

Heritage Debate 2024 - Transcript

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Good morning, everybody. Welcome to the Heritage Debate 2024. We're looking forward to a tremendous morning with people participating from right across the sector. Do use the chat function to introduce yourselves to one another. It's really nice to see who we've got online with us this morning.

So I'm Carole Souter, and it was my great pleasure to become the chair of the Heritage Alliance in July this year. I've been involved with heritage for nearly 25 years now, having worked for English Heritage, then being chief executive of the Heritage Lottery Fund, before moving to Oxford for six years, where I chaired the board of the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, the partnership board between the university and the National Trust, and the Oxford Preservation Trust's Planning Committee. As well as chairing the Heritage Alliance, I also now chair Sulgrave Manor Trust and the Fabric Advisory Committee of Salisbury Cathedral. So I have direct experience of organisations which have public, philanthropic, and commercial sources of income.

I'm a white woman in my late 60s with short blonde hair, dark-rimmed glasses, and I'm wearing a brown linen top.

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The Heritage Alliance is the leading membership body covering the breadth of the heritage sector, with over 200 organisations in membership and over 7 million members between them. Our heritage debate is one of two large annual events alongside Heritage Day in March, providing a chance for us as a sector to celebrate, learn from, and challenge each other, to hear a range of wider voices, and think openly and creatively about a topic crucial to the sector.

There's a lot to talk about this morning, and I hope everyone will take the opportunity to get engaged and feel able to comment as the debate goes on. The event will be recorded and shared online.

This year, our topic is "Balancing the Books: How should the heritage sector be funded?" Other than the obvious answer of "better," we've decided to look at a range of ways of bringing in income to our sector. We've asked our three speakers to put forward the case for three different arms of funding: public, private, and philanthropic.

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We all know that our sector's funding models are complex, and many, if not most, organisations rely on all three arms of that funding trio. But today we'll be exploring the risks and opportunities associated with the different sources of funding. If we rely on one source of funding, the risk of that being adversely affected is pretty extreme. So how do we decide what balance we want between the different arms of funding? Do we want to hope that philanthropy, as the government is keen to encourage, will come forward and help support our organisations? Do we want to rely on public funding, which can offer some degree of stability at least in planning terms? Or do we want to go for the private and commercial aspect of things, being creative about how to bring in additional income from outside? These are the sorts of things we'll be thinking about and talking about today, and we'll also be asking you to think about them too.

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Now, before we begin, I'd like to thank Ecclesiastical Insurance Group for their generous sponsorship of this event over a number of years, and to the Architectural Heritage Fund and the Historic Environment Fund, who are also sponsoring this year.

We'd like to begin by making a baseline assessment, if you like, of your thoughts about the way in which you'd like to see funding work. We're going to ask you to use Menti— you've got the code on the screen there— to share your own views about what your organisation's main source of income is at the moment.

Just use one or two words. It doesn't have to be a great sentence or an exercise. It's completely anonymous, so we're not going to be coming back to you and asking for exact percentages. Don't worry about being too exact. Let's just get the conversation started by seeing what you feel at the moment is your balance of funding.

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Thank you so much for doing this. It makes such a difference to get a review at the beginning of a process of what's really important to people. Our panellists will be interested to see what your current experience is before they get into talking through their own perspectives.

It's looking like government's starting to settle down fairly solidly in the middle. Commercial is moving around a bit. Let's see what we've got at the moment. It seems we're looking at a moving picture. Government, memberships, and grant funding seem to be coming through fairly solidly. I think most people have some membership income somewhere.

It's balancing out very nicely between government and philanthropy. Membership would likely count as a private approach to bringing in income, and commercial income is now settling down quite solidly, just under donations alongside visitor income.

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It's interesting to see "volunteer work" pop up, which we don't usually cost up unless we're applying for grants, but it's a very important part of what makes it possible for organisations to function.

I'll give it a moment or two more... Okay, I think we've pretty much settled down. That's going to give us a good basis for looking at where people are getting their income from. One entry in particular intrigued me: Interestingly, the Heritage Lottery Fund pops up here, and you'll all know that yesterday marked the 30th anniversary of lottery funding for our sector.

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And a huge amount of money has gone into projects. That's something we might talk about later on during the session: the extent to which funding comes with strings attached for projects, whether it's supporting basic operations, which we all know can be a real challenge.

Okay, I think I'm going to suggest that we pause there, with that as our baseline. Perhaps this is the moment for me to ask my colleagues to appear on the screen. I'm going to introduce our panel and then ask them to say a word or two about themselves.

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So we're extremely fortunate today because we've got some of the real experts with us— people with real experience of coming at funding from different aspects. First of all, Caroline Underwood, OBE, who's the chief executive of the philanthropy company. Caroline's going to be talking to us about philanthropy and charitable giving. We have Claudia Kenyatta, Director of Regions at Historic England, to speak on public funding. And Alex and Ali Khalil Martin, custodians of the Crooked House at Lavenham, will talk about commercial income generation.

They're each going to have one or two minutes to introduce themselves to us before we delve into the debate. They'll introduce themselves using audio descriptions to ensure this event is as accessible as possible. Claudia, I'm going to ask you to start first, please.

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No problem. Thanks, Carol. Hi, everybody. It's really nice to be here, and thank you for inviting me. My name is Claudia Kenyatta, and I'm Regions Director at Historic England. I'm a midlife brown woman, wearing a navy blue top with gold buttons, sitting in our Historic England offices in front of a picture of the Willis building in Ipswich.

For those who don't know us, Historic England is the government's heritage advisor. We advocate for heritage and its positive impact on people, places, and communities. We provide advice to central and local government, the sector, and the public, including on heritage within the planning system. We also designate nationally important heritage, including listed buildings and ancient monuments, and we are one of the heritage funders in England.

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Thank you, Claudia. Caroline, may I ask you to introduce yourself, please?

Thank you. Hi, everyone. It's great to be here and see so many friends and contacts popping up in the chat list. I'm Caroline Underwood, and I run the philanthropy company. I've dedicated my whole professional life to connecting people with money with organisations that need it. Nowadays, I work with families and family offices to help stimulate their giving. We also work with the arts, culture, education, charity, and of course, heritage.

I've been working in philanthropy and fundraising for about 30 years. I'm joining you from Chilton, Oxford, and I'm wearing a wintry business jacket in green, just to give you some context. It's exciting to bring these funding themes together, and I'm looking forward to the debate.

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Thank you, Caroline. Alex and Ollie, over to you.

Hello, everyone. I'm Alex, and this is Ollie, Khalil Martin, and we're also known as the Crooked Men. We're the current custodians of The Crooked House in Lavenham, Suffolk. Our pronouns are he/him, and we're both white men in our 30s. Usually, we dress in Tudor attire, but today we've come in slightly more casual clothing. People often say we sound the same, but you can differentiate us by our hair— Alex has much longer, more luscious locks, while I, Ollie, have short, darker hair and glasses.

The Crooked House was built in 1395 and is said to be the inspiration for the old English nursery rhyme "There Was a Crooked Man," which is why today it's home to two crooked men. We share the house and its 600-year story through immersive experiences, including our award-winning black tie dinners and a theatrical house tour, alongside Crooked House-inspired gifts and merchandise.

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Thank you very much, guys. That's a brilliant sales pitch for the Crooked House— we'll all be queuing up!

Now, you've seen our panellists. Before we kick off the debate, we're going to take a moment to explore some highlights from the Historic Environment Forum's interviews with sector leaders on what works for their funding models. We'll take a look at some of their key reflections and case studies.

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I'm really grateful to those organisations who provided a case study this year. They're all available on the webpage in the digital programme. The ones we don't use now, you'll be able to come back to and look at in more detail. We'll just call up the page to show you some of the interviews and key points made. Please take a moment to think about what messages resonate with you and whether any points made by the sector leaders surprise you or might spark questions.

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Okay, thank you, folks. I hope everyone had a chance to read through and take in the main points from those presentations or reports. Some things really jump out, don't they? Maybe something we shouldn't take for granted. I was very struck by the point from St John's in Doddington about there being only one person who had the capacity and ability to pursue funding applications. This put a tremendous strain on that individual over a long period of time, and I suspect many small organisations will be in a similar position.

Caroline, maybe you can help us with this when we talk about philanthropy and charitable giving later on—how to support the members of the team who are taking on that responsibility. It can feel very personally draining to keep applying and applying, particularly if you keep getting knocked back. I think that's something we mustn't forget—the impact on individuals. Again, Alex and Ollie, as custodians of the Crooked House, your perspective on this is particularly acute, I imagine.

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Let's get into the main debate now, the main business of the morning. First of all, everyone who's watching, please remember that you can submit questions via the Q&A function throughout the debate. Don't feel you have to wait until the end or the official Q&A session. I'm conscious I haven't received any questions yet, so no burning lists of things to ask, but please don't be shy—debates really only work if we have more than ourselves talking.

We have five or six themes we'll work through, and I'll give each one about eight minutes to keep things moving along. I'll emphasize that to our panelists because we need to get as much content in a relatively short space of time.

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I want to start with a topic that relates to the point I made earlier about fundraising: skills and capacity, and what's available in the sector to support the development of skills and capacity. We've had a lot of discussion about heritage craft skills in recent years and the need to develop them. But do we think enough about the people in our sector responsible for finding the funding to keep things going? Do we have enough training, courses, or access to support for those people?

When we talk about heritage jobs, we often think about curators or stonemasons and thatchers, but actually, there are many people we rely on within the heritage sector who are responsible for helping us raise the money to do the jobs we all do.

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So I think I might stop with Alex and Ollie in a rather atypical way and keep Caroline for a moment later. Guys, when you started on this journey, what did you know about fundraising and finding sources of income, and how easy was it for you to start?

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We began this journey because we fell in love with the house. It started with the Crooked House. From the beginning, we knew we needed to protect it, preserve it, and look after it for the next 600 years. We always

knew we would need to ensure it could fund itself. So, we initially focused on commercial income generation as our first approach.

We looked at private funding first, seeing what we could do to support the house, and thought about mixing other funding sources for emergency needs down the line. But our view was that the house itself should be able to fund itself.

We're fortunate that it's a small house, which has its benefits. But, like any ancient building, it has its upkeep costs, and a lot of specialists are needed to support it. From the start, we took it on; we didn't inherit it. We chose to live here, and we knew this would become our life and work as well. We went into it with open eyes, understanding it would be a lot of work, but we wanted to protect the house.

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We didn't have a background in fundraising specifically, but we had experience in business, working in different sectors. So, we approached it from a business perspective—how can this run as a business? But also, how can it function as a home? For us, it's about balancing those two elements: looking after the house, funding itself, and being a home we can enjoy.

We started where we had skills—our business model is tailored to what we enjoy and what we already know, like digital marketing. Traditionally, heritage properties aimed to get as many people through the door as possible, but since our house is small, it's not about that. Instead, we've expanded our reach through social media and marketing, which has been incredibly successful. We now have over 50,000 followers.

Alongside our commercial work at the Crooked House, we also do consulting for other heritage properties, helping them with social media and digital marketing. That's been a skills gap we've identified—it's not just about accessing funding but using your existing skills to generate income.

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Thank you. That's fascinating and really interesting that you brought a developed skill set to apply to this area. Claudia, any thoughts from your point of view on the sorts of people Historic England works with and whether there's a bigger need for skills and support there?

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Yeah, absolutely. A couple of reflections on where we are, especially after the pandemic. Survey work by the Alliance, the forum, and others has shown that heritage is less resilient than it was before COVID. Many heritage organisations feel they lack access to the necessary skills, capabilities, and support.

Some of these are critically important heritage skills, but there's also a significant need for business development skills, especially in fundraising and philanthropy. Many heritage organisations feel they not only don't have access to these skills but also don't know how to get them.

We've already heard this from Alex and Ollie, as well as in your introduction. There's a sense that the funding process is complex, time-consuming, and exhausting. It's not just the applications but also managing relationships, monitoring, and evaluation, and all the communication that surrounds it.

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We have solid evidence that the heritage sector has real issues around fundraising and needs help. The question now is how funders can respond effectively. One key thing that's come through is that each funder should be clear about where their funding adds value.

At Historic England, for example, we've been evaluating our own grants. We've heard that our funding, while not large, is really valuable when we're the first funder to get involved. We help de-risk projects and build confidence for other funders. Interestingly, the money we provide might not be the most important part—it's the skills, advice, and network that our staff can offer that is just as valuable.

This feedback has been helpful as we plan to reform our grants program. Starting next summer, we'll introduce changes to make the process more accessible, including a new digital front end for our grants. For us as a funder, it's been an important exercise to clearly define our role in what's a complicated funding landscape. I think other funders are also working through similar processes.

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Thanks, Claudia. That's really helpful. So Caroline, I'm going to come to you and ask you if you also have a word if you've had any experience with this, of the extent to which funders are willing to fund fundraisers, because that's a question that's been asked in the Q&A. And I think I want to come back later on to the question of how funders are most effectively working together. But Caroline, how does it seem to you as you advise organisations and donors?

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Yeah, I mean, I wish I had, I feel like I'm slightly set up to offer an easy solution, which I'm afraid I don't have. But a couple of things. One is that I was very struck as well, but I think it's Celia at St John's Church saying... He didn't say this silly about us sort of, "I'm exhausted, this is relentless," and just to acknowledge that fundraising is very lonely. And the reason it's lonely, and I've been doing it all my life, is that you get a lot of knockbacks, of course.

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But the other thing to say is that, as you've alluded to, fundraising is never just about the fundraiser. Although we do need more capacity, fundraising is about the boards, your colleagues, everybody understanding what is involved in putting a major grant application together or inviting philanthropists to support you. So that's an area for development. But I think the key point here is that there is a desperate need for capacity building in fundraising. There are some incredible fundraisers around, but there is a huge shortage of them. And there is more and more competition in the sector.

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So I would absolutely advocate for, and there are some discussions, as Claudia says, about capacity building and, of course, core costs. There are some funders who will fund core costs. However, the principles remain the same, that you need to be very mindful of the story you're telling, the impact you're achieving, your business planning. So whether you're applying for core costs or project costs, there are some kind of key skills needed.

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I just want to mention a couple of things. There were things coming up in the chat asking for where you can get advice. There's the Heritage Trust Network, there's Arts Council, there's the Institute of Fundraising. I also want to mention, thank you to Ecclesiastical for sponsoring this. I want to mention the church fundraising hub that we actually developed with Ecclesiastical, which is an incredibly useful online resource for churches in starting their fundraising.

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Some green shoots of hope, but yes, more capacity building is needed. Thank you very much, and it would be remiss of me not to say that obviously the Heritage Alliance also provides a lot of methods of contacting

one another and keeping in touch, chief executives' groups, all sorts of groups that can talk informally and find advice. But I think that's an extra layer of comfort if you like, but the training, the capacity building is a clear need, as everyone has said.

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Okay, well, let me take us into the next area to think about which comes out very nicely, actually, Caroline, from something you said, which is about competition versus collaboration. We all know that there's a limited amount of money available. There's less room in the market in some places; it varies from area to area. I think that it's very easy to get very focused on a particular project that your organisation wants to do and just go straight for that.

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And when I was at the lottery, one of the things that I became really very focused on was asking people to look around them and see what else was in the area. My classic example is the small market town with a library, a tiny theatre, a little museum, and all of them think that they need a café and education space and so on and so forth, which may be the case. But what's your view, folks, about how easy it is to work with others to push forward your application for funding and so on? Is it something you think about? Is it something you'd like people to think about? Or is it inevitable that actually people will be looking for funding for one project that's key to them?

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Claudia, do you see any of this coming through, people working together?

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Yeah, absolutely. And I'll sort of answer a slightly different question, if I may, which is to sort of take a step back and think, well, what does that mean for sort of heritage funding at national level? Because I think one of the really interesting things that we've seen over the past couple of years is, yes, everybody is competing for a slice of the pie, sort of whatever that pie is. But there are also really helpful opportunities to kind of grow the pie and make the pie bigger.

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And where heritage has been really effective over the past couple of years and where I think there's real potential for the future is to continue to demonstrate and to make the case for the role that heritage can play in delivering broader agendas. So I think it's a sort of national funding equivalent of not everybody needs the café and the visitor centre.

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So if you look at programs such as the Cultural Development Fund or the MEND program for museums, over 90%, I think, of the funding delivered through those schemes currently has gone to heritage buildings. If you think about levelling-up funding, it sort of slightly depends on how people have described their projects, but certainly we think sort of two-thirds of that huge capital funding pot has gone to culture and heritage activities. And within that, most of that has gone to heritage.

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And then if you think about sort of government departments and their respective interests, we've seen significant heritage funding coming through DEFRA, we've seen significant heritage funding coming through the Department for Local Government. So I think the more that heritage can think in those broad terms and think about its impact for people and for places, as well as thinking about individual heritage organisations

and individual heritage assets, the more scope there is to grow that pie. And I think that's something that the sector has been really good at lately.

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Thank you, Claudia. That's really helpful. As you say, we've been really good at it. I'm not sure that we shout enough about how good we are, and maybe that's something we can come back to.

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Alex and Ollie, how do you fit into the local economic situation around you in Lavenham? Do you work with others, or people who offer similar sorts of services?

Very much so. As Claudia was saying about growing the pie, we very much see it from a commercial income generation perspective. It's about looking for new opportunities, and it doesn't have to be competitive. We work very closely with the Historic Houses Network. We're proud to be part of that fantastic organisation, and we see it as a great example of where heritage isn't competitive, but can be a really collaborative, supportive network.

We speak to lots of other historic house owners, and think, actually, their visitors—who love history, heritage, and old buildings—will want to visit multiple properties in the network. We can all support each other, knowing that each house has a different story to tell. Our audiences will hopefully come to all of the properties, particularly those in their local area. From a national perspective, organisations like that show us that collaboration is key.

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Locally, we very much see the Crooked House at the heart of the community in Lavenham. We try to ensure everything we do benefits the local community. For example, we partner with local hotels and restaurants, so our guests will stay in local hotels and shop at independent stores. The majority of our merchandise is made locally, and we source all our food and drink from local farms, butchers, and vineyards. We are lucky to have such a talented network of local businesses that help our business thrive, while also supporting theirs.

So, in terms of growing the pie, we can all benefit by working closely together. Collaboration also allows us to move beyond just the heritage sector and take heritage into new spaces. For example, while our property is small and can't accommodate huge numbers of visitors, by partnering with other organisations across the UK, we can creatively support others and engage larger audiences.

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Right now, we're collaborating with Good Flowers, London's finest florist on Charlotte Street. They have a Christmas window display all about the Crooked House, and we're doing a partnership with them to have our merchandise in their shop. They've also helped decorate our house. This partnership is a great example of how we're thinking beyond just the heritage sector, reaching new customers in central London.

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Caroline, I saw you nodding at that sort of partnership working.

Yes, I was thinking about this from the perspective of private philanthropists. Recently, there's been more attention on place-based philanthropy, where people want to support initiatives where they live and work—just like Alex and Ollie pointed out. This is growing and presents a real opportunity to think about what an individual philanthropist looks like and how collaboration can be stimulated by funders.

Some of the big foundations, for example, are always looking for people to join up. I also think there's a very clear inclusion aspect here, as it can't or shouldn't always be the big, well-funded organisations at the top. Bringing together different skills and communities through collaboration is key.

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There's a real push behind place-based philanthropy, and I think it's especially relevant for the heritage sector. The focus on place is becoming increasingly important with more devolution, and it enables a more holistic approach to funding in a given area. This takes us into interesting areas of equality, ethics, and funding practices.

Should all types of heritage have access to all types of funding? Should publicly owned buildings be going for private philanthropy and private charity when other organisations that don't have that sort of public underpinning are in need of it?

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And then, the tensions between private and public funding. Anushka, just picking up your question—how can funding models make sure we don't lose sight of ethical principles?

It's a whole big debate about who you accept money from and what your fundraising policy is.

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But I mean, Caroline, do you encourage people to think about the ethics of their approach before they get into starting to disperse or apply for funding on both sides.

Yes, I mean, I would very much say that every organisation accepting any gifts by which I mean donations, should have a donor acceptance policy, even if it's a light touch piece because it's, you know reputations are the most precious things that people have and aligning yourself with somebody who doesn't fit your values can impact on your reputation. So just in a really practical sense, absolutely say that you should have donor acceptance policy.

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Does that need to be the same as everybody else's? No. And we've seen some really interesting examples in the sector with the British Museum and somebody's just put Sacklers in the chat. This is a massive area that we could spend a morning on, but at its simplest I would say you do need to think about it. If you're going down the private philanthropy route, you need to think about it even more and you do need to have some kind of agreed policy and approach.

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Yeah, thank you.

Claudia, anything you wanted to add to that?

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Thanks, Carol. Not on the specifics, although I'd absolutely agree with everything that Caroline has just said. I guess my only reflection from your intro, Carol, is that I think the conversation on sort of diversity and inclusion is sort of in some elements it's done now and that is now the baseline that we should all be thinking from when we're thinking about fundraising.

I think expectations of funders have shifted to the point that it is not something that any organisation in any of our sectors can add in at the end of the process, it's got to be fundamental to thinking through our approach to fundraising of all sorts right at the very beginning. I think that applies for central government funding as well as for everything else.

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Okay.

And I think, you know, it'll be really interesting to see with a new government what their specific and detailed take on this is. But if the mood music is anything to go by I think you know we've had a real focus on mutually beneficial partnerships and sustainability of funding in sort of large organisations working with small organisations and I wouldn't be at all surprised to see more of that in future. So I think that the world is - we are where we are now and that's a significantly different place from where we may have been 10, 15 years ago.

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Yeah.

I think that's really interesting because that would be my perspective as well. And I think in terms of policies and strategies and national perspectives, that's very much what would be expected now and certainly from major funders.

But I'm interested that one of the questions in the Q&A, for example, was how to how to manage introducing diversity into a strategy where there are senior members and trustees who are resistant to change. And so I think we've probably got a bit of an issue here with maybe smaller organisations which have had very stable trustee groups over a long period of time who perhaps haven't felt the need to address this issue for themselves locally.

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I wonder whether again we're looking at places of support for people within organisations who can see that things need to be done, but who might have some resistance or some blockers or just some ignorance about what's needed and what the huge benefits are

The thing that always amazed me when we started these discussions was how can it not be obvious to people that the more diverse your workforce, your offer, your membership, your visitors you know the more opportunities you have for your organisation, but it isn't obvious to um to some corners of our sector and every other sector, I think.

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Alex and Ollie, is there anything that you've come across that you would say was either an ethical issue or an issue about diversity and you've gone about thinking about that.

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Yes, I mean, I think from a pure funding perspective, our approach is private first. You know, we only want to take money when we absolutely need to. And for now we don't need to. And so I suppose that's our philosophical approach.

If there is a limited amount of funding, give it to those who need it most rather than those who shout the loudest, perhaps. And so we're very conscious to do everything we possibly can to fund our house privately. But there may be cases in the future where we do need extra help. Whether it's an unexpected emergency in the house or something like that.

But that gives us sort of control and security and flexibility of how we deploy the funds. From more of a diversity and inclusion perspective, that's always been so important to us with our messaging around the crooked house with how we present the crooked House as a gay couple, of course, we have a huge vested interest in D&I.

I spent years in my professional life sponsoring DNI, but actually what we find is we get people coming to our events and our house tours from such a range of backgrounds, everyone from their 20s to their 90s, and that to us is a great sign that we are being as inclusive as we can.

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And even just from our offering, we have high value experiences like our black tie dinners all the way down to you know, merchandise at a much lower price and also social media content, which is free.

We know a lot of our followers will probably never come to the Crooked House. A lot of them are international. Some just want to follow our journey and to be involved that way. And we're really proud of our little crooked community.

And so it's been always really important to us to have an offering that really genuinely feels like it's for everyone and I think our proof point is the diverse range of people we get coming to the house.

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Thank you. Yeah.

I think it's really interesting that you've got such a clear private first approach to looking at things and I think that's something that maybe some organisations could step back and think, well could we maybe think about doing that too?

So, can I just then focus on a little bit to think about the current context and risks and opportunities. And I'm determined to stick with opportunities as well as risks. But I'm looking through the questions as they come up and there is a lot of anxiety and there's a lot of concern about risk.

There's a lot of concern about lack of clarity about whether certain schemes are going to continue, what the funding button is going to look like in the future.

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So, I think I might start with power line here is slightly to one side of the public and main funding streams, if you like, what does it look like from your point of view?

How has the appetite for philanthropy changed? How does that sit next to public funding streams?

And I guess quite a specific question, are there some philanthropists who feel that they will only step in if they feel that the public sector's done its bit first?

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Well, look, first of all, I'm a fundraiser, so I have to be an optimist. Otherwise, you know, so I am optimistic. And I suppose I start from the basis that we see incredible achievements in, you know, through funding

I would like to say that philanthropy is the only way to fund things in the future, which is the purpose of this debate, but I do actually see it as being collaborative, as you say. And so one of the things that I'm really interested in is where philanthropy or donations can actually create leverage from other funders.

So there are some fantastic examples of where somebody has come along and put £25,000 into an initiative or £25,000 into part of a salary or something, which has then enabled them to apply to some of the big the big trusts and um you know the big trusts, I think, I mean, everybody knows well the kind of the kind of four leading trust really in Esme Furburn, Garfield western Wolfson and Paul Hamlin and all of those areas.

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You know, stimulated and excited by people saying there's a need for this. We've proven a need exists.

I think there's a real opportunity here: can raising money help you to raise even more money in that way?

That's the first opportunity.

The second opportunity is that so many times I talk about philanthropy, and people seem to think that philanthropists are usually men, usually wearing suits, and sort of over there, waving in the distance.

But actually, philanthropists and supporters are among the people who love and need you. There's been a lot of discussion in the chat about volunteers.

00:58:18.000

Of course, volunteers are essential to so many organisations.

However, I would say that for fundraising and for philanthropy, you often need to look closer to home. A significant number of organisations we work with don't really ask people for money.

They don't properly ask for philanthropy. They think it's all about receiving massive donations, whereas our approach would be: it's about engaging with the people you know.

Start with your friends and family first and think about the potential there.

00:58:49.000

Thank you. Yeah, I saw lots of nodding going on around the screen there.

Claudia, how do you think things have changed in maybe the last five or so years? And how are you feeling in terms of risks and opportunities? Where are you on the personal optimism barometer at the moment?

00:59:14.000

Well, I think there are lots of reasons to feel really optimistic. I think some of those reasons stem from what heritage inherently is. Heritage is a sector with an incredibly powerful story to tell.

We all know that and see it in the work we do every day and in the organisations we work with. It's also, in many ways, a really diverse sector—diverse in terms of scale, reach, and the sorts of work that people do.

There's strength in that diversity, certainly.

00:59:45.000

We've seen, through the pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and other challenges, that it's also a very resilient sector.

So, while there are understandable anxieties across the heritage sector at the moment, I think heritage has shown, time and again, that it is an entrepreneurial sector. It is willing to do things differently and operates with a range of business models.

01:00:10.000

And so, we should feel optimistic about heritage's future inherent resilience as a sector I think in terms of risk, this does feel like quite an uncertain period.

We have a new government with really clear missions, but I think some of the sort of detail about what those will look like when they sort of become policy and become programs is still yet to come.

01:00:31.000

We're waiting. We've had the autumn budget, which is obviously only a one-year settlement for heritage organisations impacted by public funding. We're now going into another spending review process for next spring, and there's a lot of uncertainty that comes with that.

Hopefully, we'll get a two-year settlement out of that spring budget process, which will provide a little more certainty. However, these do feel like uncertain times, especially as we navigate this process with a new government.

But I think there are plenty of opportunities as well.

01:01:03.000

We've already talked about the Historic Houses Association (HHA), but I keep thinking back to our chair, Neil Mendoza's, speech at the HHA event last week. He called on the sector and historic house members to shout more loudly about the amazing work heritage does and the impact it has.

I think this is an opportunity for the sector to be really confident about the work we do and why it matters. There are so many different places where we can take this conversation.

The heritage and cultural capital work being undertaken within government is going to be a really helpful tool for advocating for our sector to the Treasury. Additionally, the upcoming spending review provides an opportunity to present our best evidence as to why the government should invest in heritage as a means of achieving its own aims and ambitions.

01:02:02.000

You mentioned devolution, and I think heritage has a strong story to tell in this context. Heritage is fundamentally about place in many cases, and with new funding and powers being allocated to mayors, as well as new decision-making at the regional level, there's a real opportunity for heritage.

Meeting these challenges will partly depend on the sector being really confident in highlighting its positive impact.

01:02:21.000

Thank you, Claudia. Thinking about shouting loudly and talking about the difference heritage makes, it seems that's exactly your approach. Everything you say highlights the power of the place you've clearly fallen in love with, and the difference it can make for the local village and wider area.

You've probably taken on the biggest personal risk of anyone here. How does it feel from your point of view? Does it feel more or less risky now? Are you more or less optimistic than when you first jumped into this new world with both feet?

01:03:02.000

Thank you. I think we're natural optimists, and we believe it's all going to be wonderful. That doesn't mean we aren't aware of the challenges we'll face along the journey.

In terms of how we've planned the business, we've tried to minimise risk as much as possible through careful pre-planning.

01:03:30.000

So things like our events and experiences, we pre-sell all those tickets. It isn't a case of turn up on the day. It is for us about booking in advance. Lots of our events sell out about six months in advance. So, in a way, the funds are in to fund the event as such. So it sort of works forward in that sense.

Similarly, we've thought carefully about what those events and experiences look like in the house to make sure that we can minimise the risk to the property. It is an ancient and fragile place. So we've carefully chosen the sort of scale of the tours that we can do in terms of the number of visitors.

01:04:07.000

We have some very strict rules that we enforce before people come in, which kind of scares people a bit when they come in, but it does make people, I suppose, see the importance of heritage and how it really does need to be protected and how seriously we take that, even though we do it in quite a fun and sort of tongue-in-cheek way.

And I think, as Claudia and Caroline have both said, the sort of innovation and sort of entrepreneurial approach is crucial to all of this.

01:04:34.000

we're always looking for new ways that we can be engaging people and new ways that we can be supporting the crooked House. A couple of weeks ago, we won the High Streets Innovation Award, which we were delighted to get.

But also it shows that you know the high street and the location that we are in is in a broader picture changing how people are coming to different towns and high streets is different. They're looking for different experiences in those spaces. And so being aware of those wider consumer national trends that are going on and thinking how can we work with that to enhance what we can offer to people is again a way of minimizing risks and not being caught out by those trends when it's too late.

01:05:20.000

Yeah, sort of pre-empting them. And I think being flexible and always adapting what we offer. Currently, we have the clear offer in terms of the immersive experiences, but we know that that will change over the next 30, 40 years as consumer desires change and as we change what we want to do with it as well. So I think being very open to how things change is crucial to sort of really minimizing those risks and maximizing all the opportunities that come our way.

01:05:43.000

I think that's really interesting because one of the things that I guess the sector is now much more flexible about than it was is how it engages with technology as it develops.

And we've all had that experience of going to a relatively early adopter place where none of the tech actually works after the first two or three years because it was all so complicated and no one knew how to change the bulbs. And I think that is much more sophisticated now. I think we are better at those things but it is moving so fast that it's going to be quite a challenge, particularly if you've made a big investment in the first place.

01:06:28.000

And you guys are obviously thinking very carefully about that. I think the other thing that I was really struck by what you said was almost a throwaway line about winning an award.

01:06:40.000

And I guess quite often you have to be in it or at least nominated to win it. And I wonder whether all of our sector or perhaps not necessarily always looking for that opportunity to say, "Oh, could we apply for this award or could we apply for that award?"

01:07:01.000

You know, we're a museum or whatever—could we apply for a high street award? Of course we could. So I think there are perhaps some things there that, again, sort of mutual support and advice might be helpful in raising profile a bit.

01:07:19.000

There's lots and lots of questions coming in, so we're not going to be short of things to talk about later on. But before we get to a couple of our presentations, one final question: I'm going to ask each of you on your areas this time rather than asking you to answer for everybody else.

01:07:39.000

But is there one measure that you think would help stimulate funding in your particular area? So Caroline, I'll come to you first with an ask about philanthropy; Claudia, public funding; and Alex Nolly, about commercial and private opportunities.

01:08:03.000

Is there one thing that you've thought for ages—if we could only get that changed, that would make such a difference? If I talk long enough for you to have a moment to think about that—Karen, you go first.

01:08:10.000

Yeah. So at the moment, philanthropy across the UK is about 1%, you know, in terms of the measure of giving there could be a real push and with our discussions with the new government about this to grow it to 2%. Couldn't the heritage sector be a big part of that?

So that's my kind of proposition.

01:08:31.000 --> 01:08:33.000

Okay. What would it - what is the one thing that is needed? I mean, there are all sorts of different things, but I do think this point about capacity building is really important.

I think that not only the heritage sector, but the fundraising sector is extraordinarily collaborative and open and sharing about information so more collaboration. It would be, I mean, I said I was an optimist but obviously you know not naive the cost of living crisis is a massive pressure on people and you are competing for funds which charities you know trying to feed families are also competing for so increased competition.

So you need to think about how to make your story stand out. So that's my kind of macro grow to 2% and then my micro three practical suggestions. Does that help?

01:09:22.000

Great, thank you.

Interesting that you didn't come straight in with a request for a tax break. And I think that's very interesting because one of the trusts that I chair, we have a lot of support from America. And we spend quite a lot of time explaining to our American supporters that the tax position in Britain is really very different. And we found it very helpful to go through that explanation, actually, because otherwise it may look sometimes as if we're not being as generous, if you like, as a country.

01:10:06.000

Yeah. I was just struck, Caroline, because so often it's the first thing that people say. And you were much more in there and practical about what could be done in the short term, which I think is really helpful.

01:10:13.000

Well, I think people have been talking about a tax break for decades. And we see tax increases, not tax breaks, at the moment, although I would say another really—sorry, I'm very pragmatic—if you're not using gift aid and maximizing your gift aid and telling your supporters about gift aid, then that is something you could do tomorrow.

01:10:36.000

It's not tax, but it helps.

Yeah. Yeah. Thank you.

Okay.

01:10:42.000

Claudia, I'm not sure it's really fair to ask you what do we do to get more public funding, but have a go.

01:10:49.000

I don't think it's fair to only let everybody have one cow, but I'll have a go.

Okay. But I think just one kind of reflection is, I think the one thing we could all collectively do is make heritage as a sector as easy to understand as possible for people whose primary interest or business is not heritage. And I think where we do that, where we talk about heritage and heritage organisations in terms that others can understand, we unlock interest, focus, change, and funding.

And just sort of picking up on Caroline's excellent example, there's a couple of practical things that we're currently thinking about that might help to do that. We're starting a project focused on mapping the heritage sector, which is just thinking about whether we could describe heritage not in terms of types of historic asset but in terms of what it does and what it delivers.

01:11:44.000

Can we find the right language that gets us onto the sort of interest list of people who don't think that heritage is currently anything to do with them? And if we could crack that, I think we would unlock a huge amount of advocacy and support for our sector.

01:12:02.000

Okay. So Alex and Ollie, other than doing exactly what you two do, what is the one thing that would really make a difference to people in your position, you know, with a private-first approach?

01:12:22.000

I think it's actually very similar to what Claudia, you were saying in terms of it's about the perception probably of heritage. And also, is there something we can do to get people to engage with heritage at the earliest possible opportunity? Whether that's something on the school curriculum or making sure that visits to heritage assets, properties, whatever you want to call them, are part of people's lives.

01:12:42.000

So that people are comfortable with heritage from a really early age and see heritage as part of their broader sort of leisure activity programs. You might go to the cinema, you might go to a historic house—seeing us as part of a wider cultural program rather than its own separate sector, I think, would be fantastic.

01:13:06.000

Because so many of our guests come because they love an experience. They love a dinner party. It happens to be in a heritage asset, but what they're coming for is an immersive party. Finding those ways to engage people and elevating the profile and richness of the heritage sector, I think, is probably the thing that would help private enterprises like ours.

01:13:33.000

That's really helpful. Thank you. And something that absolutely everyone could agree on because, you know, if you can get people to just come, then we can provide the experience. Then we can show people what we've got to offer and so on. That's really helpful. Thank you.

01:13:52.000

Okay, thank you so much. Those were really great, helpful, and insightful answers. If you've got questions for the panellists that have come up, please keep sending them through. There are lots already in the Q&A, and it's going to be challenging to get through all of them. We'll have a little look at how we can bring them together after a while.

As I said earlier, you can also bring questions up the list by liking. So we'll be looking for those that have got lots of likes.

01:14:23.000

But we're now going to have a little interlude when we have presentations from our sponsors. And our corporate partners, ecclesiastical, have conducted some research on financial risk and the risks facing

heritage organisations, which they're going to share with us. And Laura Carter who is a great friend of the Heritage Alliance and I'm sure many of those on the call today, is going to talk us through

So Laura, can I hand over to you to present the results of the research, that would be great.

01:14:57.000

Absolutely. Lovely. Thank you, Carol. Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for inviting me to be here today and being involved. My name is Laura Carter. I'm the customer segment director for Ecclesiastical Insurance, and my pronouns are she/her. I'm a white woman in my 40s with shoulder-length brown hair. If the sun wasn't so bright in London today, you would have seen the monument for the Fire of London over my shoulder, but unfortunately, you've got a big TV screen. I'm wearing a pink top and a black jacket, and I'm delighted to be able to speak to you today.

01:15:34.000

So, before I start moving through the slides, I just wanted to set some context with regards to the research that we've done, which Carol touched on. We commissioned new research in 2024, really looking at the main issues that heritage organisations are facing, along with the impact of the cost of living. Just to give you a bit of background, the research was carried out on our behalf by a consultancy called FWD with over 100 heritage organisations from the built property part of the sector.

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This is internal research that we undertake annually, and it will be shared with the Heritage Alliance afterwards for the support they give within the sector. One final point I thought was crucial to raise is that this research was actually conducted between June and September of this year, so it was ahead of the autumn budget, which may have had an impact on the findings if it were conducted today.

01:16:29.000

Now I'll start moving through the slides.

There we go. First slide. To take you through the research, I just wanted to touch on the top five issues and concerns that came through. The main concern among heritage organisations continues to be increasing costs. 84% of organisations surveyed identified this as a concern, up from 81% back in 2023.

The next two main areas were maintaining and repairing buildings and diversification to attract more visitors. Interestingly, diversification to attract more visitors has seen a sharp increase compared to 2023, when it was sitting at 44%.

01:17:23.000

Personally, I would suspect this is a way of actually trying to increase revenue to help with those increasing cost.

And finally, to make up the rest of the top five, the next two are the impact of cost of living on visitor numbers and climate change. Both of these have actually had a drop back since 2023, which may be either the point of they've now got better management in place or actually there's just seen as being less of a challenge.

So moving on, the next area that I wanted to take you is looking at kind of the top 12

01:18:01.000

Let me move.

Sorry, it's looking at the top 12 areas that have been impacted over the last 12 months. So the orange line that you can see here shows essentially the five items that I've already taken you through. But actually the next seven below it has got the clear one that we're talking about today in terms of funding or interestingly, loss of funding and what that actually means.

01:18:33.000

So from the perspective of what we see here, it's got a 30% shown by it and actually this has dropped from its position back in 2023 when it was seen as the fifth main concern. So therefore, this could be down to the issue actually now being less of a challenge, but perhaps I don't think that is correct based on the conversation that we've had today and the chats, the comments that are coming up in the chat.

But it's actually more to do as a byproduct of perhaps alternative issues rising up and increasing funding coming from other areas. So for example, the piece around diversification to attract more visitors as being one of those areas is looking at needing more funding and therefore how is that coming through and pushing up the challenge there?

01:19:19.000

So the next area I really want to then get into is actually the theme of today, so funding.

This slide really highlights the issues that organisations are saying that they're feeling when it comes to relying on funding. The biggest impact has been that of inflation and rising costs, effectively shrinking the pot of existing funds in real terms, which has been felt by over half the organisations who receive funding.

Other really interesting areas are drawing out, that have been drawn out, is the nature of grants and how these are having to be used specifically for projects more than for core funding, which was raised as a concern by almost half of the respondents.

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The increase in competition for available public and charitable funding. And the final item at the bottom, so declining public donations, which shows that one fifth of organisations are feeling a decline in public donations in whatever form they would receive them.

It'd be really interesting to kind of see how some of these echo with yourselves, especially with regards to the topics that have been discussed in the debates. It'll be interesting to see if anything does start to pop up within the chat.

01:20:28.000

So moving on, another area that we looked at was with regards to sustainability. This is my final slide with regards to the actual research findings, but we just thought it would be interesting to pull out actually, again different areas of where organisations looking to deal with some of the challenges that they tackle and also the fact that climate change was in that top five of areas of concerns.

So this really was looking at retrofitting and energy efficiency works. And the top two items that you can see on the left hand side relate to the upfront costs of carrying out works and whether it's affordable. And the fact that there is actually a lack of grant funding to carry out that retrofitting in the first place.

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So whilst the heritage organisations might be keen to actually transition to greener energies, upfront costs and lack of funding could be seen as being very prohibitive here.

So without wanting to paint a picture of doom and gloom, there are some areas of support out there which can either have a large impact on organisations or in some cases just provide smaller areas of support, which is actually enough just to help push that dial and great work going forwards. And I think certainly in terms of the areas that the crooked men were talking about was really interesting just to understand the journey that Alex and Ollie have been on as well.

01:21:46.000

So one of the areas that we support on actually comes through from our parent company, the Benefact Group. So the Benefact Group is the third largest corporate donor in the UK who've given over 200 million in donations since 2014. And some of the work undertaken has been developing practical support and guidance to help fundraise successfully, something which Carol touched on in the debates.

01:22:08.000

So the tools that you can see on the screen here include certain things such as webinars, fundraising templates, case studies where you can find out how others have used our tools to raise such much needed funds

And some of the webinars, for example, provide helpful guidance when it comes to fundraising applications, social media fundraising and corporate partnerships. So there's a whole plethora of different ways of looking at things and hopefully we'll tackle individual challenges that individual organisations also find that they're having to deal with on a day-to-day basis.

01:22:44.000

And finally, I just want to turn to looking at other ways of looking for new funds.

So from the left, you can see something called GiveStar. So GiveStar is a platform for fundraising and donations. It's very similar to other fundraising websites, but it has the added benefit of a relatively new piece of development which allows your mobile phone to work as a contactless donation device.

With the ever increasing mobile-first, cashless society that we're really in, this allows for fundraising to be raised a lot more easily without the need for the card readers that also need to be accompanied. This ultimately reduces costs and increases the number of collection points if everyone was to have this available within the organisation on their phone.

So considering one of my earlier points about that piece to do with public donations, actually this could be a really smart solution that can help with the cashless conundrum, especially when people might not have that cash on them for buckets or donation boxes at certain points within an organisation.

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The next item is building improvement grants from the Benefit Trust, who is our parent charity owner. And this essentially provides funding for Christian charities and churches, including repair, restoration and improvement to church buildings, cathedrals and Christian charity buildings.

And the areas that it really touches on is with regards to grants that can support with one-off costs such as one-off repairs, minor capital works or energy efficiency or renewable measures.

01:24:17.000

And then next to that is our giving programs. So if I've mentioned right at the start, our parent company, the Benefact Group, is uniquely placed to give all of our available profits to charities and good causes. Our Movement for Good annual program of giving which has donated so far this year almost over a million pounds to charity is one of those areas that really can be used as a way to just to help pick up essentially additional funding that can come through by nominating a charity to receive a thousand pound donation.

Separately, we also have a large grants program which runs each year with the ability to use the funds there for core costs, not just for project costs. And you'll see with the snowflake picture on the right hand side, we've now entered our big annual prize draw called 12 Days of Giving. This is a set of drawers that runs up until Christmas. So please do take a chance just to pop onto the website. I think the links have been appearing in the chat as I've been talking.

01:25:16.000

So please do take a chance just to have a look and nominate a charity of your choice for them to be able to have been for the chance of receiving a thousand pound donation. It literally just does take one minute to do it. So please do take the chance to continue to complete it.

That's really everything that I wanted to take you through today. I hope you found the interesting, the research findings informative.

And I'd just like to say thank you and I think I'll be handing back to Carol.

01:25:44.000

You will. Thank you, Laura. That was really interesting and useful. I love the way that you end with positive things that people can do because obviously there is some concern about the current state of funding but you know it's always good to think about practical things. And I think it's things like that are really useful opportunities for people to pick up on.

I'm conscious there's a brilliant conversation going on in the chat. I keep seeing little comments pop up. So well done everybody for talking to one another as you go. This is great.

And we're also getting more questions coming through on the Q&A for later on.

01:26:24.000

But before we go into the Q&A, I'm going to introduce our next speaker and Stephen Anderson is going to talk to us about Valley Heritage. And some of his insights on alternative funding opportunities. And the really

good news is that both Laura and Stephen will be with us for the Q&A session as well. So if anything burning strikes you that you want to ask them in particular, you can do so.

So Stephen, can I hand over to you, please?

01:26:58.000

Absolutely. Thanks, Carol. And good afternoon, everyone.

I'm Stephen Anderson. I'll be talking about social investment and a little bit of Valley Heritage's experience. I'm the chair of Valley Heritage. I'm a director of Buttress Architects and I'm also a consultant for the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

My pronouns are he, him. I'm a white man in my late 40s with a greying beard, glasses, not a great deal of hair. I'm wearing a blue jumper today. And as I'm sat in Buttress' studio, of course, I've got some slightly enigmatic architectural sketches in my background.

01:27:33.000

Let's see if we can get these slides moving.

There we go. So Valley Heritage is a heritage development trust. We're based in Pennine Lancashire, a place called Rossendale, and we've been around since about 2015. And our aim is to ensure that redundant and derelict heritage assets in our area are brought back into socially beneficial uses.

These slides seem to be skipping on by themselves.

There we go.

01:28:12.000

So firstly, what is social investment? A really good definition from good finance, which is it's the use of repayable finance to help an organisation achieve a social purpose. Charities and social enterprises can use repayable finance to help them increase their impact on society, for example, by growing the business, providing working capital, contract delivery or buying assets.

And it comes in two main forms, which are debt and equity.

01:28:42.000

Debt comes principally in the form of loans. They're not dissimilar to commercially available loans in that they're repayable, normally interest bearing and typically work on a fixed term. However, the key difference is that they're designed to produce social impact. Social investors are interested in more than a commercial return.

The investor social impact focused on the investor's areas of interest and this means that social investors typically consider risk and reward differently to other funders. So they can be particularly flexible in their decision making.

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And then the other main form of social investment is equity.

Community shares are the most common form where individuals can purchase shares in a cooperative or a community benefit society. The shares are withdrawable, non-transferable, and can receive a return on the investment if the organisation generates a sufficient forput.

The investor owns a share in the organisation and gains voting rights in its running. So they have a tangible and quite direct say in how their investment and the organisation is managed. It also allows communities to directly invest in projects that matter to them. Successful share offers are a really good demonstrator of a clear commitment and stakeholder buy-in to other prospective funders.

01:29:53.000

So by way of a quick case study.

Valley Heritage started a project to repurpose the redundant former Lancashire New Yorkshire Bank in 2019, which is in the image. The building was in private ownership and had failed to sell at auction. Grant-based funding routes weren't going to work for us at the time given the typical eligibility criteria. Our needs were

about cash-based. purely capital financing for acquisition for a project that would eventually generate a trading income and have a social impact.

01:30:24.000

With our approach, the Architectural Heritage Fund to look at a loan the application process is pretty straightforward and it resulted in a loan offer for £195,000 to support acquisition and some working capital for urgent repairs.

The offer was made through AHF's Heritage Impact Fund, designed to invest in projects with a positive social impact by acquiring, reusing or redeveloping buildings of historic or architectural importance. The loan was for a five-year fixed term at 5.6% interest rate secured against the property and with a 12-month payment holiday at the start. And the loan to value is about 102%.

01:31:02.000

The loan previously the first major building block in a cocktail of funding for a project which cost about £900,000 in total. The confidence shown by AHF encouraged other funders such as Historic England, Ron Delborough Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to make significant contributions.

01:31:19.000

So this is a photo from when the works were taking place.

And this is an image showing the building completed now.

The projects resulted in four new apartments, some of which have provided interim accommodation for young people at risk of homelessness in partnership with the local charity M3 Project. And this is a working space, providing 11 desks and meeting rooms, offering alternative social workspace for people who might normally work from home such as flexible workers and freelancers.

01:31:51.000

Social impacts were also embodied in the activities that surrounded the project. Artworks were co-produced by the community, such as banners designed and made by the local 'knit and natter' Group and a new stone carving being designed by local school children.

And following a very enjoyable launch event, Alliance has been trading well for about two years now. The apartments are fully lapped and the co-working space is proving successful. And we're expecting to generate a healthy trading surplus this financial year, which will be sufficient to support loan repayments and contribute to Valley Heritage's core costs.

01:32:23.000

So some key points.

Social investment is a great way of gaining funding for projects while also demonstrating high levels of support and commitment to other potential funders. It seems reliant on having a viable business model to fund repayments. However, given that sustainability is a key pillar for most other grant funders, this shouldn't be a barrier to using social investment.

Social investors typically look differently at risk and reward, and this can facilitate investment earlier than other funding sources, particularly around acquisition. And I personally see it as a really important tool in the sector's funding toolkit in an increasingly challenging funding landscape.

01:32:57.000

And I'd encourage you all to have a look at these resources in exploring social investment further, especially the Architectural Heritage Fund, without whom our project and so many others wouldn't get off the ground.

And that's it for me. Thank you.

01:33:11.000

Stephen, thank you. And thank you so much for coping with the backwards and forwards slides there. In case anyone didn't manage to catch up with everything that was there. The presentation will be available online.

After we finished, little after we finished today. So you'll be able to look at all the excellent material that was there which showed the sorts of figures, which I think people really want to know about return on investment and things like that. I think the point about owning an equity share is something that perhaps isn't always understood when people talk about social investment.

01:33:47.000

Thank you, Stephen. That was really helpful.

So we're now going to have a moment to just think about where we get into the question and answer.

So you have all been submitting your questions and you have been voting so that they've been, in the terminology of Zoom, upvoted, which is a word I've never come across before. And we've got a whole range of things that we're going to ask our panellists to talk about.

01:34:23.000

I'd like to start by looking, and I'm

Forgive me, I'm going to ask the questions even if there's a name attached to them so that we move things along rather than going to individuals and asking them to ask their own question in person.

So there's a lot of interest in the question of the listed places of worship, that reclaim scheme, and whether it will be renewed or not. And obviously, if it isn't, then for places that are currently eligible the costs will go up by the 20% of the VAT.

01:34:55.000

I can say that this is something that just about every organisation I've spoken to in the heritage sector over the past six months has been keen to bring forward to get a view on and to understand what government's intentions are.

Claudia, I don't know whether you have any further information about this or how the discussion will be brought to a conclusion. But it's something that's incredibly effective. It doesn't breach the government's natural concerns about VAT and exempting things - wholesale - from VAT because it is a grant repayment - VAT - repayment scheme. Claudia, anything that we can offer to people to help on this?

01:35:44.000

Thanks. Yeah, thanks, Carol. I don't think there's anything sort of massively insightful to say at this point. And just because there was recent parliamentary question on listed places of worship and I think the answer from DCMS was as we would expect, which is this is one of the decisions that they'll be considering as part of the spring fiscal event next year.

I think for now, collectively, we need to continue to do what we have been doing, which is really just to highlight the impact of the listed places of worship scheme and the good that it does and make very clear the impacts should that scheme come to an end. So I don't think there's anything really to update at this point beyond what we all already know.

01:36:28.000

Thank you, Claudia. One always hopes. But I think the point Claudia makes is really important. This is a very, very specific and very important benefit to the - to the sector and the more people that make sure that their MP knows and that the government knows how important this scheme is, the better.

My general advice would always be as constructive as possible when you're contacting MPs or members of the government. Don't shriek and shout because frankly, that really doesn't work in this particular sort of context. What we would like I'm sure is people to be explaining very carefully and clearly what it would mean for their local place, their local church, their local project if this scheme was not extended.

01:37:29.000

So the more detailed, the more pounds that you can identify properly as being at risk if this scheme isn't continued the better. So please do take that as an action point.

If it's of any impact to you at all, and I think it's worth saying at this point, don't assume that your local MP

will have a lot of experience of the detail of heritage and heritage funding and heritage schemes. Many, many, many MPs are completely new to Parliament. They won't have had an opportunity to know about this. And unless you tell them, they may not know and that applies to quite a lot of things we've talked about today, I think.

01:38:14.000

Next question. It's about relationship management.

Who are the people we should be relating to? How can we best manage the relationships?

How can we make sure that we, I'm paraphrasing here, but how can we make sure we don't just drop the ball and forget to keep in touch with the people that are most supportive of us and most helpful.

Rather, obviously, I'm going to start with Caroline because I suspect you see this as a risk on a number of occasions.

01:38:44.000

Do you know what we're really bad at as a - as a sector as a country. And that's saying thank you. I suspect it's because we're all like so focused on the next thing, but actually we're pretty bad at saying thank you to people I'm not saying all of the people on this are because I'm sure some of you are fantastic that appreciating volunteers and donations.

But that stewardship question is really important. What practically can I advise? I think that what is really important is that every organisation has a list of your top say 20 key influencers, key funders everybody should know what that list is. Everybody on your board should know. And those sort of top 20 you kind of refresh and think about how you can steward and thank them.

01:39:36.000

The other thing which I would say is that with what we see a lot working with organisations is that quite naturally, most organisations are really reticent about sharing problems with supporters and funders. Quite a lot of quite a lot of museums and others feel that you need to kind of hide internal problems.

And actually, of course, that's really important in reputation terms, but for your closest funders, for the mature funders, for the intelligent funders and some of the public sector ones, we would usually counsel, not on everything, but we would usually counsel to share those problems before they become a problem. So, that would be my advice.

01:40:23.000

I think that's great. Thank you. And that's two top tips there. Make sure everyone knows who your top supporters are and, having thought about it, share issues and concerns as they arise.

And I would echo that absolutely there's nothing worse as a supporter than having a cheery conversation with somebody about an organisation you support only to be told, well, didn't you know that they're going to have to close the cafe or close something or other. It makes you feel stupid and nobody wants to feel stupid, particularly if they feel that they are a supporter of an organisation.

Thank you, Caroline. That was great.

01:41:03.000

Anything other about - otherwise about relationship management. Alex and Ollie have talked quite a bit about it already in terms of you know local support and networks and are obviously doing it really well. Um any key tip from you two about how you manage that?

01:41:20.000

I'd probably say it's like you say, it's about involving people and creating a bit of a community around your organisation of supporters and um asking their ideas for things and making them feel part of it rather than you're running it all and they're just there watching. Actually bring them into some of your decision making and make them feel like their opinions matter because they do. Everyone can have great ideas.

And if you know that they're interested in what you're doing, reach out to them and involve them. And that might be through special events where people sort of physically come and meet up with you, or it might be done as we do a lot on social media every day chatting to people who support the Crooked House, whether or not they buy anything is sort of irrelevant.

It's about the community to start, knowing that further down the line, people might end up purchasing something. But even if they don't, you can still share great ideas and that sense of engagement is of huge value to us nevertheless.

01:42:17.000

So yeah, I would say involve people, ask them advice and ideas of them and make them feel like part of a community.

Great, thank you. Claudia, how does Historic England like to be kept in touch? If you're dealing with folk

01:42:30.000

Um I think one of the things that Historic England has, which is incredibly helpful, is a really good network of extremely local staff. Because of our role in the planning system, actually one of the things that is useful to us but that is also incredibly useful for DCMS and for government departments is the intelligence that we have from chatting to organisations and to individuals within the sector on the ground and that intelligence and that feedback absolutely does get used.

So I think from Historic England's perspective it's an ask out to the heritage sector to remain in contact and in conversation with HE because we do have the ability to reflect that intelligence back at the right time and in the right way.

There's lots of different ways that we are planning to try and make that data and intelligence gathering a little bit more robust and we'll see some of those rolled out next year.

01:43:34.000

But even on quite an informal level, some of that intelligence then can turn into a case study, a ministerial visit, an MP engagement. And we found that, as you say, there's often not a lot of awareness out there about heritage and that's all really helpful material for helping to build that understanding and that awareness.

And so just reflecting on the Cultural Recovery Fund coming out of COVID, some of the really helpful data that we had there was about surveys and collecting sort of national level data. Some of it was about being able to understand what that looked like in real life, in real places for real organisations.

So I think just continue to speak to historic England and as we are a relatively well networked organisation, hopefully that's not too difficult to do.

01:44:25.000

Thank you. Stephen or Laura, is there anything you'd like to add to that, Stephen?

01:44:31.000

If I may, I think there's something interesting about how it works the other way around from Claudia's comments as well. What we found is that because we've got, let's call it boots on the ground that are kind of hyperlocal and we've got relationships with some of our key stakeholders. We've actually been able to introduce our MP to Historic England to National Lottery Heritage Fund, to Architectural Heritage Fund.

And as a relatively new MP, he's valuing gaining those relationships. And there's a kind of a mutual benefit to all of the parties involved in Valley Heritage having been able to kind of make those introductions.

So those relationships and the fact that our kind of major funders have got the kind of humility perhaps to kind of engage in those conversations at those grassroots levels and kind of take the advice and the contact and the network the other way we find extraordinarily valuable.

01:45:24.000

Thanks, Stephen. That's a really good point.

And Laura, I think if I may just refresh something that we said at a previous separate discussion that maybe thinking about your insurer as someone you have a relationship with can be really beneficial.

Did you want to say a word about that?

01:45:46.000

Yeah, no, definitely. And I think there's, I suppose the piece around the insurance is always kind of that you know it's part of the process of everything that people look at.

But actually when it comes to certain projects and things that might be being undertaken, for example, if there's project works or development works that are being done, actually having the insurer in early to kind of help with that sort of architectural piece to kind of say, okay, well, this is what we want to do architecturally or any kind of contract works or anything that's going on, but actually having that kind of conversation with the insurer means that what can be done right at the start means that it's not something that's building up for a problem in the future that might mean we've done something from an architectural perspective, but actually from an insurance perspective, it's going to then incur more costs.

So it's just having those conversations early and thinking about that sort of at that start point as opposed to at the end of the journey once it's all done.

01:46:39.000

Thanks, Laura. And I think that's sort of a general message isn't it that if you think that there's something that's going to be quite fundamental or make a big change to the physical fabric or the structure of your organisation or whatever, just talk to the people that are close to you and you might get some unexpected responses and some really helpful advice that will help you avoid stepping off an unfortunate cliff.

Really helpful. Thank you.

01:47:13.000

I'm conscious of time, but I'm going to try and get two quick questions in if I can. I think we've talked a little bit about the extent to which funders are willing to fund fundraisers. And I think that may be something where we need to be working hard to educate funders and make sure that funders do realise that money doesn't just actually fall into people's laps without an effort.

And again, I think the big funders understand that, but perhaps some of the smaller funders sometimes hope that things will come without that sort of cost attached.

There's a question about the impact on organisations of short-term and temporary contracts for staff and how you can retain staff and keep morale high when so many people in an organisation or a number of people in an organisation might be on short-term project contracts.

01:48:09.000

Is that something that anyone's had any experience of? Stephen, did that apply with your contracts?

We've had some experience of it. So at the moment we're working with a regional capacity building grant from Historic England, and that's given us three years of kind of core funding and some project development funding. So going back to Claudia's point about early stages funding from Historic England being incredibly helpful along with the AHF as well.

And the staff we've got appointed on that are on short-term contracts. One employed by Valley Heritage, kind of doing about 25 hours a week. We're only a few months into that contract, so we're kind of yet to see the challenges that we can kind of anticipate a little bit further down the line.

And the other one very helpful, being able to bring in on a secondment from our local authority. So her employment will be kind of continuous beyond this role. So we've kind of avoided that cliff edge of the end of the contract with our secondment.

01:49:09.000

But I think what we're kind of anticipating is that as we get towards maybe six months from the end of the funding our employee is going to be looking for the work. Her focus will naturally and quite rightly shift to what's next, and we will lose some effectiveness organisationally as a result of that. And it's going to be very, very difficult to manage. And I'm not sure what the answer is. I just know that it's coming.

And that's probably as much as I can say about it at the moment.

01:49:39.000

And I suspect that's something that would echo in every organisation that's had project funding where there isn't the prospect of another project coming in immediately, if you see what I mean. And indeed, sometimes it's not possible to simply move people from one project to another for funders requirement reasons – okay.

01:50:00.000

I'm about to ask you all to come to your closing statements. So I'm giving you a little bit of notice. And I'm going to stick this with the main panellists unless Stephen or Laura have something that they're burning to say.

And I'm going to be extremely cheeky and pull up a question from Ben, and ask you to just have a thought as you're putting things together. There's a question about whether um

01:50:29.000

Sorry, let me give the background. Next year is the 75th anniversary of the Gowers Report from 1950, which of course none of nobody remembers because we're all far too young to even think about that, which recommended that private ownership was the best way to protect significant historic houses and advocated inheritance tax reliefs.

Which obviously were then the subject of change in the recent budget, which has worried a lot of private owners.

01:50:56.000

So the question was whether the question was whether it's time for a new Gowers type inquiry into funding for heritage. And given that we've been talking about funding for heritage all morning, as you think about your closing statements, panellists, you might want to think about whether there is - Is there a need for a whole look at the funding of heritage?

Or are we actually in a position to piece together what we've got and live with the mosaic that we've got at the moment without the need to maybe pull it up by the roots and have another look?

I think I'm going to start with Claudia, if that's all right.

01:51:45.000

Thanks, Carol. Okay. And thank you, Ben, for the question.

I think the genuine answer is that what we've got and what we've talked about a lot today is some really good insight and evidence into what is going on with heritage, both in terms of the capacity and the capability of the sector, external opportunities, external risk, and a sort of horizon scan to see some of the things that might be coming down the track. And as we've talked about, some of that is risk and some of it is opportunity.

I guess this is my personal view, but instinctively I am always more keen on sort of incremental reform than big moments, but others will have a different view. But I think that the sort of challenge at the heart of it, and it doesn't sort of really matter how you do it, is given that we've got this evidence base, given that we know what the issues are, what is the response from, speaking from my sector, from national heritage bodies going to be we've talked about the fact that heritage is a really innovative sector.

So what are the innovative ideas and what are the areas where we want to see change and reform?

01:53:07.000

Now we can do that big bang or we can do it incremental. But I think my big takeaway is some change is probably going to be needed to ensure that heritage as a sector is ready for whatever's coming next and sort of doing things that way that we've always done them doesn't really feel to me like a place of safety.

So I don't really mind about the mechanism, but now feels like the time to think about innovation and big questions.

01:53:33.000

Thank you, Claudia. That's a great summary of many of the things we've been talking about, I think. Caroline, what stands out for you and what should we be doing about philanthropy?

01:53:45.000

So a couple of thoughts. I mean, I think what's come through this and something I would absolutely underscore myself is that organisations that can be flexible, adaptable and indeed collaborative are the ones that are going to survive a pretty tough climate, which, you know, that's a rather generalist statement, but I think it's very true in the heritage sector.

I think there's a real asset that we haven't touched on the heritage sector has that needs to be amplified, which is about storytelling and maybe that's a topic for another discussion, but there's a real strength and an asset there. And the reason I'm talking about that is because without telling stories, people don't know what to fund, how to fund.

01:54:34.000

And I suppose the third point I'd make, perhaps controversially and perhaps slightly counter the proposition from Ben is that: is it that heritage needs to be more porous a bit more? A bit less this is our this is our lane? A bit more in the Alex and Ollie, we're part of this place and we're part of community approach.

So that actually it's more and more inclusive in the broadest sense and less walls, more involvement.

01:55:05.000

Thank you, Caroline. I'm all for less walls.

Alex and Ollie, what would you -what would you say after this hour and what would be your take on whether we need a radical look or whether we can be incremental and porous. That's a brilliant word – I'll have to use that a lot.

01:55:25.000

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think, as we said throughout, we would advocate for a private first approach wherever possible. So the funds that are available are always going to those who need them most. And it seems likely that a mix of funding sources is probably appropriate for almost all of us and I think we would absolutely agree with that.

From our perspective, I think we'd say take inspiration from other sectors, look outside heritage and really lean in to the entrepreneurial spirit of heritage, which has always had to change and adapt.

First and foremost, the Crooked House is our treasured home for life. But we see it also as a property, but also as a brand, and as a brand, that allows us to do everything from traditional house tours all the way through to a calendar of us in Tudor costumes, which is now out for Christmas.

01:56:16.000

So once you build a story and a brand, to Caroline's point about storytelling, actually that can really help to expand your horizon as a heritage property.

And then lastly, the point on collaboration is so key. If we can collaborate with each other then actually as a sector, we can thrive and the pie can get bigger rather than competing with each other to take other people's slice of the pie.

So I think that's how I would probably conclude on this.

01:56:44.000

That's a brilliant, brilliant summary. Thank you. And a wonderful place to end.

So with huge thanks to all of our panellists, I'm going to be very rude and not gush over them because we're running out of time. But what we would like you to do is now, audience, is go back to Menti using the code on the screen and show what you think might be the ideal mix of public, philanthropic and commercial funding for heritage from your perspective.

And I'm sure this is one where the bars are going to go in and out and up and down and change places and colour and things as you all vote.

01:57:32.000

Yes!

There's always a moment when one wonders whether it's going to work, but it's obviously working because things are moving around.

Okay, I'm going to keep talking as you vote because we're getting very close to the end. And so I want to get some of my thanks in now while you carry on voting, please.

01:57:53.000

First of all, thank you so much to our panellists who've given a huge amount of time and effort to prepare to be here to talk so clearly about their particular element of the funding package.

Thank you to all of you who've joined us. It's a big chunk of time and you've been incredibly engaged. We've had so many questions and things coming through. I've been really grateful.

What we would like you to do is to keep in touch. We will have materials up online very shortly. We will have opportunities for you to look at our event page exhibitors for example who've been helping support us with ideas.

01:58:38.000

Do look at the event page for more resources on funding opportunities. The recording will be available by mid-September [December]. We'll be reflecting on socials as always, so do use the hashtag Heritage Debate 2024.

We are a charity. We're really pleased to be able to keep this event free. If you've enjoyed it and want to support us please don't hesitate to do so. We would be very grateful.

And if you've thought about membership before and haven't really known what we're all about come to our session on Thursday, 28th of November and meet our chief executive and our head of membership and we can tell you all about it.

And if you're convinced already, just sign up - get onto the website and sign up.

01:59:25.000

And indeed, nominations are now open for the ecclesiastical Heritage Heroes Award which recognises outstanding contributions to the heritage sector.

So can I see where we got to with the vote, please. Okay.

01:59:42.000

Well, I think this just proves that all of our panellists were incredibly convincing because we've almost got an even split going on here. I can understand that public and commercial are perhaps, you know, two very recognized and well-known areas but it's really interesting to me that people would quite like to see around a third of their funding coming from philanthropic giving.

So an absolute split between the three areas. Well done, all of you for incredibly convincing presentations

02:00:19.000

Thank you to the team. You haven't seen the pedalling that's been going on beneath the surface here and they've done an absolutely brilliant job to keep us all online.

Thank you to all of our sponsors and long-term supporters.

And I hope that in the future we might be able to count on all of you who've joined us today as long-term friends and supporters.

02:00:43.000

The Heritage Alliance is an advocacy body and a membership support organisation. In order to be effective in both of those roles, we need as many members as possible to hear as many voices as possible from across this wonderful, incredibly diverse sector.

So thank you all for joining us.

Keep in touch and we will do what we can to answer some of the questions that we didn't get to today in future events and future gatherings.

02:01:15.000

Thank you so much.

I hope we'll see you next year at the Heritage debate 2024 [2025] but also that we will see you at Heritage Day in person in March next year - details coming shortly.

02:01:34.000

Thank you, everybody. And goodbye. Enjoy the rest of your afternoon.