



AHRC's Heritage Strategic Priority Area: Future Strategy February 2016

Please note: This strategy is seen as an evolving document rather than fixed, adapting and responding to continuing consultations and emerging developments. We are currently reviewing the strategy in the light of a focus group held in late 2015 and other recent developments and consultations.

Introduction: AHRC's Future Heritage Strategy

1. Heritage continues to be one of the AHRC's three priority areas, alongside Design and Languages, within its Strategy – *The Human World*- for 2013-2018. The on-going development of the strategy builds on the substantial heritage related research funded through AHRC's responsive mode research schemes, post-graduate training, international and knowledge exchange funding as well as past strategic thematic initiatives particularly the Museums and Galleries Programme and joint AHRC-EPSRC Science and Heritage Programme, 2007-12 and current thematic initiatives such Care for the Future and Connected Communities. It also builds upon a range of partnerships with other agencies, targeted calls and collaborations both in the UK and internationally.
2. Heritage represents the accumulated knowledge, practices, skills, and institutions on which we draw to bring the past into the present and to stimulate reflection on the future. It forms the collective cultural memory of a society, acting as a source of artistic, literary, and scientific inspiration, creativity and enterprise for current and future generations. The UK possesses an extremely diverse, broad-based and skilful heritage infrastructure, which encompasses tangible, intangible and digital heritage, in organisations large and small, professional and volunteer.
3. The AHRC's future strategy for heritage research involves leadership and support for the continued development of heritage research as a vibrant, innovative, highly collaborative and cross-disciplinary research field. It recognises the breadth of research fields that have an important contribution to the field both from across the full range of the arts and humanities as well as the continued emergence of heritage science as an emerging field and increasing intersections with developments in science and technology. It also reflects the growing interconnections with policy and practice, both in the UK and internationally, and increasing moves towards research co-production with heritage institutions, practitioners and communities and the growing opportunities for pathways to research impact and wider benefits both within the heritage sector and beyond. Finally it recognises the growing diversity of heritage and the heritage sector and the growth of international collaborative opportunities and transnational research agendas
4. As the strategy develops we will aim to lead research collaborations across the diverse heritage sector and with other relevant organisations, both in the UK and internationally, working with partners to support the development of the capabilities, facilities and skills needed to underpin research innovation in this field and build strong pathways to impact¹.
5. The heritage sector forms an integral vital part of a much wider and highly dynamic cultural and creative ecosystems and economies and its changing role in

¹ The strategy deliberately takes a broad view of cultural heritage (incorporating the tangible, intangible, digital, intellectual, artistic etc. and the connections between them) and of heritage-related processes, whilst recognising that there are important research and practice issues surrounding the conceptualisation and use of the term 'heritage'.

UK and global society needs to be considered in wider cultural, social and economic contexts. The AHRC is uniquely well placed to lead thinking about heritage in its widest sense and to address cross-cutting, inter-connected and transnational issues.

AHRC's Leadership Role in Heritage Research

6. The AHRC's distinctive contribution to the future of heritage research will build on:
 - the breadth of our research interests in heritage which cut across tangible, intangible and digital forms of heritage;
 - our existing diverse portfolio of high quality, collaborative heritage research, training and knowledge exchange activities, reflecting the UK's strong research base, including in independent research organisations and the wider heritage sector;
 - the range and strengths of our existing partnerships and collaborations within the heritage sector;
 - our capacity to bring together issues around research capabilities, research excellence and innovation, supporting knowledge exchange and research which addresses user needs and has impact;
 - the significant international reach of our activities and our influence;
 - our ability to work in cross-disciplinary ways both across the arts and humanities and with wider fields of science and technology;
 - the unique capacity of the research we support to place 'heritage' within its wider cultural and historic contexts, to contribute to our understanding of its broader cultural and societal value, and to explore connections between heritage and wider cultural ecosystems and creative practices.

7. The AHRC has an important role in leading research and policy/practice debates which address fundamental underpinning or cross-cutting heritage research issues. These include (for example):
 - what constitutes 'heritage', how does it shape - and is it shaped by – diverse cultural identities and values, and what contribution it makes to economic development, cross-cultural engagement and well-being?
 - How can research inform the critical choices that need to be made about what to keep and what not to keep, about the sustainable management of heritage in changing times and to support creativity and innovation in the ways that societies engage with and use heritage, in all its many different forms
 - What is the role of intangible heritage - and its interconnections with tangible and digital heritage- in these debates, given its current under-representation² in policy/practice debates in the UK? Indeed are such distinctions between intangible, tangible and digital heritage useful?
 - How are the interactions and inter-connections between different forms of heritage (tangible, digital, intangible, emerging etc), histories and cultures, changing?
 - How do we 'count', 'value' and 'authenticate' heritage in different cultural contexts?
 - How do heritage practices need to adapt to address challenges such as: contested and forgotten heritages; new interpretations and ways of representing heritage; changing ownership, rights, roles and responsibilities within and across communities and generations; exploiting the opportunities offered by digital and other technologies and open/big data; uneven distributions of the costs and benefits arising from heritage; and the re-purposing and misuse of heritage.

²In addition to not being included in Heritage 2020 or being a focus for the National Heritage Science Forum, the UK is not one of the 161 states that have signed up to the 2003 UN Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage



8. International comparative and collaborative research, and co-design and co-production approaches with the heritage sector and wider communities, will be important aspects to addressing many of these issues. The AHRC already has international credibility due to its former strategic programme on Science and Heritage and its prominent role in European work in this area as the wide range of international collaborations across the globe within its wider research portfolio reflecting the international connectedness of the UK research community and heritage organisations.

Future Strategic Objectives and Framework

9. We will deliver the strategy and meet the leadership challenge through three cross-cutting and interconnected strategic objectives. These build on, and complement, the current extensive portfolio of activities, and aim to ensure that this cross-disciplinary field is enriched by engagement with a wide range of perspectives from across arts and humanities research fields and wider cross-disciplinary and cross-national perspectives and engagement beyond the academic sector.

I) To further develop heritage research as an innovative and broad cross-disciplinary field we will:

- i) **strengthen cross-disciplinary links between the arts and humanities and the sciences**, building on the success of the AHRC/EPSRC Science and Heritage Research Programme and supporting the continuing emergence of Heritage Science as an innovative cross-disciplinary research field and continuing to provide opportunities for new reciprocal cross-disciplinary engagements which open up new research questions, approaches and applications both within the sciences and in the arts and humanities
- ii) **broaden engagement across arts and humanities disciplines in heritage research** to ensure that the heritage research field is able to draw on wider expertise of relevance from across the arts and humanities and inform and inspire the development of wider arts and humanities research
- iii) **support research innovation and ambition and challenging, critically reflective research**, through both responsive mode provision and through strategic/thematic or international calls aimed at addressing emerging research challenges, supporting exploratory awards or providing opportunities to bring together diverse and/or international perspectives to discuss contentious research issues.

II) To extend collaborations, partnerships, knowledge exchange and pathways to impact in cultural heritage research we will:

- i) **extend international collaborations**, building on AHRC's leadership role in Europe and the diverse range of existing international collaborations, to open up opportunities to exploring new collaborative opportunities and explore global heritages and the role of heritage in international development
- ii) **widen collaborations across the Heritage sector** by developing current partnerships and widening these to other key organisations in the heritage sector and wider cultural ecosystems (both in the UK and internationally), ensuring that research agendas are informed by user needs, exploiting opportunities for knowledge exchange and research co-production with the sector and strengthening pathways to impact from research
- iii) **enhance community and public engagement**, further developing the innovative work under the Connected Communities Programme and other strategic activities and partnerships
- iv) **strengthen knowledge exchange and connectivity beyond the heritage sector** for example, exploring new connections and pathways to

impact with the wider experience, creative, digital and knowledge economies and in local, regional and urban economies and clusters, with public policy, with international development agencies, and with emerging social, health and wellbeing agendas.

III) To enhance research capability for heritage research as a cross-disciplinary and collaborative field of enquiry we will:

- i) **support the development of people and skills**, particularly in strategically important areas of national capability and including both doctoral and early career researcher level and developing capability for collaborative, co-produced, cross-disciplinary and/or cross-national research
- ii) **exploit the potential of access to new equipment, tools, data and facilities**, building on past capital funding initiatives to develop long-term sustainable access to assets, technologies, data and facilities with the potential to transform cross-disciplinary and collaborative heritage research (in the UK and internationally), and building the research skills and capabilities need to exploit the potential they offer.

10. The range of these three areas is designed to allow for the full scope of arts and humanities research diversity to contribute while also underlining the distinctive place of the AHRC in terms of skills and training; access and support for research leadership and sharing of best practice; and the AHRC's capacity to take an overview of the sector's complexity and act as a partner of choice for key collaborators.

Priority Research Areas

11. Drawing on the EU Cultural Heritage Joint Programming Initiative's Strategic Research Agenda, emerging agendas in the heritage sector (e.g. Heritage 2020) and consultations within the sector, the following broad and inter-connected research themes emerge as examples of key areas of opportunity for arts and humanities heritage research:

i. **Values and cultural heritage:**

- o what counts as cultural heritage, how is it chosen, how does this change in increasingly diverse/plural societies, how does it shape identities, how and when are different types of heritage recognised, experienced, embraced, represented or ignored?
- o How is heritage instrumentalised and what are the consequences of this?
- o How does the way societies represent their heritage respond to shifting interpretations of the past and how does heritage influence identity formation and the way in which we learn about and perceive the past and different cultures?
- o What role does heritage play in areas such as cross-cultural engagement, education, popular culture, social cohesion, sense of place and well-being?
- o How do different cultures value and represent their heritage and how do cross-cultural engagements affect these values and representations?
- o How is the value of heritage distributed – whose heritage is excluded?
- o How do we value (and measure/build the evidence base for that value) heritage?
- o What are the impacts of the loss of heritage?

ii. **Community engagement with heritage:**



- how, why and with what results do people engage with their cultural heritage and why does it matter to them?
 - What new forms of, and opportunities for, engagement with heritage are emerging (eg sensory heritage, heritage gamification) and how will people engage with heritage in the future (eg immersive technologies)?
 - How can academic research be better connected with public heritage activities ('citizen history and heritage') and how can this contribute to better understanding of processes such as commemoration?
 - How should public engagement with 'contested heritage' or heritage relating to 'difficult pasts' be managed? Can community engagement with diverse heritages support inclusion and positive inter-cultural dynamics and post-conflict reconciliation?
 - How can we better understand the ethics of engagement with heritage and issues of social justice, inter-generational learning and coming to terms with the loss of heritage?
- iii. **Sustainable management of cultural heritage:**
- are the paradigms of heritage protection that have served us well in the past equally fit to respond to the challenges of the future?
 - What new paradigms are emerging for managing, governing, making decisions about, engaging, safeguarding and adapting our cultural heritage or dealing better with the potential loss of heritage in a rapidly changing world? What can we learn from sharing sustainable practices and data across national, organisational and other boundaries? What new challenges are emerging in relation to sustainable heritage management in the digital/information age? Can community engagement lead to more sustainable management of cultural heritage (crowd sourcing, owners, volunteering, philanthropy, etc.)? Can an ecosystem approach be adopted for managing heritage? How do you sustain environments, landscapes, places and spaces that people use, while respecting historical integrity and taking into account changing societal needs? Can more integrated approaches be adopted which reflect diverse needs and pressures and which also factor in responsibilities to future generations?
- iv. **Innovative use and re-use of heritage:**
- How can heritage be used as a resource for cultural, social and economic wellbeing beyond tourism and conservation?
 - How can we support innovative use of tangible and intangible heritage, heritage skills (eg crafts) and heritage research and data?
 - What can heritage learn from experience in other domains (eg recycling) and what wider applicability might heritage methods and approaches (e.g. forensic archaeology and linguistics) have for wider society?
 - How might heritage resources (eg archives, historic buildings) and institutions be transformed by opening up new forms of use?
 - How does heritage fit into wider debates around open access, ownership and exploitation of data?
- v. **Intangible, emerging, hidden and contested heritages:**
- How might emerging forms of future heritage be identified more effectively?



- How might intangible heritages be more sustainably conserved and exploited in the future?
 - How can arts and humanities research contribute to processes which uncover 'hidden' heritages, rediscover 'lost' heritages, understand 'entangled' heritages and/or enable the re-valuation and re-interpretation of under-valued heritages?
 - What new challenges, opportunities and conflicts do emerging and intangible heritages raise for heritage management and organisations?
 - How can we better understand the interconnections and inter-dependencies between the tangible, tangible and digital heritage are such distinctions between forms of heritage useful?
 - In the context of increasingly diverse forms of heritage, how can research inform the priorities and decisions made by heritage practitioners for example about what to conserve and what not to conserve?
- vi. **Changing Heritage Economies:**
- How can research further enrich heritage experiences and encounters and enhance the contribution of heritage to the growth of the experience economy?
 - How can we better realise the potential for inter-disciplinary and collaborative heritage research to inspire creativity and innovation which contributes to the creative economy?
 - How can we better understand the role that heritage plays in cultural ecosystems and clusters, place-making and local and regional economic development and to the digital economy?
 - What new opportunities and challenges do emerging forms of heritage raise for future heritage economies?
 - What new economic models might emerge for heritage 'ownership', curation, collaborative working and copyright/ intellectual property?
 - How might the heritage exploit wider economic opportunities, for example in international markets or emerging fields of technology (for instance around Open/Big Data, or the Internet of Things)?
- vii. **Heritage and conflict:**
- How can research aid the management of heritages at risk from conflict or 'recovery' from the loss of heritage?
 - What role does illegal trade in heritage, or the use or destruction of heritage play in conflict contexts?
 - How is heritage 'appropriated' or exploited in the perpetuation or prosecution of conflict?
 - What role can heritage management and commemorative processes play in post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation processes or in supporting conflict reconciliation?
- viii. **Global heritages and international development:**
- How can heritage economies contribute to international development and the UN Sustainable Development Goals and/or to the development of aid and humanitarian strategies or 'cultural diplomacy'?



- How can research inform approaches to the addressing the challenges for heritage created by international development, globalisation, rapid urbanisation, climate change, and high mobility?
- What role does heritage play in the wellbeing of diasporic and displaced communities?
- How might issues of international justice, legacies of the past and displaced heritages be addressed in the future?
- What approaches are most effective in unlocking the potential of new heritage discoveries and uncovering hidden cultural heritages to contribute to international development?
- How can better management of heritage in post-conflict contexts contribute to international development?
- How might heritage tourism be sustainably developed?
- How might community engagement in the management of heritage in diverse development contexts develop in the future?
- How could heritage assets, including heritage skills and knowledge, heritage organisations and minority heritages, be sustainably developed to support international development?

Taking Forward the Strategy

12. It is assumed that substantial amounts of heritage research will continue through AHRC's responsive mode and training schemes and through AHRC's current research themes and programmes.

13. In addition, new opportunities will be explored in relation to:

- the potential to secure capital funding to enhance research capability for heritage research as a cross-disciplinary and collaborative field of enquiry
- thematic research linked to current or potential emerging future research areas and AHRC and wider cross-Council strategic priorities
- potential contribution of heritage research to global challenges such as international development, urban living and conflict
- international collaborations
- partnerships opportunities and innovative approaches to supporting community engagement, knowledge exchange, co-production and pathways to impact
- supporting the development of research skills, leadership and careers, with particular attention to the potential to support early career researchers.

14. Given the breadth of the current portfolio and proposed new activities, in 2016 we plan to appoint a Leadership Fellow for Heritage Research, to provide leadership, overall coherence and a focal point for taking forward the strategy.

15. The strategy will be developed, refined and updated through continuing dialogue with the research, heritage and wider interested communities. Plans for activities to further inform the strategy include:

- holding further focus groups in particular areas building on the 2015 focus group on *Intangible, Emerging, Hidden and Contested Heritages*, including developing agendas in relation to heritage and international development;



- exploring connections between heritage and other AHRC themes and priority areas (and wider cross-Council agendas where appropriate) for example in areas such as conflict, connected communities and Science in Culture;
 - on-going engagement with organisations in the Heritage sector (eg the Heritage Alliance, Historic England, HLF, IROs, Heritage Science Forum, etc.)
 - continuing and developing international collaborations
 - strengthening the narrative and evidence base for the economic, social and cultural value and impact of heritage research, both in the UK and internationally, through AHRC's own impact evidence activities and through wider collaborations on the value of heritage.
16. Examples of outcomes from developments under the strategy could include:
- new types of partnerships (business sector with heritage organisations; new disciplinary alliances around the subject)
 - new ways of sharing practices between institutions/organisations/groups/practitioners in the UK & overseas
 - new methodologies of critical analysis of heritage & heritage research/practice
 - new research questions, perhaps bringing together digital/data approaches and heritage management/use – through identification and pursuit of new research themes and their consideration from 'multidisciplinary' dimensions
 - new insights into ethical questions (whether because of involvement of business, or in response to conflicted heritage)
 - new infrastructure to enhance provision of physical and human capital in heritage sectors, particularly enhancing 'citizen heritage'
 - new systems of information gathering about the effects of past/existing funded research projects and parallel projects funded by other research organisations in the UK and Overseas.