Data for Heritage Places – a new analysis using the Heritage Index

Executive Summary

October 2023

The National Lottery Heritage Fund Research, Data and Insight team

Introduction

The National Lottery Heritage Fund's vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. We are the UK's largest funder of heritage. Our new strategy, Heritage 2033, sets out how we will invest £3.6billion over the next 10 years. This includes a new commitment to a place-based approach, including a targeted strategic initiative called Heritage Places.

This strategic initiative will take a local approach to transforming heritage in 20 different places. Our ambition, by 2033, is to have delivered long-term projects to transform local areas, towns, cities and landscapes that improve the condition of heritage and increase the pride people take in their local environment.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (Heritage Fund) has used a wide range of evidence and analysis to support the new strategic initiative and the selection of places. This document summarises the process and methodology for the analysis that supported the selection of places and design of the strategic initiative.

A new framework for place and heritage

The Heritage Fund has a strong history of investments that have improved places across the UK. Our previous and ongoing programmes of place-based work include Future Parks Accelerator, Landscape Partnerships, Townscape Heritage Initiative and 15-Minute Heritage on behalf of the Welsh Government. We are also currently providing targeted support to 13 Areas of Focus that have historically received lower levels of funding from us.

The introduction of the Strategic Funding Framework in 2019 saw most of our investments delivered through open programmes, rather than dedicated initiatives with a place-based focus. In 2021, an external review was commissioned by the Heritage Fund from Wavehill Social And Economic Research to explore the impact of this change and our record of place-based investment.

The central finding of the analysis was that a more targeted approach, and concentration of resources, are needed to have an impact in relation to local places. The research found that the number of grants awarded through the Strategic Funding Framework that were place-based was relatively low and far smaller than when the Heritage Fund had operated targeted programmes. It also found that the process of prioritising investment and defining our 13 Areas of Focus could be improved by drawing on broader considerations relating to the potential and need for places.

In early 2022 the Heritage Fund began to develop a new framework to define our strategic approach to place. This framework was founded on three principles that we could use to identify places where our investments could have the strongest impact:

Need

Places with heritage of all kinds which are at risk of loss, damage, neglect or in significant need of investment, where it is shown that the sector lacks capacity, communities face challenging economic, social and wellbeing circumstances.

Opportunity

The local economic and political/civic factors within places, including time-specific events and funding, which may function as multipliers for investment in heritage and lead to wide-reaching impacts.

Potential

The factors inherent to a place (quality and type of heritage, prior connection to heritage, social infrastructure and partnerships) that make successful delivery of heritage projects or a stronger contribution to their local community more likely.

Drawing on the policy context for place across the UK, the outcomes in the 2019 Strategic Funding Framework and the evidence base regarding best practice for place based investment, 13 potential factors were considered across these three categories that help to identify the needs, opportunities and potential of places with regards to heritage. These factors are set out in Section 2.4 of the full methodology report.

Combining data analysis with local insight

In developing a new framework for our place-based investment, our aim has been to combine quantitative analysis with local insight and expertise. Research into successful place-based working has shown the importance of local intelligence about the opportunities and potential for places.

The Heritage Fund team for place therefore conducted a review of all 13 factors to assess availability, relevance and coverage of data for each factor and to determine which were suited to quantitative analysis and which required local intelligence.

Not all 13 factors could be analysed as part of this first application of the framework. Instead, the team looked for a good balance across the three principles (need, opportunity and potential) and between quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Quantitative factors

This review identified four factors as suitable for quantitative modelling:

- Heritage at risk or in poor condition – measured via a modified Royal Society for the Arts (RSA) Heritage Index (identifying need).

- Social and economic deprivation – measured via Indices of Multiple Deprivation (identifying need).

- Low levels of prior funding in heritage – measured via the time series of Heritage Fund investment (identifying need).

- Non-heritage-specific infrastructure, cultural, creative public funding – measured through the presence of other place-based investments (identifying opportunity).

Qualitative factors

Three factors became the focus for local intelligence and insight, with the first two also relating to the opportunity within a place:

- Evidence of local leadership – whether the local authority and other partners actively include heritage within local plans relating to the area and/or whether there are cultural, heritage or green space strategies that align with the Heritage Fund's ambitions (identifying opportunity).

- Extent of heritage and heritage adjacent ecosystems – alignment with cultural and tourism activities or investment that create the opportunities for National Lottery funding to have greater impact and reach over time, particularly within the next three years (identifying opportunity).

- Strength of local infrastructure – strength of local infrastructure and partnerships to support successful heritage investments in the next three years (identifying potential).

In the first tranche of strategic investment in place, the Heritage Fund sought to identify just nine places to be the focus of our new strategic initiative from 374 authority areas in the UK. The quantitative analysis of need was therefore conducted first in order to shortlist places for deeper analysis of the potential and opportunity by our local teams.

Approach to the quantitative analysis

In designing a model to support the framework, the Heritage Fund's Board of Trustees decided in June 2022 that data on heritage need was the most important factor for the quantitative analysis. The overall weightings were agreed as:

- heritage assets and condition: 75%

- deprivation: 15%

- other government funding: 25%

- extent of prior Heritage Fund investment: -15% (favouring areas of prior under-investment)

The analysis was conducted to a UK-wide framework using the principles described above, but also recognised that data about heritage varies enormously by nation. We therefore created one model each for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to accommodate these differences and offer insight that was bespoke and relevant to each nation.

Data on heritage assets and their condition was drawn from the RSA 2020 Heritage Index. A key principle of this work was that the Heritage Condition factor should cover the full breadth of heritage, even if the quality of data in some domains varied. We ensured there was data included from all domains within the Heritage Index, namely:

- built heritage

- museums, archives and artefacts

- industrial, maritime and transport

- cultures and memories/community heritage

- land and nature

- public parks and open green space

We also adjusted the Heritage Index methodology to more strongly weight data about assets and, where available, condition. This approach is explained in full in section 3.3 of the methodology note. We then added data for the other three factors as follows:

- **Previous levels of Heritage Fund support** was drawn from our grant management systems and applied on a per capita basis for each area of the UK.

- **Deprivation** was calculated by drawing the relevant datasets from each nation and calculating the percentage of sub-areas within a local authority boundary that were in the 20% most deprived for that nation.

- **Other government funding** was included for place-based schemes across the UK. Data from 14 different programmes was consolidated into a measure of the level of investment by others into each place in the model.

Data for all four of these factors was indexed to a common 0–100 score then weighted. This was then consolidated into a single overall rank for each area.

Using the analysis to select Heritage Places

Area teams used the quantitative analysis to shortlist places which were then subject to in depth assessment using the above qualitative factors. These area teams typically shortlisted between six and 10 places for review and then completed a detailed assessment of the opportunity and potential for each.

The Heritage Fund's six committees were asked to agree a smaller number of places that would become the focus of a targeted strategic intervention over the lifetime of the new strategy, based on the analysis of their local teams.

The exercise of selecting areas was different in each part of the UK, owing to the diversity of places in each nation and English area, as well as the different policy contexts across the UK.

In some areas the data and the local insight supported the same priority places, whereas for others the local intelligence brought new places into focus. Each team conducted their own analysis to integrate local intelligence with the insight in this way. The full lists from the quantitative analysis that were supplied to each team are presented in Annex A of the methodology report, together with the rankings for each place within the area or nation in question.

Committee discussions on this topic took place during the spring of 2023 and this led to a recommended shortlist. The Board of Trustees reviewed the analysis alongside the advice from committees and agreed the first 9 places in May 2023, which are:

- Stoke on Trent (Midlands & East)
- Leicester (Midlands & East)
- County Durham (North)
- North-East Lincolnshire (North)
- Torbay (London & South)
- Medway (London & South)
- Glasgow (Scotland)
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon (Northern Ireland)
- Neath Port Talbot (Wales)

Strengths, limitations and future development of the analysis

The aim of this analysis has been to support evidence-based decision making by the Heritage Fund as we embark on this new programme of investment in places. We used a combination of quantitative and qualitative insight because research has

shown that it is important to understand the need, potential and opportunity of places when making investment decisions.

The main strength of this analysis is that, for the first time, the Heritage Fund has incorporated data about heritage and local insight into the process of selecting places to prioritise for investment.

There are also limitations to the data analysis used to select places, however, which are discussed in full in the full methodology report.

First, the range of data we were able to use for each type of heritage varies significantly. We adhered to the principle of treating all heritage 'domains' equally, but this means that in those areas (such as cultures and memories) with sparse data, a single data source has a disproportionate influence on the model. We believe that the long-term answer to this challenge is to work with all parts of the heritage sector on projects to improve data about heritage and incorporate this into our modelling.

Second, our analysis used administrative boundaries as a geographic scope for places. This is a limitation because it does not often correspond to how people think about their local neighbourhood, or how we should consider the need for investment in land and nature. This was a pragmatic choice in the context of the project since all the data required came fitted to these boundaries. In future, however, it may be possible to adopt a different geographic scope that is bespoke to heritage, but this would need significant consultation across the devolved nations and between the sub-sectors of heritage.

Finally, we are conscious that the analysis predominantly used data from 2020. The Heritage Fund is committed to further place-based investment through the lifetime of our new strategy, Heritage 2033. We will continue to use data about the profile of heritage within areas to support our new aims. Wherever possible we will improve and update the quantitative analysis to address the limitations we have highlighted above. This includes through our ongoing work with partners from across different sectors and by incorporating new data as it is published.