

Why heritage science is important

Following confirmation that a General Election will be held on 8 June, the National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) publishes, for the benefit of all parties, these key facts about heritage science and why it is important to the UK.

- Heritage science is the application of science and technology to cultural heritage to improve understanding, management and engagement. Heritage science research and innovation is carried out in research institutions, heritage institutions (e.g. Independent Research Organisations and Public Sector Research Establishments), universities and by business.
- The Heritage Industry contributes £21.7 billion or 2% of national GVA in England alone¹. It is geographically distributed spreading the value of skills, jobs, investment, innovation and engagement across the UK to both rural and urban communities.
- The Heritage Industry is of particular value to international diplomacy, policy and relationship building. The Portland Soft Power index (in which the UK was ranked second in 2016) includes heritage and culture as strengths of the UK².
- The UK's heritage science skills, expertise and technology are routinely sought internationally³. The UK has an opportunity to establish a wider, more global reach for its Heritage Industry, particularly with Anglophone countries, given the high level of cultural connectivity that exists.
- Heritage science is highly cross-disciplinary. It provides effective and efficient links between the arts, humanities, social science, science, technology and engineering^{4 5 6}.
- Heritage Science delivers STEM skills. It has a particular contribution to make in terms of the development of these skills in non-STEM application areas, i.e. heritage, with the potential to build a more diverse scientific community and engage a broader range of people with science through heritage.
- Heritage science is a priority area for investment in research and innovation. It is an area in which the UK is world-leading and, as with many other sectors, the heritage economy is dependent on investment in science, research and innovation to grow and prosper.
- Heritage Science research benefitted from EU funding of €121.27 million between 1998-2014 (FP5, FP6, FP7). Between 2008-2013, the EU contribution to UK institutions was €4.88 million; funding from UK research councils in the same period was £21.94 million. From 2014 to date, the EU Horizon 2020 contribution to heritage science research has been €104.68 million of which UK institutions have been awarded €14.81 million.

The NHSF calls for strong support for heritage science and its contribution to tourism, education and industry. NHSF calls on all parties to give assurances that after the election this value will be re-told and built on to give us the strongest possible future as a country.

¹ Historic England, [Heritage Counts: Heritage and the Economy](#), 2016.

² Portland, [The Soft Power 30](#), 2016.

³ See a range of expertise and technology featured in projects funded by the DCMS and British Council [Cultural Protection Fund](#)

⁴ The AHRC and EPSRC [Science and Heritage Programme](#)

⁵ The [Joint Programming Initiative on Cultural Heritage](#)

⁶ See AHRC's [Heritage Strategic Priority Area](#), February 2016