



Trustees' Annual Report

For the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

The National Heritage Science Forum is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), registered charity number (England & Wales) 1154160.

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Charity trustees: Kutsi Akcicek (from 22.01.2025)
Dr Alex Ball
Nancy Bell
Sara Crofts
Prof Gaffney (Chair)
Prof Adam Gibson
Dr Jen Heathcote
Dr Freya Horsfield

Objects, mission and strategic priorities

The stated charitable object of the National Heritage Science Forum is:

To promote the efficiency and effectiveness of charities, not-for-profit organisations and voluntary organisations and the effective use of resources for charitable purposes by charitable and non-charitable bodies working to promote the understanding, preservation and conservation of the UK's material cultural heritage for the benefit of the public. Material cultural heritage is the things both natural and man-made that are valued for their meaning and significance.

About the National Heritage Science Forum

The National Heritage Science Forum (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/EPSRC 2007/12) and the National Heritage Science Strategy (published 2010).

The **mission** of the National Heritage Science Forum is to improve collaboration in heritage science by connecting communities of practice. The Forum:

- Shapes the future through strategic partnerships to build and share knowledge, data and skills across organisational boundaries.
- Connects people: researchers, conservators, curators, scientists from many disciplinary backgrounds, educators at all levels, and commercial operators.
- Co-creates the strategy for Heritage Science in the UK and coordinates its delivery.

Structure, governance and management

The National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), registered charity number (England & Wales) 1154160. The operation of NHSF is governed by its Constitution. This reporting period covers 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

NHSF's Board of Trustees (currently eight trustees) is responsible for managing the affairs of NHSF including compliance, public benefit, strategic direction, development of the organisation, risk management, financial sustainability and application of resources in the pursuit of the Forum's charitable object. The Board of Trustees met (virtually) four times in this reporting period. In addition, trustees held two planning/strategy sessions to review the charity's place in the evolving heritage science landscape and a meeting focused on a review of the risk register.

The NHSF Member Council, on which representatives of NHSF's member organisations sit, is a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees. Its role is to initiate and direct the Forum's subject-specific (heritage science) activities. In the period of this report the Chair of the Member Council reached the end of her term at the 2025 AGM. The NHSF and its members thank Prof May Cassar for her Chairing of the Member Council between 2023 and 2025. Following a process of nomination from members and appointment by trustees, Dr Constantina Vlachou-Mogire took up the role of Chair of the Member Council from the 2025 AGM. A nominated trustee attends meetings of the Member Council to support good communication between the two groups. Thanks is recorded to Boris Pretzel who fulfilled this role between 2023-2025 and Kutsi Akcicek is welcome to the role from April 2025. The Member Council met four times between April 2024 and March 2025.

NHSF's 12th Annual General Meeting took place in hybrid format (in-person and online) on 22nd January 2025. At the AGM members agreed: the minutes of the 11th AGM be signed as a correct record; to receive the annual report for the year ending 31st March 2024; to receive the statement of accounts for the year ending 31st March 2024 and to appoint Kutsi Akcicek as a trustee and of the Forum and reappoint Freya Horsfield and Adam Gibson for a second term as trustees of NHSF.

NHSF contracts out operational and administrative support to Preservation Matters Ltd. The schedule of services and contract is reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees.

Appointment and induction of trustees

There were three trustee vacancies in 2024-25 due to three trustees reaching the end of their first 3-year term. Two trustees (the Chair and Treasurer) led the recruitment process for new trustees which included considering the findings of the annual Board skills review to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the Board, reviewing the trustee role description and open advertisement of the opportunities. Following applications and interviews, three applicants were proposed to the Board of Trustees for appointment. The Board agreed to the proposal and in turn proposed the applicants for appointment by the members at the AGM on 22nd January 2025.

Before appointment potential trustees have access to the role description, the latest annual report and annual accounts and a meeting to discuss current strategic priorities and how the Forum operates. After appointment, trustees are provided with a copy of the Trustees Handbook which covers the governance, management and operations of NHSF. The Trustees Handbook was updated in February 2025.

Register of related party interests and transactions

All trustees are asked to complete the related party interests form on appointment and thereafter, annually. All trustees are asked to complete the form for declarations of related party transactions following the end of the financial year. At each trustee meeting trustees are asked if there are any new declarations of interest to be made, or any declarations of interest in relation to the meeting's agenda. For the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 no trustees' remuneration was paid and three trustees were paid expense claims totalling £207. Three trustees were connected to organisations which paid membership fees totalling £7,875 to the National Heritage Science Forum. One trustee is connected to an organisation that will make meeting rooms available to NHSF at no cost for its conference in July 2025. There are no other related party transactions.

Risk management

NHSF maintains a risk register for the purpose of identifying and managing risks to the organisation. The risk register is reviewed by trustees at each trustee meeting. The risk register was streamlined and updated to a new format in May 2024, and trustees held a dedicated meeting to review risks, mitigating actions and responsibility in February 2025. In the last year, the key risks that trustees have identified are the potential for disruption to operations if the external consultancy services contract is terminated and the risk of loss of access to data and systems posed by a cyber-attack. A number of mitigating controls have been agreed by trustees amongst which are the clarification of trustee responsibilities, the identification of trustee leads for areas of responsibility, the need for a business continuity plan, the need for training on cyber security and data protection.

Activities and achievements

The trustees have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing NHSF's aims and objectives and when agreeing the activities of the charity.

NHSF brings together organisations active in the field of heritage science so that knowledge and innovation can be shared to improve the understanding and preservation of cultural heritage as well as methods of engagement with it, for the benefit of the public. It aims to support the strategic development of heritage science in terms of research, capacity building, application, collaboration and infrastructure.

The Forum's priorities for 2024-2025 were:

- A successor to the Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK 2018-2023 is launched.
- The importance, potential, context and wider relevance of heritage science is effectively articulated.
- A vibrant and sustainable NHSF is able to champion heritage science and support its members.

1. A successor to the Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK, 2018-2023 is launched.

In the first quarter of 2024, NHSF members worked together to review progress that had been made towards the goals of the 2018-2023 Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK, and consider the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. A new draft framework for 2024-2027 was produced in July and 49 people attended the two online consultation events in August. The input gathered through consultation was incorporated into the refreshed Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK (2024-2027) which was launched at an online event in November 2024. In January 2025, NHSF organised a one-day hybrid workshop to bring people together from across the heritage science sector to start to build a delivery plan for the framework which draws together activity from many different organisations and individuals to address the framework's three goals of measurable public value, excellent research and an inclusive community.

2. The importance, potential, context and wider relevance of heritage science is effectively articulated.

The updated Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK is being used as a tool to support communication of the importance, potential, context and wider relevance of heritage science. A content calendar is being used to focus communications content on different strands of the strategic framework and link to wider events that help NHSF to demonstrate the relevance of heritage science, such as British Science Week.

The NHSF Board of Trustees held a strategy session in November 2024 focused on stakeholder groups and audiences to guide its work on communicating the potential, context and relevance of heritage science. The Board will build on this work in 2025 to understand where and how NHSF can have most influence with key stakeholders. This is complemented by an updated communications strategy which has led to reinvigoration of the NHSF blog and changes to the use of social media channels to engage different audiences with a range of news, stories and activities that demonstrate excellent research, public value or an inclusive community.

In addition, communications content has been provided for a range of external organisations including the Association of Independent Museums, the Institute of Conservation, the Heritage Alliance, and RICHeS (Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science). NHSF has contributed to external initiatives including the Skills Investment Plan for Scotland's Historic Environment, the Heritage Alliance's response to the industrial strategy consultation in November

2024, a response to the DCMS inquiry Protecting Built Heritage in February 2025, a lecture to students on the UCL Sustainable Heritage MSc, and the Chairman's participation in a panel discussion as part of the launch of the £80 million RICHeS programme in October 2024.

3. A vibrant and sustainable NHSF is able to champion heritage science and support its members.

NHSF facilitates collaboration between its members, and the wider heritage science community. The Member Council remains the primary means of connecting members to each other and sharing views on research interests and wider challenges and opportunities.

In September the Forum surveyed its members to better understand individual and collective member priorities, as well as gain member input to the role the Forum can play in connecting organisations. Together, the Member Council and Board of Trustees shape and deliver the organisation's annual priorities including the way in which the Forum engages with the Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK.

In a new departure which aims to provide benefit to members, encourage collaboration across the heritage science community, build and share knowledge, and champion heritage science, the NHSF is planning the first in an annual series of conferences on the theme Trends in Heritage Science. The first conference will be held in July 2025 and planning is led by a committee of Trustees and representatives of the Member Council.

A second new initiative is NHSF's contribution to the 14-member consortium, (led by the University of York) that is developing the Heritage Science Data Service (HSDS) as part of the AHRC-funded RICHeS programme. NHSF's contribution to the programme is to lead a three-year programme of user needs research to inform the design and development of HSDS so that it meets the need of the heritage science research community. Delivered via a commissioned consultant (appointed in December 2024), this three-year research project represents an exciting development in the role that NHSF is able to play in connecting communities of interest and improving the way in which parts of the sector work together for wider public benefit.

Planning and development

The updated Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK (2024-2027) provides a framework within which NHSF, and other parts of the heritage science community, can plan future activity.

NHSF's commitment to the Strategic Framework is reflected in its annual operational priorities, which for 2025-26 are:

- Encourage sector-wide participation in the delivery of the Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK
- Promote the societal relevance of heritage science
- Develop NHSF as a vibrant and sustainable organisation that is able to champion heritage science and support its members

NHSF's Member Council is using the results of the Strategic Framework delivery workshop held in January 2025 to show how the sector is working together to deliver the strategic framework goals, as well as focus the collaborative activity of the NHSF members. The areas that have been identified by members as priorities for collaboration through a series of task groups are:

- Inclusive community strand – conduct workforce analysis and assess skills gaps

- Inclusive community strand – grow NHSF's membership
- Excellent research strand – work together to understand shared research priorities
- Excellent research strand – support the translation of research into real-world applications with reference to societal challenges
- Public value – improve the collective understanding of heritage science stakeholders
- Public value – collaborate on KPIs and measurement systems for heritage science to support the demonstration of public value and increase recognition and support for heritage science.

Policy on reserves

The trustees of the National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) have considered the charity's budget and future plans in determining its need for reserves. The trustees have agreed a reserves policy to safeguard NHSF's activities in line with its charitable objects against uncertain income streams.

The trustees have agreed to retain unrestricted free reserves equivalent to a minimum of nine months of operational expenditure to meet these needs. This is calculated as an average of the past 3 years' operating budgets (excluding designated funds), and estimated for 2025-26 as approximately £35,303. At 31st March 2025, NHSF's unrestricted reserves were £48,067. The trustees will monitor reserves through the year as part of budget reporting and will review this policy annually. Planned expenditure in the forthcoming year is expected to draw minimally on free reserves. Additional expenditure from reserves will be brought to the Board of Trustees for decision.

The Trustees confirm that there is no material uncertainty as to whether the charity can continue as a Going Concern.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees:

Signature



Print full name
Prof. Chris Gaffney

Position
Chair, Board of Trustees

Date 10 / 10 / 2025

Signature



Print full name
Dr. Jen Heathcote

Position
Treasurer

Date 13 / 10 / 2025

Accounts

Accounts for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 are presented using the receipts and payments accounts template provided by the Charity Commission.



Receipts and payments accounts

For the period
from

01/04/2024

To

31/03/2025

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Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Membership subscriptions	51,450	-	-	51,450	45,875
Other charitable activities	10,543	-	-	10,543	
Miscellaneous	200	-	-	200	
Bank interest	102	-	-	102	115
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Sub total (Gross income for AR)</i>	62,295	-	-	62,295	45,990
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	
<i>Sub total</i>	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Total receipts</i>	62,295	-	-	62,295	45,990
A3 Payments					
Consultancy services	42,121	-	-	42,121	41,477
Board meetings	-	-	-	-	-
Trustee expenses	207	-	-	207	
Website	1,288	-	-	1,288	1,150
Telephone, print, post, stationery	329	-	-	329	
Events	1,711	-	-	1,711	2,632
Travel and subsistence	76	-	-	76	156
Subscriptions	946	-	-	946	850
Commissioned research/services	-	-	-	-	1,500
Independent examination	1,056	-	-	1,056	960
Projects	18,036	-	-	18,036	1,474
Bank charges	60	-	-	60	60
<i>Sub total</i>	65,827	-	-	65,827	50,259
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	
<i>Sub total</i>	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Total payments</i>	65,827	-	-	65,827	50,259
<i>Net of receipts/(payments)</i>	- 3,532	-	-	- 3,532	- 4,269
A5 Transfers between funds					
	-	-	-	-	-
<i>A6 Cash funds last year end</i>	51,599	-	-	51,599	55,868
<i>Cash funds this year end</i>	48,067	-	-	48,067	51,599

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	<p>Cash at bank</p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p style="text-align: right;">Total cash funds</p> <p>(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))</p>	48,067	-	-
		OK	OK	OK
		Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	<p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p>	-	-	-
B3 Investment assets	<p>Details</p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p>	-	-	-
		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	<p>Details</p> <p> </p>	-	-	-
		Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B5 Liabilities	<p>Details</p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p> <p> </p>	-	-	-
		Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees		Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
 			Chris Gaffney	10 / 10 / 2025
			Jen Heathcote	13 / 10 / 2025

NATIONAL HERITAGE SCIENCE FORUM

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF NATIONAL HERITAGE SCIENCE FORUM

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of National Heritage Science Forum (the charity) for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011.

Independent examiner's statement

Your attention is drawn to the fact that the charity has prepared the financial statements in accordance with the relevant version of the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) in preference to the Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has now been withdrawn. I understand that this has been done in order for the financial statements to provide a true and fair view in accordance with UK Generally Accepted Accounting Practice.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 130 of the Charities Act 2011.
- 2 the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
- 3 the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of financial statements set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the financial statements give a true and fair view, which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.



Oliver Read FCCA ACA

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England 13 / 10 / 2025

Date: