Ensure input from key stakeholders (such as funding partners) into business plans - unsure
5. Take part in other non-cultural civic initiatives in their community - unsure

Do you have any additional ideas for how organisations can best respond to the interests and needs of their communities and stakeholders?

Should the inclusivity and relevance investment principles be applied to the following (select one):

1. All National Portfolio Organisations – yes if scalable and achievable
2. Only National Portfolio Organisations that receive more funding (e.g. bands 2 and 3)
3. Other

Ch. 7: Ambition and quality

What should a framework for ambition and quality apply to? Yes/No.

1. All organisations applying to be National Portfolio Organisations - yes
2. All organisations seeking any funding from Arts Council England - yes
3. Process of creating work / activity - yes
4. Finished work - yes
5. Participative activity - yes

Do you have any other suggestions of what a framework on ambition and quality should apply to?
Process of creating networks, at an international, regional or local level.

How could new applicants to our funding demonstrate creative potential?

No suggestions.

Which of these components should the Arts Council expect to see as part of the ambition setting process? Yes/No

1. Involvement of colleagues/staff - yes
2. Involvement of collaborators in the work/activity - yes
3. Involvement of board
4. Involvement of funders and/or other stakeholders
5. Involvement of audiences and participants - yes
6. Involvement of peers
7. Consideration of best practice
8. Use of ACE Impact and Insight Toolkit
9. Use of ACE Children and Young People Quality Principles
10. Use of the ACE Creative People and Places measures
11. Inclusion in a business plan

Do you have any other suggestions for what should be part of that ambition setting process?
Involvement of collaborators from across multiple fields.

Which of these should be part of the process for how organisations review the quality of their work?
No suggestions.

Can you suggest any processes by which organisations can learn from best practice in their field – locally, nationally, internationally?
No suggestions

Can you suggest any further ideas that should be considered for a framework designed to assess ambition and quality?
No further suggestions

Ch. 8: Applying the Investment Principles

Ranking exercise on what measures would be most beneficial to (your) organisation.

What support do you think would be most helpful for organisations in the delivery of the investment principles?

Toolkits for self-evaluation
Peer review and support

Learning networks

What other support would be helpful for organisations in the delivery of the investment principles?
No suggestions.

Which of these ideas do you think would be most helpful to ensure the delivery of the investment principles?

Organisations agree their own targets with the Arts Council
Self-evaluation monitored by leadership and board
Peer assessment

Do you have any other ideas that could help to ensure the delivery of the investment principles?
No suggestions.

Ch. 9: Further Thoughts

There are three key areas of the ACE draft strategy that are of particular interest to heritage science in the UK: partnerships; infrastructure; and education.

There must be provision for interdisciplinary and collaborative projects to support ACE's goals of creating networks at the local, national, and international levels. These should include not only arts and culture, but also heritage, industry and academia. As identified in the AHRC Delivery Plan 2019, smaller museums, archives and libraries need to be brought into wider research networks. Meanwhile, an international scope should be developed, especially in the wake of Brexit. The EU has been a major source of funding for the heritage science sector: for example, the EU Horizon 2020 program award €14.81m of grant funding to heritage science research (to 2014 alone). In place of this, new collaborative opportunities must be fully supported and not be allowed to fall through disciplinary gaps in funding streams. It would be valuable to have the support of ACE in ensuring this. The development of physical and digital infrastructure will provide the foundations for future collaboration. The Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK, 2018-2023, has identified weaknesses in infrastructure, as opposed to willingness, as a barrier to sharing knowledge and collections. There is significant recent progress towards an understanding of the research and innovation infrastructure landscape for cultural heritage (by UKRI and AHRC) and ACE should consider this work and engage with it so that a broad range of cultural organisations can provide and access infrastructure to create key partnerships.

Educational activities across all ages need to be supported to ensure a skilled heritage science community for the future. There is a clear opportunity to engage children with culture through STEM topics in heritage science; while citizen science opportunities will provide opportunities for individuals and communities to get involved. Support for heritage science activities and recognition of heritage science as a field of activity will help to present it as an attractive career option. However, further support will be needed to develop clear pathways to sustainable careers in the field – something that is not distinct to heritage science but a finding of wider research into recent AHRC funded collaborative studentships (JD Hill, 2019).

Underpinning each of these three areas is the wider definition of culture to be adopted by the ACE. Heritage science is an interdisciplinary field, which leads to fruitful partnerships that create cultural opportunities and research outcomes beneficial to the wider arts, cultural and heritage sectors. However, this interdisciplinarity also means that it risks falls between funding streams that rely on narrow definitions of cultural activities. The wider definitions of arts and culture in ACE's new strategy will enable heritage science to act on the key areas defined here, bringing further benefits to society.

- End -