

**Press release – 25.11.13**  
**For immediate release**

## **Forum calls for police to work with heritage scientists to safeguard artworks against theft**

The National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) is calling on the police to work closely with heritage scientists to develop techniques and tools to deter thieves targeting cultural objects. The appeal comes in response to the launch last week by the Association of Chief Police Officers, of a new strategy aimed at combating organised criminal gangs targeting valuable cultural heritage.

Sarah Staniforth, Chair of NHSF said: *“The UK has a vibrant and active community of experts who can work closely with the Association of Chief Police Officers to find ways to apply cutting edge technology and scientific enquiry to protect our nation’s treasures.”*

In reply, Mike Harlow, English Heritage’s Legal and Corporate Governance Director said: *‘Heritage science clearly has a key role to play in reducing heritage crime. I welcome the enthusiasm of the National Heritage Science Forum and hope that heritage scientists can work with the police, local authorities and others involved to prevent and detect these crimes.’*

Recent advances in terahertz imaging in heritage science are pushing the boundaries of detection in cultural heritage. From subsurface characterization of wall paintings to reading the contents of sealed letters, the possibilities of heritage science to apply new technologies to defeat art crime are clear.

Nancy Bell, NHSF’s Deputy Chair added: *“The forum draws together experts in heritage science from pre-eminent organisations across the UK. We are ideally placed to work in partnership with ACPO and English Heritage.”*

The National Heritage Science Forum brings together academic, cultural heritage organisations who share a vision of building a coordinated community of scientists representing many disciplines to address the big challenges to the present and future needs of cultural heritage in the UK.

**-Ends-**

## **Notes to editors**

1. 'Heritage Science' is the term used to encompass all technological and scientific work that can benefit the heritage sector, whether through improved management decisions, enhanced understanding of significance and cultural values or increased public engagement.

2. National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) is a registered charity (number 1154160). It brings together major UK institutions active in the field of Heritage Science, [www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk](http://www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk).

The strategic aims of NHSF are:

- To improve partnership within the sector and with others by increasing collaboration to help practice make better use of research, knowledge and innovation and to enhance resources, funding and skills, investment and profile.
- To demonstrate the public benefit of heritage science and increase public engagement and support for it.

3. Association of Chief Police Officers. Heritage and Cultural Property Crime National Policing Strategic Assessment (November 2013)

<http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/crime/2013/201311-cba-heritage-cult-prop-strat-asmnt.pdf>

4. The Science and Heritage research programme ran for five years with £8million of AHRC and ESPRC funding invested in developing multi-disciplinary science and heritage research, [www.heritagescience.ac.uk](http://www.heritagescience.ac.uk)

### **For more information contact:**

Nancy Bell, NHSF Deputy Chair

E [Nancy.Bell@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Nancy.Bell@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

T +44(0)208 392 5283