



Arts and  
Humanities  
Research Council

# **RICHeS (Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science: how the AHRC is planning to invest in heritage science infrastructure**

January 2023

# Introduction: Research Infrastructure for what..?

## Strategic context

- UKRI strategy and landscape mapping
- AHRC 'Vision' and Delivery Plan

## The road to RICHeS

- Scoping and consultation
- Capability for Collections
- Assurances and approvals
- What next?

# Context: a UKRI view

**Our vision** is for an outstanding research and innovation system in the UK that gives everyone the opportunity to contribute and to benefit, enriching lives locally, nationally and internationally.

**Our mission** is to convene, catalyse and invest in close collaboration with others to build a thriving, inclusive research and innovation system that connects discovery to prosperity and public good.

**Priority 2.1: Strengthen clusters and partnerships  
– locally, nationally and globally**

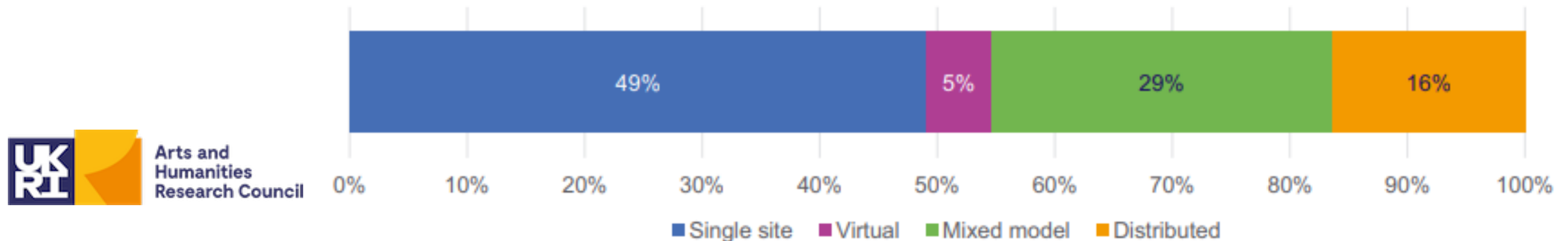
**Priority 2.3: Secure cutting-edge infrastructures  
for world-class research and innovation**

**Priority 3.2: Incentivise and remove barriers  
to multi- and inter-disciplinary working**

# Context: a UKRI view (cont.)

## Arts and humanities research infrastructure:

- includes tools and techniques, clusters of expert capability and provision of hardware or facilities
- also collections of research objects, such as historic artefacts, documents, data
- generally large, diverse user bases, often requiring skilled support to mediate access
- dispersed across multiple locations
- diversified, short-term funding models



# Context: an AHRC view

AHRC is committed to UKRI's holistic vision of science, in which arts and humanities research is enriched and emboldened by engagement with technology, medicine and our environment, and informs and enriches those disciplines in turn.

## Our priorities

- Cultural assets: conserving, curating and maximising the impact of our museums, galleries, libraries and archives so our national collections are accessible to all

### **2.1: Transforming infrastructure to enable the best research**

We commit to building networks and infrastructure that enable research breakthroughs, innovation and research sustainability across the arts and humanities and beyond.

# Context: some sector views

**AHRC Impact Fellowship (2014-17): Public Benefit, Cultural and Economic Impact and Growth Prospects of Heritage Science Research**

**UK-RIHS Heritage Science Infrastructure Capabilities Survey (2019)**

# The road to RICHeS: scoping and consultation

## Heritage Science Scoping Group (2019-22)

- And representation of heritage science researchers on AHRC's Infrastructure Advisory Group

## Infrastructure Policy and Engagement Fellows

- Discussion workshops, data collection, literature review

## Expression of Interest survey

- Current capability, costs, gaps

# The road to RICHeS: Capability for Collections

Call for proposals (2020)

## Two funding streams

- Stream A: refit and upgrade of facilities
- Stream B: replacement of equipment

## A huge and diverse portfolio of awards

- £37.4m through 60 awards to 50 organisations, of which 34 x HEIs, 13 x GLAMs, 3 x 'other', including NERC British Antarctic Survey, Historic England, Historic Environment Scotland



# The road to RICHeS: assurances and approvals

- Summer 2021: bid approved by AHRC's Heritage Science Scoping Group and Infrastructure Advisory Group
- Autumn 2021: bid approved by UKRI's Infrastructure Advisory Committee
- Autumn 2022: Outline Business Case approved by UKRI's Board Investment Committee, Chief Financial Officer, and Executive Committee
- January 2022: Outline Business Case approved by BEIS Projects and Investments Committee
- February 2022: onward to Treasury...

# **RICHeS: objectives**

**To catalyse the development of an informed, collaborative and innovative UK heritage science community**

**To ensure that the heritage science community has the capability and the capacity to meet user demand and deliver world-class scientific excellence**

**To ensure heritage science equipment, expertise, resources, and research data are findable and accessible to users, available to external stakeholders, and capable of being leveraged by a range of partners**

# RICHeS: mechanisms

## Infrastructure HQ:

- new, dedicated, standalone unit of AHRC to coordinate and catalyse heritage science and conservation research sector

## Digital Research Services

- data repository capacity, and directory of heritage science equipment, collections, expertise and reference data

## Capital funding calls:

- equipment, facilities, storage and access to HS reference collections
- access programme (research support grants, staff costs)

## Equipment innovation programme:

- high-risk research grants to address technical barriers, opportunity of further funding for development

# RICHeS: benefits to HS community

- New and fit-for-purpose equipment and facilities
- New staff posts and funding available to enable access to facilities, equipment and collections
- HS reference collections have appropriate, sustainable storage and are easier to access
- Sector has full visibility of the availability and location of HS equipment, expertise, reference collections and data
- New research into analytical techniques and methodologies
- Liaison, partnership-building and knowledge exchange with industry and other sectors
- RICHeS and E-RIHS joined up via IHQ

# The road to RICHeS: what next?

## **RICHeS announcement events:**

- Friday 10<sup>th</sup> February, London
- Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February, Liverpool
- Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March, Stirling

## **Funding calls for FIXLAB, MOLAB, ARCHLAB and DIGILAB**

- to launch April 2023 (tbc.), and close September 2023
- applicant support workshops in May and June 2023
- outcomes announced January 2024
- full programme launch coming summer 2024



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**Thank you for your questions**