

NHSF 2020-21: a year in review

[Text of communication to members, May 2021]

The past year has been dominated by the coronavirus pandemic and the impact of it. It's been difficult for lots of us and in many different ways: home working, lone working, furlough, home schooling, no or limited lab access, remote teaching and I'm sure much more.

So a particular thank you for your continued involvement in the National Heritage Science Forum during our 2020-21 membership year, and a welcome to the two new members who joined us in that year, National Museums Scotland and West Dean College. I hope you will feel a sense of pride as you reflect on the past year in which, by working together, we've:

- Contributed to the AHRC Heritage Science Scoping Group to provide input to an AHRC led bid for UKRI investment in heritage science and conservation research infrastructure.
- Supported and promoted AHRC's new [Capability for Collections fund](#) (the first investment for AHRC through the World Class Labs programme) including Letters of Support to members applying to the fund and a de-brief session to capture lessons learnt and provide feedback to AHRC to benefit any future rounds of the programme. (Delighted that so many members have benefitted from this new fund).
- Participated as an observer on the [E-RIHS.uk](#) (UKRIHS) steering group.
- Consulted with members on, and co-created, a new governance structure involving a smaller Board of Trustees and a new Member Council focused on heritage science activity.
- Contributed expert input to the [UCL Institute for Sustainable Heritage bicentennial conference](#) committee.
- Submitted a [written representation](#) to HM Treasury ahead of the 2020 spending review and contributed to the Heritage Alliance's 2020 fiscal manifesto.
- Contributed two sessions to the [Fair Museum Jobs careers summit](#).
- Thanked five long-standing trustees for their service and commitment at our 2020 AGM.
- Developed and published five [Societal Challenges for Heritage Science Research](#)
- [Collected information](#) on and published examples of the use of [heritage science to support engagement with school-age children](#).
- Developed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion statement.
- Carried out an extensive [review of methodologies](#) for measuring impact as part of work on the development of a heritage science impact toolkit.
- Moved our members' meetings and other events online, including:
 - 6th July – [Briefing to NHSF members](#) on AHRC infrastructure activity with a focus on training and skills development
 - 8th July – Communities group 'Member Meeting' on a [Skilled and Diverse Heritage Science Community](#) (YouTube link) featuring speakers from the University of Cambridge Museums Change Makers Action Group and the CITiZAN project – as part of Icon's 'Conservation Together at Home' webinar series.

- 10th December – Research group ‘Member Meeting’ on [societal challenges and heritage science research](#) with six guest speakers providing strategic context to discussions on the contribution that heritage science can make to key issues of importance to society.
- 15th December – De-brief for members on AHRC Capability for Collections programme.
- 25th February – inaugural Member Council meeting, marking a major step in the development of the new organisational structure to better support sectoral heritage science activity alongside the running of NHSF as a charity.
- 5th and 18th March – joint sessions with the Icon Heritage Science group to explore the [networking and career development needs](#) of students and early career researchers.

as well as our working group and trustee meetings.

We’ve continued our communications through our [monthly newsletter](#) (which now has a dedicated section for news from our members), our [blog](#) (this year focussing on British Science Week), and Twitter (@HertSci_UK) which continues to be our main means of quickly sharing and re-sharing heritage science content.

Our priorities for the 2021-22 membership year build on these achievements and are to:

- Involve more organisations in the delivery of the [Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK](#) and in doing so, raise NHSF’s profile, develop its strategic partnerships and grow its membership.
- Work in partnership with AHRC, E-RIHS.uk (URKIHS) and IROC to secure investment in UK heritage science infrastructure.
- Develop a toolkit to support the community in demonstrating the value of heritage science.
- Articulate the social relevance of heritage science and encourage the heritage science community to show how its research helps to address the issues that matter to people.
- Establish a framework to support heritage science students and Early Career Researchers with networking and skills development to reduce barriers to a career in heritage science and strengthen the identity of heritage science.
- Embed the newly created Member Council in the Forum’s governance and operational structures so that the Forum continues to serve its members and the heritage science community well and develops as a resilient organisation.

This work is carried out with, by and on behalf of our members to achieve the Forum’s goals of:

- Improving partnership within the sector and with others by increasing collaboration to help practitioners make better use of research, knowledge and innovation; and enhancing resources, funding and skills investment and profile, and;
- Demonstrating the public benefit of heritage science and increasing public engagement with it and support for it.

We look forward to continuing to work with you over the forthcoming year and hope to be joined by more organisations that share our goals.

National Heritage Science Forum, May 2021

www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk

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