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Kate Guest

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## Heritage and the Pandemic: An Early Response to the Restrictions of COVID-19 by the Heritage Sector in England

Kate Guest

Senior Policy Adviser, Historic England

### ABSTRACT

This article examines the response of the English heritage sector, in particular Historic England, to the impact caused by the initial lockdown and restrictions introduced to protect lives during the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK. This response, headed by the Heritage Sector Response Group, relied on effective cross-sector working in order to both make the case for targeted support for the heritage sector to the UK Government and to provide advice and support for organisations during the lockdown and the limited reopening of the economy which followed. This included gathering intelligence in order to understand the impact of restrictions on the sector, which was used to swiftly develop emergency grant schemes funded by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England. The paper also considers the Historic England Heritage Online Debate around the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on the sector, which gathered case studies from across the sector to capture and share qualitative information. The paper then looks at other long term challenges facing the sector, such as climate change, and considers how a collaborative approach and lessons learned from the sector's response to the COVID-19 restrictions may provide models for building resilience for the future and developing solutions to other issues.

### KEYWORDS

COVID-19; recovery; response; heritage sector; lockdown; collaboration

This article discusses certain aspects of the response of the English heritage sector, in particular Historic England, to the impact caused by the initial lockdown and other restrictions to protect lives and health during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> The response focused on intelligence gathering, analysis and making the case for the heritage sector in England to the UK Government in tandem with other key sector organisations. It also discusses the aims and initial outcomes of this response. Due to the ongoing threat the virus represents and the need to continue with social restrictions and other measures to protect lives, the long-term outcomes of this approach cannot yet be assessed. However, the initial sector approach has demonstrated what can be achieved in the short term through sector organisations working in partnership with each other and Government, which might be a suitable model to address ongoing and future challenges.

**CONTACT** Kate Guest  [Kate.Guest@HistoricEngland.org.uk](mailto:Kate.Guest@HistoricEngland.org.uk)

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## COVID-19 and the Heritage Sector in England

The heritage sector in England is calculated as being worth £31 billion to the national economy and as providing nearly half a million jobs.<sup>2</sup> Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and the life-altering restrictions which have been necessary to protect people, there has been an immediate toll taken on the cultural and creative sector, including the heritage sector.

As the initial national lockdown and suspension of normal life were implemented, many heritage organisations were forced to cease operations by closing buildings, offices, parks, gardens and other sites, or by stopping, at least temporarily, planned archaeological, conservation, construction or maintenance work. Consequentially, many businesses furloughed staff as usual activities became impossible. The pandemic also came hot on the heels of catastrophic flooding in many areas of the country, and coincided with damaging wildfires in others, amplifying challenges already being felt by businesses and employers. Overall, across the arts, entertainment and recreation sectors, 76% of employers have furloughed at least one employment.<sup>3</sup> It was estimated that over 474,000 employees were furloughed in these sectors in July, with £1.3 billion claimed by employers.<sup>4</sup>

Restrictions for all sorts of site work, construction, education, training, and public engagement activities have had a knock on effect for businesses in the heritage ecosystem – those contractors, consultants and other businesses which provide services, works, materials and advice across the country – and put jobs, businesses and heritage assets at risk. Similarly, another big impact was caused by the main funders of heritage projects re-focusing their programmes during the initial stage of the pandemic to provide cashflow support to struggling organisations, leading to a closure of open grant schemes and hence a brief cessation of new project funding. This essentially turned off the tap of heritage repair and adaptation projects that provide income for heritage construction businesses.

### The Initial Sector Response

In March, organisations from the national Historic Environment Forum including Historic England, the Heritage Alliance, Historic Houses, National Lottery Heritage Fund and the National Trust quickly came together to form the Heritage Sector Response Group. The group's aims are to assess the impact of the responses to the pandemic on the heritage sector in England and coordinate action and support. During the first national lockdown, this ensured that organisations across the sector had timely access to clear information, advice, support, analysis and insight.

This swift action also amplified the voice of the sector in order to make a strong case to the UK Government for financial support for those organisations and individuals whose livelihoods have been threatened and for those historic places and collections in greatest need due to closure or prevention of planned maintenance or work. As detailed below, the initial success of this approach has led to a number of UK Government grants and support packages for the sector distributed by Historic England, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and others.

A huge amount of work was undertaken across the sector to keep businesses afloat during the initial lockdown and, after this, the focus turned to supporting the sector to restart, where possible, during the summer months.

However, the ongoing threat to life and health has been increased by the onset of colder weather and, at the time of writing, the Government has responded to an increased infection rate by announcing new national restrictions across England in the form of a one month lockdown<sup>5</sup> and is ramping up the NHS Test and Trace system.<sup>6</sup> Ongoing and future safety measures to control the spread of the virus will continue to impact on how the sector operates. The priority is now to prepare for a second peak in infections and a winter where increased restrictions, both local and national, will be necessary in order to protect people.

Although we will not be able to fully assess the effects of the initial sector response for some time to come, the combined sector approach in drawing Government and public attention to the immediate issues facing the sector and in ensuring action was taken to combat these, can be learned from to inform future responses to both this crisis and other issues. The sector must continue work to respond to simultaneous long-term challenges, such as climate change, and their effects.

## Intelligence Gathering

The initial aim of the Heritage Sector Response Group was to understand as fully as possible the extent of the effects the responses to COVID-19 had on the sector and to share this information so that organisations were up to date when developing responses to the immediate crisis.

Several bodies in the group and across the sector undertook surveys of members, grant recipients and other organisations across the sector with specific questions on the impact caused by the restrictions. The National Lottery Heritage Fund ran a survey in March, and Historic England and the Institute for Conservation (Icon) ran surveys in April. The Heritage Fund survey was conducted before the initial Government support package for businesses and furlough scheme were announced, while the Historic England and Icon surveys ran just after this, which explains some of the differences in sentiment below.

The Heritage Fund survey was sent to UK organisations, mainly charities and third sector organisations, which had received a grant from the Heritage Fund of over £250,000 in the last 10 years.<sup>7</sup> This received over 1250 responses and findings included:

- The impact was universal – 98% of organisations had been affected within the first three weeks.
- A large part of the impact was financial – loss of revenue was the second most frequently reported impact (69%), after cancellation of events (91%).
- 82% of organisations reported high or moderate risk to their long-term viability and 46% of respondents reported that they could not survive for more than six months.

The Historic England survey targeted other parts of the sector, particularly micro-businesses with 10 or fewer employees, on which large parts of the sector depend.<sup>8</sup> Nearly 800 responses were received – including 70% from micro-businesses, around 20% from organisations with between 10 and 100 employees and 10% from larger businesses.

The data from the survey, stripped of personal information, is available on the Historic England website.<sup>9</sup> This survey was intended to complement the National Lottery Heritage Fund survey and so targeted a specific group, heritage businesses, which might not otherwise have been represented in survey results.

The main findings included:

- 76% of respondents reported lost business and 58% has cancelled or postponed income-generating events.
- At the time of survey, nearly 40% of respondents had decided to furlough staff.
- Around 90% of respondents thought that, if they were supported by Government measures in the way they expected, they could keep going in the short term.
- Craftspeople/smaller crafts-based businesses or professional services such as architects, surveyors and engineers were the most at risk. These small businesses are crucial to the operation of England's heritage construction sector, which employs 100,000 construction workers (including specialised craftspeople), 6,000 archaeologists and 24,000 architects, engineers and quantity surveyors. They generate an estimated £7.1 billion in GVA to the economy and are vital for the maintenance and continued enjoyment of England's heritage.<sup>10</sup>
- Over 40% of these businesses forecast failure within 3 months and were very pessimistic about their survival over 6 months.

The information gathered from this survey and from other sector surveys such as that of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, was instrumental in developing both the Historic England response to support the sector and in advising the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) on public policy development.

The Icon survey aimed to capture information from the conservation sector across the UK and also to complement the wider Historic England and NLHF surveys.<sup>11</sup> There were 168 responses, mainly from freelancers, sole traders or private limited companies and key findings included<sup>12</sup>:

- More than 90% of respondents reported loss or postponement of work and 70% reported loss in monthly income.
- 40% reported the postponement or cancellation of income generating events.
- Many respondents reported anxiety and uncertainty over their long-term futures and also the longer-term economic forecast.
- There were calls for targeted sector support, including long-term support for businesses.

All of these surveys highlight the vulnerability of many sector organisations and businesses during this period, and the anxiety of many over their long-term survival.

## **Making Use of the Intelligence**

The intelligence gathering carried out through the survey, discussions with sector partners and the Heritage Online Debate (discussed below) formed the evidence base for ongoing discussions with Government to make the case for supporting a heritage sector

recovery. It clearly showed the scale and immediacy of the impact which the first lockdown had on the sector and the likelihood of organisations across the sector failing in the short term without a significant package of support alongside broader programmes such as the Job Retention Scheme.<sup>13</sup>

The information gathered through these activities, and continuing to be gathered and analysed by DCMS and the Heritage Sector Response Group at the time of writing, has allowed us to understand how best to respond to the immediate crisis and to develop the first round of support schemes for the sector. These included:

- Historic England's COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund of £2 million.<sup>14</sup> Developed primarily using the survey data, this provided grants of up to £25,000 to address financial difficulties and of up to £50,000 for projects or activities that reduce risks to heritage by providing information, resources and skills. This programme was heavily oversubscribed, receiving nearly 300 applications requesting grants of a total in excess of £6.5 million against the £2 million budget. Historic England offered over 70 grants through this scheme to businesses and organisations working both nationally and regionally.
- Historic England's COVID-19 Emergency Heritage at Risk Response Fund of up to £3 million. This scheme awarded grants to help fund urgent maintenance, repairs and surveys to both help sites to reopen when this became possible and to generate business for heritage specialists severely affected by COVID-19.<sup>15</sup>
- National Lottery Heritage Fund's Heritage Emergency Fund of £50 million.<sup>16</sup> This scheme offered grants of up to £50,000 for essential costs and of up to £250,000 to help organisations that manage a heritage asset at immediate risk and to help the organisation look towards a longer-term recovery.

Although these emergency funding schemes were designed to respond to the immediate crisis, they have also consciously targeted longer-term issues such as employment for craftspeople and specialists in order to maintain important specialist skills.

Through intelligence gathering and other frequent cross-sectoral discussions, organisations such as Historic England, the Heritage Alliance and Icon have also produced online resources to provide support to organisations looking for advice and funding. These included both 'hubs' linking to new or existing support and guidance, and new advice for those managing historic sites during lockdown. For example, The Heritage Alliance's COVID-19 Guidance Hub<sup>17</sup> and the COVID-19 Funding Hub<sup>18</sup> are Google Documents which could be edited to rapidly respond to updates and announcements. The Historic England web pages contain both hub-style sections linking to Government and sector guidance and funding,<sup>19</sup> and new guidance such as that on cleaning historic surfaces<sup>20</sup> and reopening heritage locations.<sup>21</sup> Analysis of these schemes and resources is ongoing; however it is not yet possible to measure the long-term success of the outcomes generated.

Following the launch of the initial emergency grant schemes for heritage, discussions continued on how best to provide support to the sector as it started to reopen over the summer and consider the next steps of the sector response in line with the Government's Roadmap to Recovery, discussed below.<sup>22</sup>

## Heritage Online Debate

As well as gathering data from organisations across the sector, another approach was to collect and promote case studies from a variety of organisations to capture qualitatively the immediate impact on and response of the sector to the restrictions from March 2020. Whilst this article focuses on the Historic England Heritage Online Debate, edited by the author, it should be noted that other sector bodies have taken a similar approach.<sup>23</sup>

The Heritage Online Debate is a regular debate hosted on the Historic England website and usually published quarterly.<sup>24</sup> It takes the form of a magazine of several short articles by conservation and heritage experts presenting different views on a topical issue. As it has a wide audience and is easily accessible on the Historic England website, it was the most appropriate format in which to both capture and share this information.

A wide range of organisations contributed case studies in the form of short blogs for an extended edition of the Heritage Online Debate: from those working in archaeology, places of worship, industrial heritage, parks and natural heritage to local authorities, contractors, suppliers, consultants and national heritage organisations.

In total 26 articles were contributed. These were published in three tranches between May and July 2020 in order to generate maximum impact through broad promotion across social media channels, newsletters and other means by both Historic England and contributing organisations. This has been the most popular edition of the Debate yet produced, with over 16,000 views across the three tranches.

Contributors were asked to discuss how their organisation had been affected by the initial restrictions, what sort of support they would find most helpful to continue operating in the medium to long-term and whether the lessons they had learned when adjusting to restrictions might generate any potential opportunities for new ways of working or networking in future. Comments were also invited from readers through the use of pop-up boxes appearing on each article, which were collected and published as part of the Heritage Online Debate.<sup>25</sup>

## Facing the Challenges Caused by COVID-19 Restrictions

A key aim of this issue of the Heritage Online Debate was to capture perspectives from individuals, businesses and other organisations during the early stages of the response to lockdown, and as it became clear what a deep and long-lasting impact measures would have across the heritage, cultural and creative sectors.

Other aims were to use these articles to inform and inspire the sector; to encourage organisations to apply for available support; to showcase the breadth and depth of work still ongoing during the lockdown period; where possible, to consider opportunities to experiment with new ways of working; and, to engage or support both new or existing audiences through innovative activities such as holding events virtually or using their collections or knowledge to develop online activities.

The success of this approach was demonstrated by the extremely positive responses and feedback Historic England has received on the Debate through social media and comments. Readers have considered this to be a successful method of sharing messages and information across the sector.

Strong common themes about the effects of the pandemic emerged from these articles which echoed discussions Historic England and members of the Heritage Sector Response Group had been having across the spectrum of the heritage sector. Key themes included:

- The risks posed by postponed or cancelled maintenance and conservation projects to heritage sites including historic houses, places of worship and industrial heritage, and their associated collections. Some organisations and groups do not currently have the capacity to carry out such projects due to furlough, redundancies or lack of volunteers able or to assist.
- The need to get local and national supply chains, consultancy and planning services moving again to support jobs, skills and local economies.
- The time needed to restore 'normal' activity – everything from the postponement of environmental legislation to projects being postponed as staff were furloughed or diverted to other work.
- A requirement for targeted support to help heritage organisations and to help them and other businesses remain viable.
- Long-term concerns, if businesses are forced to make redundancies or to close, over the capacity of the sector to maintain services and specialist skills, as well as to maintain the provision of heritage sites of all types open to the public.
- The immediate impact of lockdown on volunteers and those who benefit from activities and programmes, for example the thousands of volunteers who support the daily running of places of worship and heritage attractions of all types and those who take part in programmes such as Operation Nightingale, which enables military veterans to volunteer for archaeological fieldwork.
- The innovative activities some groups and organisations were already engaging in, from developing new online resources such as the Council for British Archaeology's Dig School, an online teaching platform, to podcasts and webinars for specialists, for volunteers and for school children.

The articles received from the commercial sector indicated a level of confidence in the return to work, across areas such as development and archaeology, following the initial easing of restrictions in May which allowed site work to continue. However, there were concerns over the long-term outlook for the economy and the impact this might have on construction and development, and consequently on specialist areas such as archaeology and conservation.<sup>26</sup> These views were gathered before the recent spike in infections and increased restrictions.

Several articles mention the importance of protecting specialist skills in any recovery programmes and schemes. The initial round of Government and sector support has naturally focused on protecting businesses and restarting paused conservation, maintenance and repair projects, which will promote demand for certain skills over the short to medium-term. Future support measures and responses from Government and the sector may also focus on the longer-term maintenance and development of specialist skills within the sector.

Collectively, these articles and sector discussions have helped promote the continued importance of the heritage sector to the economy, to supply chains and other sectors, and to health and wellbeing.

## Roadmap for Future Recovery

The heritage sector came together to make a strong case to Government for a targeted initial support package, to help organisations with rapidly dwindling resources and historic places requiring maintenance or repair. The Government responded rapidly to the case which was made, with Secretary of State for DCMS, the Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP, and Chancellor of the Exchequer the Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP announcing the £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund package on 5 July 2020.<sup>27</sup>

Part of this was the £88 million Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage, for which, at the time of writing, applications have closed and are being assessed for a swift turnaround of grant payments.<sup>28</sup> The scheme received over 850 applications. This grant scheme is distributed by the National Heritage Lottery Fund in partnership with Historic England and offers grants of up to £3 million to organisations across the heritage ecosystem to help them take action to reopen, or to operate on a sustainable and cost-efficient basis if they are not able to reopen by 31 March 2021.

As well as this significant investment, in August the Government announced a further investment through the Culture Recovery Fund of £50 million capital funding, the Heritage Stimulus Fund.<sup>29</sup> This will provide £34 million of funding for Programmes of Major Repair Works for organisations who look after nationally important heritage attractions to kick-start repair and conservation projects impacted by the pandemic; £11 million top up of the previous COVID-19 Emergency Heritage at Risk Fund; and a £5 million top up of Historic England's existing Repair Grants for Heritage at Risk. As well as kick-starting projects, these programmes also look to sustain employment and skills – a key part of the criteria for the Major Repair Works scheme was the development of skills.

The scheme was welcomed by Sir Laurie Magnus, Chair of Historic England, who noted: 'England's heritage is worth £31 billion to the economy, supports nearly half a million jobs and engages even more volunteers. It has a central role to play as the country moves towards a sustainable recovery. This crucial funding will help the organisations who look after our locally-cherished historic sites. It is a recognition that investing directly in historic places can bring wide ranging social benefits, inspiring communities to engage with their past and encouraging creativity, regeneration and growth.'<sup>30</sup>

The Government has also published specific advice for those working in heritage locations as part of the Working Safely during Coronavirus series to help owners, managers and volunteers assess risk and to keep visitors and staff safe.<sup>31</sup> To complement this, Historic England has published advice on Reopening Heritage Locations with advice for specific types of heritage site and for heritage professionals, while other organisations have issued their own guidance for members, including the Royal Institute for British Architects (RIBA).<sup>32</sup> The guidance for archaeologists from trade union Prospect and Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA),<sup>33</sup> have also, following discussions with a variety of sector organisations, been recommended within the Government's sector guidance in order to cover the risks to specialists working in the construction sector.

It is hoped that these programmes of support and advice will support the sector on the road to recovery by kick-starting delayed conservation and repair projects and help businesses, suppliers and other related industries continue to operate.

## **Facing the Future: Responding to Other Long-term Challenges**

As well as the immediate, direct threat caused by the pandemic restrictions, several articles within the Heritage Online Debate explored long-term issues and threats to the historic environment which have been exacerbated or brought to the fore due to the current situation. These include: climate change, the future of urban green space and the loss of heritage assets.

### **Climate Change Action**

2020 was meant to be the year of COP26, the United Nations Climate Change Conference, in Glasgow – a chance for the UK to contribute and commit to climate action on a global stage. This has now been postponed until November 2021. In her article, Hannah Fluck, Head of Environmental Strategy at Historic England, argued that the delay, while unfortunate, offers a chance for more work to be done collaboratively before COP26. This could help organisations such as the Climate Heritage Network to argue for cultural heritage to be embedded in global responses to climate change.<sup>34</sup>

The UK has an opportunity to make the recovery from COVID-19 a green recovery to propel us towards our commitment to a 100% reduction in greenhouse gases by 2050. The heritage sector also has opportunities – both to use this time to find new ways of working to reduce our own carbon footprint and to build the case for the contribution of the historic environment to a green recovery. This includes the maintenance, reuse and recycling of historic buildings and the use of well-maintained historic landscapes to help reduce flood risk and lower temperatures.

### **Urban Green Space**

Articles from Helen Monger, Director at the London Gardens Trust, and Ian Baggott, Managing Director at CFP, a specialist parks, green space and heritage consultancy working across the public, voluntary and heritage sectors, contributed articles discussing aspects of the value of green space to society – in particular how important urban green space became during the lockdown.

Research carried out by CFP with the Midlands Parks Forum for MHCLG found that there had been a huge impact on service delivery in parks during the lockdown, including: the closure of car parks, cafes, and other services, reduced grounds maintenance and many parks staff being diverted to other activities.<sup>35</sup> Coupled with previous austerity cuts, the cancellation of all income-generating activities pushed many parks services into the red just a few weeks into lockdown.<sup>36</sup>

Concerns about the future of funding for parks and for organisations like the London Gardens Trust, which rely on income-generating events and membership, are very real.<sup>37</sup> Despite wide-scale recognition of their value to both places and people's mental and physical wellbeing, including the 2017 Public Inquiry into the Future of Public Parks,<sup>38</sup>

these issues have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 restrictions and the considerable impact these had in just a few short weeks on the financial model of many parks and related organisations. Although the long-term impact remains unclear, looking towards further months of reduced indoor mixing and further potential local or national restrictions, the demand for urban parks is unlikely to decrease.

## Loss of Heritage Assets

Tanya Venture, a Collaborative Doctoral Partnership PhD student with the University of Exeter and Historic England, contributed an article discussing the effect coronavirus will have on the loss of heritage assets.<sup>39</sup> Her PhD is considering how the relationships people have with the heritage landscape change when confronted with loss or change, and how these are communicated.

Loss and transformative change are inevitable if uncomfortable aspects of managing change in the historic environment. The financial impacts of the COVID-19 response have already put some historic places at risk – not all will reopen or survive in the way they had previously done. We as a sector need to confront these issues and establish new ways to increase resilience as we learn more about the long-term effects of the coronavirus on the historic environment and what this means for the loss of heritage assets.

## Lessons Learnt from COVID-19 Response and Restrictions

As a sector, we can learn from the challenges of the last few months and the initial sector response to these, to help us tackle both the recovery from the effects of the pandemic restrictions and other long-term issues such as those described above. Some particular areas where lessons can be learned include:

**Understanding the ecosystem:** As impacts are felt across the sector, it has become apparent that different parts of the sector are dependent on each other in ways which have not previously been unpicked. Work by Historic England and others is underway to get a deeper understanding of the heritage ecosystem and the networks and dependencies within it, in order to make better decisions about where to target future funding and support for recovery.

**Planning for flexible working:** Since March, organisations have had to adapt quickly to new, often flexible, homeworking patterns to allow staff to balance childcare and other responsibilities with work. For many, online meetings, training and even conferences have allowed projects to continue or have even opened up new possibilities for the future. Becoming more adaptable to homeworking and flexible working will have benefits for both the immediate recovery phase and also potentially for dealing with future challenges. The unpredictable weather patterns already emerging due to climate change, combined with the increased need to reduce our carbon footprint, are likely to make this more common in the years ahead.

**Understanding risk:** In the same way that climate change has been demonstrated to be a risk multiplier that amplifies existing risks such as flooding, the response to COVID-19 can be viewed as a risk multiplier exacerbating other risks to the sector such as reduced visitor numbers due to bad weather. Countries around the world entered 2020 largely unprepared for disruption on the scale there has been – we must learn from this where

our existing vulnerabilities are in order to protect the sector from future shocks like this one. The capacity of the sector to cope with the effects of such shocks is likely to have been reduced due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic restrictions. Only by understanding our vulnerabilities can we develop appropriate responses in advance.

**Bringing networks together:** The sector response was only possible due to the existence of networks and member organisations such as the Historic Environment Forum, the Heritage Alliance, Historic Houses and Icon. Such bodies represent the diversity of needs and concerns within the sector, and were able to come together to make the case to Government and to develop appropriate responses.

**Public engagement:** The lockdown and other restrictions have meant that many people have been exploring and using local places – this is exemplified in the increased use of public parks and other designated landscapes. There is likely to be continued interest as the recovery period continues, particularly with ongoing travel restrictions and increased ‘staycationing’. Many heritage organisations and groups have worked during lockdown to engage with both new and existing audiences through online resources – from guided walks and educational tours of museum collections to webinars for local authorities on managing socially distanced high streets.<sup>40</sup> Can we learn from the uptake of and interest in this relationship between people, places and heritage to continue to engage both the public and professionals in the sector and to promote the usefulness of online engagement for visitors, education, training and understanding of local heritage?

**The value of heritage:** The evidence emerging from the initial lockdown is of heritage organisations working to deliver for their local communities – from keeping parks and gardens open, to millers at historic mills working to produce flour at a much higher rate than usual to keep up with demand<sup>41</sup>; from the reopening of historic high streets to the restarting of construction and conservation work. The recovery may be a chance to demonstrate the value of heritage to people, to places and to regeneration; as a sector we can continue to make the case to Government for the ways in which heritage organisations and assets can contribute to the economic recovery.

## Conclusion

By ensuring that collective action and intelligence gathering was undertaken at the start of the crisis, the heritage sector was able to develop a swift response, to collect the necessary data to make an ultimately successful case for initial targeted Government support and to produce complementary online resources and advice.

Although the financial support already received has supported many organisations, at least initially, we are still only part-way through this pandemic and there is continued uncertainty over ongoing restrictions, the longer-term economic outlook and what this will mean for the sector. We have achieved some successful outputs, but long-term outcomes have not yet been realised. Some organisations will close their doors, or have already. As we collectively work towards a recovery, we must remember that this will not be in the same environment as before. Indeed, it may never be the same again – with some sites possibly closed long-term, organisations, jobs and skills lost to the sector, reduced capacity to carry out projects and volunteers unable or, understandably, reluctant to return.

However, the fact that the sector response to the immediate pandemic restrictions has been developed quickly, in partnership between a variety of organisations and with Government, should be used as a model in future. Better sharing of information, developing new ways of working and forming partnerships on new projects as organisations seek to pool resources around managing other long-term threats, and also opportunities, should become the ‘new normal’.

As we learn from our response to the COVID-19 restrictions and safety measures, there is also the opportunity to work more collaboratively on other challenges. We can learn the lessons from the first lockdown and effectively make the case for a green recovery, and for the role of the historic environment in adapting to climate change; we can make the case for the importance of historic places, including urban green spaces, to placemaking, to the wellbeing of society and to the economy; we can establish new ways of working and new relationships with the historic environment as it changes and transforms in the future.

## Notes

1. Due to the timeframes involved for publication, and the position of the author, this article in large part focuses on work carried out by Historic England.
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23. For example, the National Lottery Heritage Fund’s blog on *Future Heritage*.
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26. Articles relating to the commercial sector include: Lennox, "COVID-19 Restrictions and Impacts"; Powers, "Changing Behaviour"; North, "Is the 'Small Scale' perception"; Paine, "The Impacts of Coronavirus"; and The Traditional Cornmillers Guild, "Flour Milling."
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35. CFP and the Midlands Parks Forum, Information for UK Government; Baggott, "Parks, People and a Pandemic."
36. CFP and the Midlands Parks Forum, Information for UK Government; Monger, "Visit Your Local Park."
37. Historic England, Heritage Online Debate Number 7.
38. House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee, Public Parks. (14ff, 60.)
39. Venture, "Loss in the Time of Corona."
40. See, for example: Band, "From foreshore to armchair"; Mantyniemi, "'Waking up' Collections"; Historic England, Webinars.
41. Traditional Cornmillers Guild, "Flour Milling."

## Disclosure Statement

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## Notes on contributor

**Kate Guest** is a Senior Policy Adviser in the Strategy and Listing Department at Historic England. She has worked at Historic England for ten years and her current role focuses on heritage at risk. She holds an MA in Latin and Ancient History and an MLitt in Ancient History from the University of St Andrews, and an MSc in Museum Theory and Practice from the University of Glasgow.

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