

The
Heritage
Alliance

HERITAGE CREATES

Heritage and the Creative Industries | 2025

A Heritage Alliance Report

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A Message from our Chair

Carole Souter CBE



the UK. The arts and cultural sectors have certainly not been immune. But challenging times have been met with resilience and, crucially, with creativity. The heritage sector and the creative industries have found innovative ways to do more with less, whilst broadening their impact and engagement. Some of the most striking examples of this are those in which the two sectors have come together, for mutual benefit and for the benefit of communities and the economy.

Britain possesses a long and proud history of creativity, the evidence of which is etched into the fabric of our communities – sometimes quite literally. Our heritage includes our creative past. Today's creators are helping build the heritage of the future. That is understood. But, as the case studies in this report show, heritage also underpins the success of the creative industries in the present day: whether providing the setting for cultural activity of all kinds, from poetry recitals to pottery studios and everything in between, or by directly inspiring new expressions of creativity from fashion to film. Heritage organisations often act as partners for creators and innovators looking for new places and stories to engage audiences, and develop technologies and ways of doing things.

Much has changed in the years since the publication of the first edition of *Inspiring Creativity* in 2019. The triple impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the ongoing cost of living crisis, and our changing relationship with the EU and wider world has challenged organisations and individuals across

Last year also brought a change of government, and with it a new vision for our sectors – notably a forthcoming industrial strategy with the creative economy as an essential component. The major cultural funding commitments announced on the 60th anniversary of Jennie Lee's first Culture White Paper recognised that heritage is a key part of the lives of communities and individuals – many of the organisations receiving additional funding to support their creativity and boost their community engagement draw inspiration from the historic places and buildings in which they are based. It's more important now than ever that we demonstrate the potential of heritage and the creative industries to bring communities together, improve our wellbeing and shape a shared cultural legacy to be proud of. The case studies in this report illustrate what can be done when our sectors work together. I hope they will help inspire further initiatives that provide opportunities for employment, community engagement and enjoyment of all that heritage and culture have to offer.

'The preservation of our heritage relies not just on passion, but on skill, dedication, and investment in craftsmanship. Heritage restoration is a delicate balance between conservation and renewal - preserving what is while restoring what has been. At Farcroft, we are privileged to work across disciplines, from stonemasonry and woodwork to fine furnishings and artefacts, ensuring that history is not lost to time. This report is a timely reminder of the importance of skilled craftsmanship and sustainable investment in our heritage sector. The expertise required to care for our historic buildings and collections is both invaluable and irreplaceable, and we must continue to champion and support those who dedicate their lives to this craft.'

Paul Clarke, Chief Executive & Danny Bennett, Managing Director Farcroft Restorations Group

Background

In 2019, The Heritage Alliance published an insight report exploring the relationship between the heritage sector and the creative industries in England. [Inspiring Creativity, Heritage and the Creative Industries](#) summarised available evidence and featured case studies showcasing partnerships from the breadth of the heritage sector and creative industries to highlight the mutual benefits of cross-sector working.¹ The report concluded with recommendations for the future.

Since the publication of *Inspiring Creativity*, the creative industries have continued to flourish, capturing the attention of the public and policymakers alike. [The evidence base for heritage's integral contribution](#) to these industries has similarly grown.² The continued political and economic relevance of the creative industries under a new government, alongside the emergence of new technologies and bolder commitments to inclusion, makes 2025 a timely opportunity to update our original compendium of case studies, six years on.

Structure

This report is organised into five thematic chapters, each of which focuses on a particular dimension of the relationship between the heritage sector and the creative industries:

- Heritage as a Host
- Heritage as a Muse
- Heritage as a Creative Practice
- Innovative Partnerships
- Inclusive Partnerships

Each chapter begins with a brief contextual introduction to the theme, followed by a selection of case studies, gathered from across the Heritage Alliance's membership. Chapters conclude by signposting to relevant further literature and resources.

Definitions

This report adopts DCMS's [classification](#) of the creative industries:³

- Advertising
- Architecture
- Crafts
- Design (product, graphic, fashion)
- Film, Video, Television and Photography
- IT, Software, Computer Services and Video Games
- Publishing
- Museums, Galleries and Libraries
- Music, Performing and Visual Arts

Our call for case studies was open to all Heritage Alliance members, representing the heritage sector in its full breadth.



Heritage as a Host

From classical museums, grand theatres, brutalist galleries and art deco cinemas to open-air theatre, concerts and festivals hosted in historic parks and gardens, **heritage plays host to a dazzling array of cultural and creative activity.**

These unique places, full of character and thick with the legacy of storytellers past, act as **more than a backdrop**: the atmosphere they provide is key to enticing and exciting audiences.

Entrepreneurs and investors are likewise drawn to our historic environment. Research shows that creative industries are more likely to operate out of listed buildings than non-listed buildings and **businesses based in old buildings generate a higher-than-average GVA** – a phenomenon known as the ‘Heritage Premium’.

The restoration and re-use of historic buildings and places for commercial and community creative-use is not only popular, but **offers significant wealth-generation potential** and has been at the heart of some of the most successful culture-led regeneration projects.

The case studies in this chapter explore the role of **heritage as a host**, enabling and facilitating creativity **for the benefit of local communities and economies.**

26,000 - The Number of Cultural Events Hosted by our Member Historic Houses in 2022.⁴

4.4% - The Percentage Increase in GVA Generated by Businesses in Listed Buildings vs Non-Listed Buildings.⁵

26% - The proportion of Creative Enterprises Located in Conservation Areas.⁶

Tell Me More....

Cultural Heritage, Creativity and the Creative Economy – Heritage Counts, *Historic England, 2024*

Creative Industries in Historic Buildings and Environments, *Colliers International, 2018*

New Ideas Need Old Buildings, *Heritage Lottery Fund, 2013*

Image credits: © Ellis Robinson for The Piece Hall

Space to Create: The Creative Land Trust's Alice Billing House



Image credits: Interior view of Alice Billing House © Monika Szolle; Exterior view of Alice Billing House © Andrew Baker (NLHF)

'We have to secure the future of London's studios or we risk losing London's creative industries and the many benefits they give us...'

Creative Land Trust was established to be part of providing a lasting solution – a social enterprise that will own the buildings in which studios are housed so they can be used by artists and makers in perpetuity. Their goal is to build a portfolio of space for more than 1,000 artists across London: spaces that will be available to artists and makers forever.

When property owner Newham Council was unable to find any viable long-term future use for Alice Billing House, a unique former firefighters' home and hosepipe drying tower, the heritage asset was without investment in its maintenance or conservation for decades, resulting in closure to the public due to its condition.

Creative Land Trust proved through viability studies and business plans that a proposed use as artists' workspaces, with a project space for a heritage-led programme of community engagement would give Alice Billing House a vibrant sustainable future.

In February 2024, the first artists moved into Alice Billing House's south block after its restoration and development where a thriving, diverse local community of artists and makers is being created. The Trust's vision from the outset was to save a unique, heritage asset in the centre of Old Stratford. History has been brought out of the archives to be better understood and will be added to by present and future residents.



Twelve months after opening, the space is inspiring a new generation of creatives providing affordable studios for Newham people, as well as a platform for a dynamic community heritage and arts education programme.

Affordable studios are in need in Newham, which is poorly served compared to the neighbouring boroughs of Hackney, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest. Creative Land Trust can provide studios at a rate that is sub-market and truly affordable to ensure that artists can live and develop their practice in London.

The Creative Land Trust's work to restore the building to beneficial use also supports Newham's Recovery Strategy and Community Wealth Building

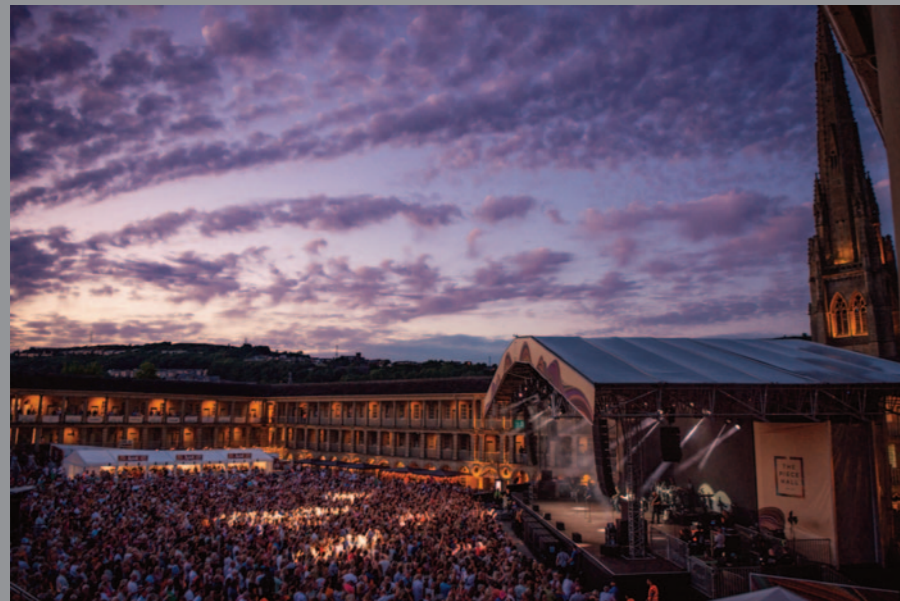
initiative, a priority for Newham's Mayor. Working with expert studio providers, Alice Billing House will be a catalyst for the regeneration of Stratford's High Street, including a cluster of nearby historic buildings.

By working with the existing structure, rather than tearing it down and building something new, Creative Land Trust's model reduces the environmental impact of development.

The renovation of Alice Billings House was funded by the Architectural Heritage Fund and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, along with the London Borough of Newham, the Greater London Authority, the London Legacy Development Corporation and the Levelling Up Fund.

'If we are serious about using architecture as a force for good in tackling and adapting to climate change, we need to make the best use of the buildings we already have and bank the carbon they have already captured'

The Piece Hall: More than just a Music Venue



The Grade 1 listed Piece Hall in Yorkshire is the only remaining Georgian cloth hall in the world, a 66,000sq ft open air courtyard on a par with the great piazzas of Europe. First opened in 1779, it is now an award-winning and free to enter leisure, retail, and arts destination. It welcomes around **three million visitors a year and also plays host to a year-round programme of world class cultural events and community festivals.**

TK Maxx presents Live at The Piece Hall is a live music and events series which brings global superstars to this unique heritage site in Halifax each summer in partnership with promoters Cuffe and Taylor. It has grown steadily over the years with 11 shows in 2022 to 22 shows in 2023. The 2024 season saw 34 dates with **more than 180,000 music fans watching headline shows** from the likes of Noel Gallagher's High-Flying Birds, Blondie, Nile Rodgers & CHIC, Sheryl Crow, Loyle Carner, Tom Jones, Korn, Biffy Clyro, Fatboy Slim and Bryan Adams plus the first comedy gig with Bill Bailey.

The aim of the season is multi-faceted, **providing a modest supplementary income to The Trust, boosting the venue's profile and reputation and helping to fire up the local economy** by bringing in visitors from near and far as well as keeping cash in the borough by removing the need for people to travel outside the area to see world class acts.



Image credits: © Ellis Robinson for The Piece Hall

The Piece Hall has hosted **arts, culture and community events** for some time but the *Live at* series, which has seen this unique heritage site welcome some of the **biggest music stars on the planet** has taken this to the next level.

During the summer months the iconic open-air courtyard boasts a fantastic, **purpose-built bespoke stage to best use the buildings' natural amphitheatre while being as visually sympathetic as possible to the stunning architecture and landscapes** which surround it.

The reactions of both artists and audiences to the experience of a gig in the iconic open-air courtyard has led to **The Piece Hall being hailed as one of the nation's leading live music venues.**

'Beautiful – just one of the best venues'
Debbie Harry (Blondie)

'I've not been to a place like this since I was in Verona. Such a beautiful place'
Richard Ashcroft

'The Piece Hall is a crazy beautiful place!'
Sheryl Crow

During gig season this **often serene and atmospheric heritage site effectively becomes a rock and roll venue** for the best part of three months. The transformation is a challenging, labour-intensive task involving a lot of hard work. It requires **strong and effective leadership, a highly skilled, agile and flexible workforce** and great teamwork.

The results for The Piece Hall and the wider borough are clear to see **with hotels, bars and restaurants in the local area all fully booked** on gig nights.

The series shows how **it is possible to perfectly combine the historic and the contemporary**, helping to ensure this unique heritage asset is not only kept alive for future generations to enjoy but is actively thriving.



Heavenly Illuminations: Immersive Art Installations at English Cathedrals and Abbeys



Since 2019, growing numbers of cathedrals up and down the country have played host to innovative art installations which engage new audiences by transforming their spaces with immersive light and sound.

These installations are the work of *Luxmuralis*, an artistic collaboration between sculptor Peter Walker and composer David Harper, who specialise in immersive fine art experiences. Inspired by the concept of "Son et Lumière," *Luxmuralis* pioneered the introduction of light and sound art within sacred spaces, reshaping how cathedrals are experienced and interpreted. Described as 'the stained-glass windows of our time', these installations bring history to life and allow viewers to journey through dynamic light and soundscapes.

'Cathedrals are spaces of encounter, and we are increasingly seeing the value of large scale public art work as an invitation for visitors to come and discover for themselves. Visual art can transcend language and has the ability to reveal to us new ways of seeing and thinking and therefore opens us up to new dialogues in our sacred spaces. Engaging with beautiful artwork creates opportunities for fresh conversations that inevitably further the mission and ministry of cathedrals as places of spiritual and cultural treasure. The AEC has just engaged an arts curator, supported by an Art In Cathedrals Project Board, as a new resource for all our cathedrals and recognises the value art has in attracting, engaging, encouraging and reaching out to our different audiences and diverse communities.'
Dean Jo Kelly-Moore, Chair of the Association of English Cathedrals

As of 2025, 34 English Cathedrals have hosted *Luxmuralis* installations, welcoming hundreds of thousands of visitors through their doors. Many of the exhibitions explore the rich heritage of the site, inviting visitors to physically immerse themselves in the story.

Gloucester Cathedral's installation celebrated its 1000-year-long history, from scripture adorning the walls of the Cloister through to choral music sheets illuminating the Quire. Similarly at Rochester Cathedral, iconic images from the collections of the cathedral created a tapestry of Anglo-Saxon artifacts and medieval manuscripts. Some installations celebrate the unique craftsmanship of these sacred places. In Bath, "Shine On" illuminated and transformed the Abbey's intricate designs, while Birmingham Cathedral's Burne-Jones windows were brought to life by vivid floor-to-ceiling projections.

Other cathedrals have hosted installations which animate turning points in history – the Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution, and the two World Wars are the subject of immersive experiences which have toured around the country and brought history to the doorstep of thousands of people. Many of these installations are projected onto the outside of the cathedrals, creating captivating public artworks which are open to all.

A programme of educational activities and community events often run alongside the installations, including early years storytelling, silent discos and accessible 'quiet time' viewings for neurodivergent audiences. Their success has further supported the financial resilience of the cathedrals and their upkeep, whilst bringing new meaning and interpretation to these ancient places.



Image credits: © Luxmuralis

Heritage as a Muse

Some of the most successful British cultural and creative outputs of recent years have been those which have taken their inspiration from history and heritage.

By GVA contribution, Film and Television is the second-largest subsector within the creative industries.⁷ The UK continues to be an internationally popular destination for period and fantasy films, capitalising upon our world-famous heritage destinations. In 2022, our member Historic Houses hosted over 4,100 days of filming across the country,⁸ testament to the enduring fascination of filmmakers with the British country house.

Screen Tourism also continues to exert powerful influence on international travel trends, with 'set-jettlers' drawn to the UK by the unique heritage assets that inspire their favourite media.

Tell Me More....

Predicting Filming Location Trends, *Filming in England, 2024*

The Future of UK Tourism with Visit Britain CEO Patricia Yates, Hidden Heritage Podcast

The Power of Fashion, *British Council, 2016*

Fashion is Political – the Legacy of Georgian Power Dressing, *Historic Royal Palaces Power Dressing*

Keeping the UK's Creative Industries Globally Competitive, *UAL and Erskine Analysis, 2024*

In the world of fashion and design, Britain is a leader on the world stage thanks to our cultural legacy in these industries, from 'British Invasion' to 'Cool Britannia'. The unique blend of tradition and innovation which characterise British style – from high-end heritage brands like Burberry and Harris Tweed to the fearless innovation of London Fashion Week – has made British Design internationally recognisable.

The case studies in this chapter will explore the role of heritage as a muse, inspiring new generations of creatives and keeping 'Brand Britain' globally competitive.

200+ Film and High-End Television Productions shot at our member The Old Royal Naval College.⁹

7 in 10 Visitors to the UK reported including a trip to a film or television location during their stay.¹⁰



Image credit: © Charlie Urmston

The Most Popular Filming Location in the World? 100 Years of Filming at Old Royal Naval College



Image credits: *Les Misérables* (2012), Universal Pictures.
The Crown (2016), Netflix. Photo by Thomas Duke, @steppingthroughfilm

Maritime Greenwich's Old Royal Naval College (ORNC) is historically famous for such names as Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, Sir Christopher Wren and Admiral Lord Nelson. Equally famous, however, are the names of the actors and filmmakers who have worked here: names such as Colin Firth, Keira Knightly, Nicole Kidman, Meryl Streep, Robert Downey Jr and Dame Judy Dench. This is because, in addition to being a World Heritage Site and a leading and award-winning visitor attraction, **Old Royal Naval College is also one of the UK's most sought-after film locations.**

ORNC is a stage set for inspiration. Designed by Sir Christopher Wren, **the site's iconic baroque buildings, Painted Hall, famed domes, colonnades and courtyards lend credibility and authenticity to productions that simply cannot be replicated in studios.** For filmmakers, the narrative possibilities are endless, with ORNC having hosted **over two hundred film and television productions over the last one hundred years.** These range from breathtaking period pieces such as Netflix's *The Crown*, *Bridgerton* and *Enola Holmes* to superhero blockbusters like Marvel Studios' *Thor II* and *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* – testament to the site's power to conjure up the past, present and future. You can find a full list of films and television shows shot at ORNC [here](#).



Through these vital partnerships with film and television, **ORNC opens the door for new stories and exciting, unexpected visitor experiences.** ORNC saw a noticeable increase in numbers for its *Blockbuster Film and TV* guided tour following the release of *Bridgerton* (Season 3), whilst the themed *Bridgerton Afternoon Teas* sold out and the web pages with *Bridgerton* content received more visitors than ever, 99% being first-time visitors.

The revenue generated from these creative projects goes directly toward conservation efforts, ensuring this heritage destination continues to be preserved for future generations to enjoy and to ensure that **heritage and creative industries can continue to work together to create both cultural and economic value.**

'The Old Royal Naval College is easily accessible and well-equipped to handle film crews and equipment, while our film-friendly policies make it an efficient and visually striking choice for a production. The 600 year old building complex offers a rich visual palette for filmmakers. Additionally, the location's adaptability allows for creative set dressing and manipulation that can be cost-effective, as it eliminates the need to build elaborate sets from scratch or use expensive CGI.'
Luke Flynn, Estate Operations Manager at ORNC

The Modern Artisan: A Sustainable Luxury Fashion Training Partnership Between The King's Foundation and Yoox Net-a-Porter



Since 2019, educational charity The King's Foundation has partnered with online luxury fashion retailer Yoox Net-a-Porter to deliver *The Modern Artisan* – a training partnership which champions **responsible design and sustainable luxury textile craftsmanship**. *The Modern Artisan* forms part of The King's Foundation's flagship *Future Textiles* programme, which aims to address skills gaps within the UK's textile industry.

The second edition of *The Modern Artisan* training partnership saw eight students recruited from the UK and Italy **to design and produce garments inspired by Highgrove Gardens, Gloucestershire**. Highgrove is the private residence of Their Majesties King Charles III and Queen Camilla and is surrounded by a **series of interlinked gardens which are renowned as some of the most inspiring and innovative in the United Kingdom**. Managed organically and sustainably, the gardens have become an important haven for a rich variety of flora and fauna.

The cohort of young designers had access to the gardens at Highgrove to undertake intensive drawing days and to create mood boards. In doing so, **they captured the shapes, details and colours of iconic areas of Highgrove Gardens, such as the Wall of Gifts, Thyme Walk and the Highgrove Rose** to inspire designs for their collections.

The students were also inspired by the sustainable environmental practices at Highgrove and carried through into their final design concepts the principles of sustainability and responsible design. The resulting responsible womenswear capsule collection was also **the first to 100% align with YOOX NET-A-PORTER's Infinity Product Guide and achieve carbon neutrality**.



Image credits: © Charlie Urmston

The students presented their designs to Net-a-Porter and prototypes were developed at Fashion Enter, London, before the students moved to The King's Foundation Dumfries House, Ayrshire, to learn batch production techniques for the luxury market. The finished garments were **showcased at Homo Faber, Venice in April 2023** and the collection was launched on the Net-a-Porter online platform.

All eight students have since either set up their own business or have gained employment in the fashion and textiles sectors.



Heritage as a Creative Practice

Last year, the UK government ratified the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Many traditional crafts and practices can be understood simultaneously as both expressions of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and as forms of creative practice in their own right.

From the potteries of Stoke to the sea shanties of Cornwall and the Morris dances of Oxfordshire, our crafts, folk practices and traditions are kept alive by a prevailing popular interest in Britain's cultural heritage.

Indeed, whilst ICH is afforded protection owing to its role in shaping unique local and national cultural identity, many forms of ICH are practised as commercial enterprises, representing an important contribution to our creative economy.

In addition to supplying substantial domestic and international consumer markets, heritage crafts are also vitally important to many of the most profitable creative industries sub-sectors, such as film and high-end television, architecture and fashion.

The case studies in this chapter explore the role of heritage as a form of creative practice, demonstrating how heritage crafts and traditions both contribute to the creative economy and sustain its other sub-sectors.

259 - The Number of Recognised UK Heritage Crafts.¹¹

38M - The Number of Craft Buyers in the UK in 2020.¹²

Tell Me More...

UN Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003

The Heritage Crafts Red List of Endangered Crafts, 2023

On the Fringe of Extinction Heritage Crafts, National Trust Podcast

Day in the Life of... A Bricklayer, Historic Royal Palaces Podcast

Image credit: Alex McCallion/York Minster

Chawton in Stitches: Embroidery Inspired by Literature and Nature



Image credits: © Emily Barnett

Chawton House's Spring/Summer 2024 exhibition – *Chawton in Stitches* – showcased the work of award-winning graduate of the Royal School of Needlework Emily Barnett, whose degree project took inspiration from the gardens and collection at Chawton House. **Barnett's beautiful creative response to Chawton reflects the power of heritage to provide inspiration for modern artists.**

Barnett has worked with Chawton as a General Assistant since 2018, and her stunning work speaks to the level of talent and skill in Chawton House's young staff team. When the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted Barnett's degree, she returned from Hampton Court back to her local area.

Whilst learning historic needlework techniques in online seminars, she also spent more time at Chawton House, first in the parkland and gardens. Once restrictions eased, Barnett communicated her interests and shared her work with other staff members, who were delighted to show her the site's rare botanical works in the library.

With Chawton's gardens and library as her muse, she took inspiration for her final project, literally threading it into her work. Starting with mixed media experiments to capture wisteria, blossom, roses and moss in stitches, watercolour and photography, she moved on to incorporate her botanical designs with text taken from the books in the library. She even hand-stitched a letter written by Jane Austen in which Chawton is mentioned, replicating Austen's handwriting on parchment, which formed the petals of the roses in her final piece.

Barnett's final triptych of embroidered panels brings together garden and library, and took over 1500 hours to complete. The panels represent the orchard and the Knight family cookbook, the Rose Garden, Elizabeth Blackwell's impressive botanical work *A Curious Herbal*, the library terrace and Chawton's women's writing collection.

The display took visitors through Barnett's creative process, setting her work alongside historic artwork and advice in Chawton House's collection – produced over two centuries before – and showing how needlework has provided occupation, solace, and community for practitioners from the eighteenth century to today.

Chawton in Stitches was a departure from previous exhibitions, which have focused on sharing the work of the women writers in Chawton's collection, aiming to challenge common misconceptions about what women were capable of in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This focus remained for *Chawton in Stitches*, but situating Barnett's modern response directly alongside historic objects.



In addition to tours and regular embroidery demonstrations, Barnett also ran a series of embroidery workshops, building communities.

The exhibition was one of Chawton's most popular to date, garnering very personal responses from visitors – evoking memories, inspiring visitors to return to their own creative or crafting practices, or to try something new.

York Minster Centre of Excellence for Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management



Image credits: © Mal Ex

It takes a **multidisciplinary team of skilled heritage craftspeople and experts to care for the ongoing cycle of repair, restoration, conservation and development of York Minster**, its ancient buildings and monuments.

At the start of this project, the facilities available were constrained and inadequate. **This is set against a backdrop of declining craft skills in the wider industry.** It is also important that **the sector responds to innovations and modern processes** such as digital technology, data scanning and Computer Aided Design (CAD).

The Centre of Excellence for Heritage Craft Skills and Estate Management will establish the York Minster Precinct as a **world class campus facility for research, education and training in ancient craft skills.**

It will bring benefits including **continuing the craft of stonemasonry and encouraging global learning and knowledge sharing.** It will also **preserve ancient craft skills for future generations**, as well as being a shining example of best practice in managing complex heritage estates.

Utilising **world-class, cutting-edge technology**, it will also **support young people in the early stages of their careers** and provide dedicated residential facilities for York Minster's first-year apprentices. The vision for the Centre of Excellence is a key element of the adopted York Minster Precinct Neighbourhood Plan which sets out a **policy-led approach to creating a sustainable future** for the Minster and its seven hectare estate.

Through the Centre of Excellence, the delivery of which has only been possible through the Neighbourhood Plan, York Minster have **connected with institutions around the world including Pisa, Cologne, Milan, Nidaros, Washington, Christchurch as well as the National University of Singapore, University of York and The King's Foundation.** These connections have led to the **twining of institutions in New York and York** to the benefit of the wider city and county through raising the profile of York.

Importantly, the opportunity for sharing knowledge and training opportunities with European cousins **ensures the connections between the great cathedrals of Europe continues** and flourishes. It is hoped that work in York will inspire others to partner with the initiative to **grow the network for sharing knowledge** around caring for heritage estates and importantly, **raise the net zero agenda in a heritage context** thus highlighting the role the heritage sector has to play in achieving net zero.



The multidisciplinary team of skilled heritage craftspeople that care for York Minster and Precinct includes:

- Stonemasons
- Precinct Managers
- Joiners
- Painters
- Sawyers
- Glaziers
- Heritage Builders
- Gardeners

Reviving Oak House Museum: Traditional Craftsmanship in Action



'This project was a true showcase of heritage craftsmanship. By combining historic skills with innovative solutions, we have ensured that Oak House Museum remains a cherished part of Britain's architectural heritage.'
Danny Bennett, Managing Director at Farcroft

Oak House Museum, a Grade II* listed Tudor building in West Bromwich, is a striking example of 16th-century timber-framed architecture. Over the centuries, exposure to the elements and previous failed repairs had severely compromised its structural integrity, particularly the jetty cill and dragon beams on the north elevation.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, in collaboration with Donald Insall Associates, commissioned Farcroft Restorations to **restore the failing timber frame and associated lime infill panels, a project requiring exceptional craftsmanship and traditional restoration skills.** A detailed assessment was undertaken to identify areas for restoration and replacement. Where possible, the original timber was retained, treated by hand for woodworm and Death Watch beetle infestation. Sections too deteriorated to save were carefully removed and replaced with reclaimed oak, hand-selected to match the grain, veining and density of the original. The repair process involved cutting out decayed sections by hand and seamlessly integrating new timber using historically accurate scarf joints, mortise-and-tenon fixings, and hand-cleft oak pegs. **This ensured a strong, reversible repair that remained true to the building's original construction methods.** Beyond the timber, the lime infill panels had also deteriorated. To ensure authenticity, material analysis was conducted on the existing lime plaster to recreate an exact composition match. Skilled plasterers then hand-applied the new infill, maintaining the breathability and integrity of the building.

Heritage restoration often requires adaptability and ingenuity, and this project was no exception. The team devised bespoke temporary propping to support the structure while the fragile timber frame was repaired in situ. In addition, reclaimed historic bricks were carefully removed, cleaned and reinstated to maintain the Tudor character.

The completed project has restored structural stability to Oak House Museum, ensuring its long-term preservation while showcasing heritage woodworking, timber framing and lime plastering skills. **This restoration stands as a testament to the importance of heritage craft skills, which are essential not only for preserving individual buildings but also for safeguarding Britain's architectural legacy.** Farcroft's expertise extends beyond timber conservation – stonework, stained glass restoration, historic metalwork and artefact conservation are all part of the firm's broader mission to preserve and celebrate the UK's built heritage.



Image credits: © Farcroft Group

Innovative Partnerships

Modern challenges require innovative solutions, from confronting the climate crisis to tackling health inequalities and encouraging regional growth.

The arts and heritage sectors are working together to 'think outside the box' and develop creative solutions and new ways of working.

Heritage contexts have been an important early testbed for emerging technologies - including innovative partnerships between cultural institutions and Creetech companies. Immersive experiences, such as the use of mixed, virtual or augmented realities, lie at the cutting edge of art and technology and offer opportunities to attract new audiences and boost revenue. Meanwhile, the digitisation of heritage materials has enhanced their accessibility, facilitating the application of assistive technologies.

Tell Me More...

Immersive Experiences in Museums, Galleries and Heritage Sites: A review of research findings and issues, *Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre*, 2019

Wellbeing and Social Prescribing, *Historic England*, 2021

Improving Health and Wellbeing by Water, Canalcast: The Canal & River Trust Podcast

Partnerships between heritage organisations and health practitioners have also been used to deliver effective community care interventions. Innovative creative and green social prescribing initiatives support the government's ambition for universal personalised care whilst offering value for money.

The case studies in this chapter celebrate innovative partnerships between heritage and the creative industries, demonstrating the value of collaboration, for both communities and the economy.

£193.2 million- the amount saved by the NHS through reductions in GP and psychotherapy appointments as a result of heritage site visits.¹³

Image credits: Visitors at the launch of the Nature's Confetti immersive experience at Outernet, London ©National Trust Images/James Dobson



Sounds Great! Museum of Croydon's Music Heritage Trail



Image credits: Multi Instrumentalist and Composer Shri Sriram © Glenn Foster

'I'm an incredibly proud Croydoner and a foodie so I decided to have my plaque located in front of a hometown favourite, Tasty Jerk, just down the street from Crystal Palace Football Club where my dad took me to watch my first match.'
Nadia Rose, Songwriter and Rapper

Funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Mayor of London and part of a flagship project for Croydon's year as London Borough of Culture in 2023, the Museum of Croydon celebrated the borough's rich music heritage with a new trail, app, exhibition and events programme.

Croydon is a birthplace of pioneering musicians and musical genres. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, the celebrated British composer of mixed-race heritage, lived and worked in the borough whilst folk singer Ralph McTell's famous song 'Streets of London' mentions a market which McTell based on Surrey Street. More recently, dubstep was born from Croydon's record labels, whilst students at the BRIT School of Performing Arts, including multi-award-winning alumni Raye, develop their craft in the borough.

Croydon's iconic and famous venues have attracted world class talent to play there including Duke Ellington, Dave Brubeck, Jimi Hendrix, The Beatles, The Who, Roxy Music and David Bowie. Meanwhile Croydon School of Art alumni include Malcolm McClaren and Ray Davies.

The project included a Music Heritage Trail highlighting local artists, venues, and locations with historic or current musical significance. A new mural, "Croydon Symphony", was created at The Queen's Gardens, the starting point for a walking trail of pavement-mounted celebratory bronze plaques, alongside a **digital platform to enable people to discover the stories, sights and sounds of Croydon** as they follow the trail.

The Croydon Music Heritage Trail app, **developed by Situate.io, can automatically display location specific information on users' smart phones, making links between outside attractions and exhibits inside the Museum of Croydon**, encouraging further exploration. The triggers for the information displays are GPS (externally) or Bluetooth (internally), **enabling users to access content without needing an internet connection** after initially downloading the app.

The first phase of **the app's development was built on community engagement and a public vote for the most important sites to represent with bronze plaques.** Following the launch, a programme of guided tours and promotions was initiated to raise awareness and gather user-generated feedback.

Content on the app goes beyond what can be trawled generally from the internet and includes **archive footage, websites, images and oral histories gathered through community engagement and contemporary collecting undertaken by the museum team.** This engagement and development informed the exhibition **Rewind: This Is Croydon's music**, which opened in the Museum of Croydon in February 2024.

Community collecting of oral histories is ongoing and the museum's aim is to **continue developing the content in the app through further research and engagement and to link to different heritage stories in Croydon.**

Additional features could also include **links to local events and businesses to promote Croydon's wider culture and leisure offer** at relevant points on the trail and practical information such as transport services, parking, weather updates, traffic bulletins etc.

The project was supported by some of Croydon's famous musicians including Captain Sensible, bassist and guitarist with The Damned, the family of reggae legend Desmond Dekker and leading rapper and songwriter Nadia Rose, whose stories can be found in the oral histories on the app and in the Rewind exhibition.

Chronicles of Greyfriars: An Environmental Heritage and Creative Wellbeing Project



Chronicles of Greyfriars was a two year environmental heritage and creative health based project on the Suffolk Coast.

Chronicles of Greyfriars ran in partnership with Greyfriars Trust (Greyfriars and Leper Chapel) and Dunwich Museum. It **worked across traditional boundaries to offer innovative tailor-made days for child carers, adults with serious mental illness and adults in recovery from mental health issues**, as well as providing wellbeing opportunities for the wider local community.

Available via social prescription, this multifaced project is a powerful example of collaboration between the heritage sector, creatives and healthcare practitioners in service of **innovative health interventions**.

The project team, led by Art Branches, was **drawn from a broad range of professions** and included an environmental heritage specialist, geologists, archaeologists, environmental educators, a former nurse, a resident doctor, and ten different artists.



Thorough cross-training across the team was fundamental to the success of the project and included upskilling in such areas as **project management and evaluation and neurodiversity and mental health awareness**. Specialist knowledge of the partner sites was provided by the team's expert heritage professionals to identify areas of potential interest for the programme of creative activities. The team were supported by a number of volunteers, many of whom were **service users who have participated in previous projects and are on their journey of recovery with Art Branches' support**.

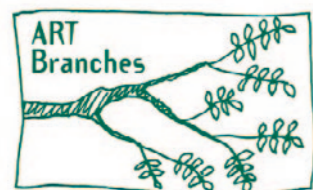
The rich heritage of the three participating sites – Greyfriars Friary, Leper Chapel and Dunwich Museum – formed the basis for creative inspiration which included poetry, textiles and filming. Participants were encouraged to **look holistically and at macro level at the environmental heritage of the sites** which included lichens, stones, soil, plants and insect life.

There were many diverse creative outputs from the project including three interpretation booklets, **two large tapestries made with over three hundred participants, poetry and drawings**.

Inclusion was central to this project. The use of online workshops during winter months enabled those unable to go outside due to caring roles or chronic health conditions to access the project, **whilst links with local BAME groups supported diverse engagement**. The project appealed to all ages which is reflected in the work created by the project.

The creation and provision of high quality resources made with the community meant they were **purposeful, relevant to needs and providing a rich legacy**. At the same time a network of health connectors was established, **ensuring that knowledge and partnerships can be preserved** to support future projects.

Image credits: © Art Branches cic



Space to Feel: Immersive Experiences Delivered in Partnership between the National Trust and Outernet London



Image credits: Visitors at the launch of the Nature's Confetti immersive experience at Outernet, London ©National Trust Images/James Dobson

Outernet is a global media and entertainment company which creates 'connected city-center entertainment districts where music, film, art, gaming and retail experiences come to life in breathtaking new ways'. The first of these districts – Outernet London – centers on an immersive entertainment space located in Central London's Soho.

Now **the most visited cultural attraction in the UK**, Outernet London features 4-storey high, 360 degree, 16k resolution screens – **the most advanced in the world**.

In recent years, the National Trust has worked in partnership with Outernet to deliver **immersive experiences which bring the beauty and splendor of the heritage places they care for** to Londoners, commuters and visitors to the capital.

In 2023, the National Trust and Outernet teamed-up to celebrate Pride Month with **a free immersive experience that brought to life parties of the past**. Taking influence from the Queer history of National Trust places, *Space to Have a Ball* combined the history of ballroom culture with the creativity of contemporary dancers.

The National Trust, Outernet and Media Worx Films worked in collaboration with contemporary dance talent from the LGBTQ+ community to design an immersive experience featuring performances of voguing – a dance style that was birthed by Black and Latinx queer and trans individuals in the 1960s. Content for the experience was filmed across the ballrooms of three National Trust places with LGBTQ+ histories and connections – Kingston Lacey, Osterley Park and Bath Assembly Rooms.

In 2024, *Nature's Confetti* **celebrated blossom in a highly urban space in a unique digital way**. The immersive experience was created using a combination of shots that cut between the city vista and close ups of blossom bursting into life, plus audio recordings from National Trust places including Petworth House and Park in West Sussex, to echo the authentic sounds of nature in the UK. An interactive element of the experience allowed visitors to use their body movements to control and see how blossom trees grow on the screens.



Nature's Confetti used Outernet's space and technology to immerse audiences in a story of beautiful blossom as never seen before - elevated, interactive and truly Instagrammable! Designed for impact, this is a powerful example of how **heritage organisations are reaching new audiences in modern ways and where they are**.



Image credits: English Heritage's work with the Aardman Academy has empowered young people to create their own animations © English Heritage

Inclusive Partnerships

Since the publication of the first *Inspiring Creativity* report, there has rightly been a growing impetus on institutions across the heritage and cultural sectors to address the legacy of complex and contested histories and to recognise the histories and contributions of those who have been overlooked or marginalised.

At the same time, the heritage, cultural and creative sectors continue to grapple with the diversity of their workforces, which are marked by profound divides in terms of gender, race and ethnicity, social class and disability.

Research suggests that the lack of diversity in the cultural and creative industries is rooted in unequal access to arts and cultural education. The Cultural Learning Alliance reports that creative and cultural education has been 'systemically deprioritised' within the state education system, resulting in a decline in in-school opportunities and in the quality of facilities available, ultimately serving to widen the gap between the 93% of young people educated in state schools and their counterparts in the independent sector who continue to enjoy unparalleled access to specialist provision.

The case studies in this chapter celebrate inclusive partnerships between heritage and the creative industries, highlighting their potential to address complex or hidden histories and break down barriers to access.

A recent survey found that only 11% of respondents of colour had attended a historic landscape or habitat in the last twelve months, compared with 41% of white respondents.¹⁴

In film, TV, video, radio and photography, under 10% of people are from working-class backgrounds.¹⁵

Tell Me More...

The Class Ceiling in the Creative Industries, *Creative Access*, 2024

Inclusive Histories: Narrating our Shared Past in Polarised Times, *British Future*, 2023

UK Arts, Culture and Heritage: Audiences and Workforce, *Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre*, 2024

Wentworth Woodhouse Creative Producer Training Programme



Image credits: Young Producers at Wentworth Woodhouse © Steven Ash

In 2025, Rotherham will become **the world's first Children's Capital of Culture**. The Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust will partner with the Children's Capital of Culture (CCoC) Programme, which **will deliver 365 days of cultural activity designed by and for the young people of Rotherham in 2025**.

Providing **opportunities for young people in the communities that they serve** is a central theme of Wentworth Woodhouse's work. Since 2022, **they have undertaken two pilot programmes to train Creative Producers**.

Each cohort of ten young people aged 16-25 were tasked with creating an original piece of film and designing an event at Wentworth Woodhouse where the film could be shown. Working as teams, in a **professional setting and using professional grade equipment, they delivered two unique, sell-out events which used film in very different ways**. Each event showcased the outstanding, original ideas that the teams had devised themselves.



For most of the young trainees, **it was the first time that they had set foot inside the building** but the Creative Producer Training Programme is tailored to the needs of the trainees and uses the site to engage and inspire. From the 'Scavenger Hunt' induction programme through the State Rooms, to the various locations used during the training programme **Wentworth Woodhouse itself plays a vital role in the success of the programmes**.

Personal growth, as well as **improvements in technical and employability skills, such as communication, teamworking and planning**, over the course of the programmes was evident. A common theme in the feedback received from the Young Producers was the degree to which the programme had increased their levels of confidence and self-belief.

On completion of the programmes, **over half of the producers signed up as volunteers at Wentworth Woodhouse** and are still working with the site over two years after completion of the first programme. The Wentworth Woodhouse Filmmakers Club was set up by past participants as a legacy project following their training and has **produced a series of films using the House and gardens as locations**.

Several of the trainees have also gone on to secure work in the Cultural Industries sector since completing the Young Producers programme. In 2025, young producers will participate in the Perception Busters programme, which will form part of the CCoC celebrations.

Animated Histories: Youth Engagement Partnership Between English Heritage and the Aardman Academy



Image credits: English Heritage and the Aardman Academy with young people inspired by Bristol's Temple Church © English Heritage

English Heritage has worked with the Aardman Academy, based at Aardman's studios, **to inspire young people to use stop motion animation to bring their interpretations of the stories of historic sites to life.**

In summer 2023, Aardman animators joined English Heritage in welcoming young people from Bristol's Creative Youth Network to the city's Temple Church, inspiring them to produce stop motion animations about **what they found interesting about the history of this late medieval church.** The young people's animations included telling the story of the Second World War bombing of the church.

In summer 2024, English Heritage expanded its partnership with the Aardman Academy to offer **free workshops with its professional animators for young people at four English Heritage sites.** Using freely available kit, materials and apps, **the animators helped young people develop skills in paper animation and creative storytelling** - to bring the stories of Stott Park Bobbin Mill, Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens, Charles Darwin's Down House and Fort Brockhurst to life.

In September 2024, English Heritage **launched a mass participation digital project** - the 'Animated Histories Film Festival'. Young people aged 11-25 were able to enter their own heritage-inspired stop motion animation film for consideration by a panel of Aardman Academy and English Heritage professionals. Online resources were made available to **encourage young filmmakers** and the most creative and inspired films will feature in an online film festival in early 2025.

One animator, aged between 18 and 25, will be awarded **the opportunity to secure a paid commission, to inspire other young people to engage with heritage using stop motion animation.** They will benefit from Aardman Academy mentorship and access to English Heritage's sites, collections and expertise.

This youth engagement programme highlights the power of inclusive partnerships. Many of the youth organisations English Heritage collaborate with work with young people who may not otherwise have the chance to engage with heritage, or who might feel it is not relevant to their lives. It also provides opportunities for them **to develop skills with the support of creative professionals** - inspiring them to consider their own future journeys as they connect with our past.

All young people taking part in the initial project with the Aardman Academy reported **their confidence had increased and they had learnt new skills.** The opportunity to speak and work with creatives from the Aardman Academy was a unique offering for English Heritage visitors.

At the same time, English Heritage staff learned **new skills they can pass on to young people participating in future creative projects,** new ideas were formed for future on-site activities and the animators were able to access 'behind the scenes' at various sites, learning more about these historic spaces and using them as inspiration for ongoing and future animation work.

The Indian Army at the Palace: A Community-Led Creative Exhibition at Hampton Court Palace



The Indian Army at the Palace uncovers the history of encampments of Indian soldiers that took place in the grounds of Hampton Court Palace in the early twentieth century. **This forgotten story is told in a creative, radical community-led exhibition.** The exhibition centres South Asian voices and features crowd-sourced objects alongside previously unseen material from Historic Royal Palace's (HRP) collection.

The team of HRP staff, community curators and contributors have **co-created a unique experience with a multi-layered interpretive approach**, including objects, sound, archive film, stereoscopic 3D viewers, and film of profoundly personal stories and contemporary relevance, attracting a new South Asian audience.

This exhibition evolved organically through years of fostering community collaboration. It started small – in 2021, HRP approached *A Little History of the Sikhs* to advise on silhouettes of Indian soldiers and a graphic panel to accompany the remembrance installation *Standing With Giants*. The installation **inspired international media coverage and interest from visitors who were both fascinated and moved by the display**, many of whom knew little about the Indian Army and nothing about its links with the palace.



Recognising the power of the story, and the interest in it from the South Asian community, in March 2022, HRP invited two community curators to join a project co-creating a 6 month 1-room exhibition. **Fuelled by collective enthusiasm, this short display expanded** this into a crowd-sourced two-room creative exhibition with community lenders as far-flung as Canada, a film, portrait commissions, blogs, two podcast episodes, social media films, a new permanent interpretation panel in the gardens and an **opportunity to engage with the stories in virtual reality through Project Daastan's *Child of Empire* experience.**

Through crowd-sourcing objects and stories, HRP engaged the communities they hoped to attract in the process of creating the exhibition. **The exhibition became all the richer, in terms of stories and objects, because of their involvement.** HRP staff also received training in **best practice when engaging with marginalised communities and communities who have experienced racism** or trauma and an ethical framework for collaboration with community partners was developed.

The Indian Army at the Palace is an exhibition which embodies HRP's commitment to be a charity for everyone. **The project aimed to reveal hidden histories, evoke emotions, change perspectives and attract new audiences.** This required a different approach – one which **married heritage expertise with community and creative collaboration.**

Notes

¹ *Inspiring Creativity, Heritage & The Creative Industries*, The Heritage Alliance (2019)

² 'Cultural Heritage, Creativity and the Creative Economy', Heritage Counts, Historic England (updated 2024)

³ Cited in *The UK Creative Industries: unleashing the power and potential of creativity*, Creative UK Group (2021, p. 14)

⁴ *Changing Times, Valuing History: historic houses for the twenty-first century*, Historic Houses (2023)

⁵ *New ideas need old buildings*, Heritage Lottery Fund (2013)

⁶ 'Cultural Heritage, Creativity and the Creative Economy', Heritage Counts, Historic England (updated 2024)

⁷ DCMS Sectors Economic Estimates

⁸ *Changing Times, Valuing History: historic houses for the twenty-first century*, Historic Houses (2023)

⁹ 'Film and TV productions', Old Royal Naval College

¹⁰ *The influence of Film and TV locations on visits to the UK*, VisitBritain (2024)

¹¹ According to Heritage Crafts

¹² *The Market for Craft*, Crafts Council (2020)

¹³ 'Further analysis to value the health and educational benefits of sport and culture', Fujiwara et al (2015)

¹⁴ McAndrew, S., O'Brien, D., Taylor, M. and Wang, R. (2024) Audiences and workforces in arts, culture and heritage

¹⁵ Ibid

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About the Authors

This report has been worked on by various members of the Heritage Alliance team.

The final draft was written by **Rhiannon Watts**, a civil servant on secondment to the Alliance, with contributions from **Neil Andrews**, Policy and Advocacy Manager and **Lydia Gibson**, Head of Policy and Communications.

About The Heritage Alliance

Established in 2002, the Heritage Alliance is England's largest coalition of heritage interests. We are a membership body that brings together over 200 independent organisations, who represent the full breadth of the sector. We work to champion the needs, aspirations, and achievements of our members and the wider heritage sector – influencing policy and legislation, bringing diverse groups together, and helping heritage practitioners to innovate and grow. Our vision is for a society in which England's historic environment and wider cultural heritage are valued, supported, and able to enrich everyone's lives. Join us here.

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Case Study Participants

Art Branches
Association of English Cathedrals
Association of Independent Museums
Chawton House
Creative Land Trust
English Heritage
Historic Royal Palaces
National Trust
Old Royal Naval College
The King's Foundation
The Piece Hall
Wentworth Woodhouse
York Minster

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