



The National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) speaks as a single voice for heritage science researchers and practitioners across the UK. Its member organisations represent the major UK institutions that make a significant contribution to heritage science.

NHSF's strategic aims 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.

Achievements, 2014-15

Having led NHSF through a successful first year, Sarah Staniforth (CBE) stood down as Chair and we welcomed new Co-Chairs Nancy Bell and Professor May Cassar as her successors. Two new member organisations, Cardiff University and Royal Armouries, joined the Forum bringing the number of members to seventeen.

During 2014-15 NHSF has been particularly active in the areas of informing policy, supporting collaborations and public engagement. It has also defined its priorities for 2015-16 and beyond by identifying three 'Grand Challenges'.

Influencing policy and strengthening the position of heritage science in the UK

As the uniting forum for heritage science in the UK, NHSF spoke as a single voice for the sector by issuing formal responses in the following key areas:

- Call for written evidence on the Historic Environment Scotland Bill (Scottish Parliament Education and Culture Committee, April 2014)
- Response to inform future priorities for the National Heritage Protection Plan (English Heritage, May 2014)
- Consultation on proposals for long-term capital investment in science and research (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, July 2014)
- Consultation on the Government's Science and Innovation Strategy (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, December 2014)
- Response to the Autumn Statement (December 2014)
- Comments on the draft Heritage 2020 Framework (Historic Environment Forum, January 2015)
- Response to Historic England's draft action plan (English Heritage, January 2015)
- Response to the Nurse review of Research Councils (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, April 2015)

NHSF has joined the Heritage Alliance to add our voice to those of other independent heritage organisations and as a means of engaging the wider heritage sector with heritage science.

Promoting partnership and increasing collaboration

- Nine member organisations have added information about equipment to the online resource-sharing database that NHSF operates on behalf of its members and the wider community. The 'Kit-Catalogue' maximises investment in resources and knowledge by bringing together those who seek a particular piece of equipment with those who are able to share it. Work is also underway on a template Memorandum of Understanding that will make it easier for organisations to share equipment.
- Member organisations have shared information about their research strategies, with those that are able to publishing them on the NHSF website. This has the dual purpose of supporting interdisciplinary collaboration across the community and, in the longer-term, highlighting how current research is addressing the gaps identified by the National Heritage Science Strategy.

- NHSF held a ‘Members and Friends’ event in November 2014 at which the Forum’s Honorary President, Baroness Sharp of Guildford, and out-going Chair, Sarah Staniforth (CBE) spoke. The event provided the opportunity to highlight NHSF’s work in the first year since becoming a registered charity and to share its plans for the future.

Public engagement and communication

A common theme running throughout NHSF’s activities is improving understanding of the contribution of heritage science to the science and heritage sectors, and to the beneficiaries of science and heritage.

- The monthly e-newsletter has become NHSF’s primary means of sharing information with its members about NHSF’s activities and the activities of its members, as well as wider policy developments, funding calls, events and job opportunities.
- A blog ‘love heritage, share science’ was set up in March to coincide with British Science Week. Each day we introduced a different heritage scientist, profiling their work and that of their organisation to demonstrate the diversity of heritage science and improve understanding of the work of heritage scientists. The blog has been supported by increased social media activity (Twitter and Facebook); Twitter followers have increased by 33% and our Facebook posts are reaching an increasingly wide audience (five posts from April 20th-29th reached over 1200 people) – all raising the profile of heritage science, the Forum and its members.
- Facebook and Twitter are also used to draw attention to member activities and research opportunities as well as share heritage science news amongst our followers.
- Our members have taken part in external events, including NHSF Co-chair Nancy Bell attending IIC’s dialogue ‘The Future of Heritage Science’ in January 2015 as a panel member and Katy Lithgow (National Trust) participating on behalf of NHSF in a ‘Climate Change and Heritage Environment workshop’ coordinated by Oxford University.
- We continued to contribute to the sector and wrote articles for NMDC e-newsletter, Heritage Alliance Newsletter and Icon News.
- A new membership leaflet has been produced to communicate the benefits of being part of the Forum. Trustees are in conversation with several organisations interested in joining the Forum. An increased membership will strengthen NHSF’s voice and enhance the benefits of collaboration amongst members.
- Profiles of recently qualified heritage scientists have been added to the NHSF website to demonstrate the diverse routes into the field and showcase the variety of research and practice carried out by heritage scientists. This is complemented by information about courses and training opportunities to help develop capacity within the sector.

Grand Challenges

In the latter half of the year trustees identified three ‘Grand Challenge’ areas that are informing NHSF’s strategic priorities for 2015 and beyond. Future activities will be aligned to these three strategic areas, each of which is led by a working group made up from trustees and representatives of member organisations.

Challenge 1 - Policy

A key challenge for NHSF is to deliver impact in the policy arena in recognition of the role that heritage science has in underpinning good curatorial and conservation practice and in improving understanding and preservation of our shared heritage. We will seek to demonstrate how heritage science work aligns with wider national priorities. This will enable the heritage science domain to develop new opportunities in the wider research world in order to address gaps in knowledge and practice. In 2015, we will be meticulous in responding to public policy consultations ensuring that NHSF is widely recognised among policy makers as an influential voice for heritage science in the UK.

Challenge 2 – Partnerships and networks

An important challenge for NHSF is to demonstrate its leadership by reaching out to strategic partners with the aim of laying the foundation for a robust national network of public, independent and charitable links that understand the need to build future capacity in heritage science. We will identify platforms that will enable us to work with communities to create public benefit by turning the concept of citizen heritage scientists into a reality, thus creating grass root support for NHSF. By developing professional and public partnerships during 2015, we will position NHSF to champion public access, enjoyment, understanding and support for heritage

science. By consciously blurring the distinction between the 'doers' and 'users' of heritage science, the public will become more scientifically literate through engagement with heritage science and the protection of cultural heritage will become the responsibility of the many and not the few.

Challenge 3 – Resource-sharing

An essential challenge for NHSF in 2015 is to share the outcomes of heritage science research across the community of members through our website and e-newsletter. We will promote the sharing of knowledge, data and skills among our members underpinned by the NHSF Heritage Science Equipment Catalogue which is set to grow in value and importance among our institutions. Knowledge, data, skills and equipment sharing will ensure that membership resources are pooled, shared and that better use is made of them all. These will raise awareness of the practical benefit of NHSF membership as the value of access to knowledge, data, skills and equipment and their wider benefits will quickly outweigh the cost of membership. Furthermore, it will engender excitement among members of the possibilities that sharing affords for public engagement.

NHSF members 2014-2015

The Forum's membership represents the major UK institutions that make a significant contribution to the Heritage Science Community. They include the major national museums, universities as well as conservation and heritage bodies. The Forum is diverse and multi-disciplinary, ranging across Humanities and Science, leaders, researchers, and practitioners. The Forum is a registered charity (no. 1154160) funded by its members and led by a board of trustees.

Current members:

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales
Birmingham Museums Trust
British Library
British Museum
Cardiff University
English Heritage
Historic Royal Palaces
Historic Scotland
Icon, the Institute of Conservation
National Galleries Scotland
National Trust
Natural History Museum
Oxford University
Royal Armouries
Tate
The National Archives
University College London

NHSF has its roots in the recommendations of a House of Lords Select Committee report on Science and Heritage (2006), the Science and Heritage Programme (AHRC/ESRC 2007/12) and the Science and Heritage Strategy (Published 2010). A key goal of the Forum is to pursue the development and delivery of the strategy.

For further information or to join the Forum see www.heritagescienceforum.org.uk or contact Caroline Peach heritagescienceforum@outlook.com.

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