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**Evidence summary**

**The evidence for a future innovation programme**

The Young Foundation, October 2021

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# About The Young Foundation

The Young Foundation creates positive social change through working with people and communities to understand and take action on the issues they care about. With a 60-year legacy of innovation within the social sphere, and as a UKRI accredited research organisation, social incubator and charity, we bring communities, businesses, innovators, entrepreneurs and policymakers together to help build stronger communities and solve the most pressing issues in society.

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# 1. What facet of the workforce might The Heritage Fund choose to focus on at this stage?

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| Key Findings To answer this first research question, we summarise the evidence available on workforce concerns within heritage, noting that much of the literature is either older, from the period 2010-2014 or extremely fresh (past 12 months and entirely focussed on post-Covid recovery).  We have therefore broken down our findings into:   * Material pre-dating Covid, covering themes relating to workforce diversity, workforce capabilities, career pathways and volunteering * Post Covid material, covering themes on employee health and wellbeing, organisational downsizing and restructuring, ways of working and relevant skills, and a sharper focus on equality and equity * Foresight material, covering exploratory evidence with regards to future workforce issues.   The literature creates a picture of a sector under strain in different ways, some of which are consistent and persistent over time. As seemingly intractable challenges, any number of them might be ripe for addressing through an innovation programme. However, we note that many of the themes referred to here have been, or are being, energetically addressed through ongoing programmes delivered by The Heritage Fund, or by other bodies within the sector. We also consider it advantageous to occupy a sphere where there is less ‘traffic’, otherwise the programme must become very specific in order to differentiate itself.  The conclusion we have drawn from our examination of workforce issues is that ‘ways of working’ emerges as a preferable theme. It also has the advantage of creating space to wrap in some of the other issues – such as inclusion and diversity, or volunteering. We see an opportunity in a programme which focuses on creating future-fit workforce models and ways of working for heritage that is distinctive by being anticipatory. |

## 1.1 Scoping the size and scale of the workforce

In examining the evidence of workforce challenges and opportunities in the heritage sector, a key question has been around how we define workforce parameters for this.

Our interpretation of the heritage workforce has included both paid and unpaid workers, those included as full-time employees through to those who work on short-term fixed projects or on a freelance basis. We see volunteers included within the workforce and would also see trustees as a subset of the volunteer base. We also see the potential to include some other forms of support as connected to the principal workforce, such as Friends groups. This is in line with, for example, the Skills Investment Plan for Scotland’s Historic Environment Sector:[[1]](#footnote-1)

*“The sector relies on a wider range of employment type: direct employees, freelancers, researchers, students, and volunteers all of whom may be working full time in the sector, while others only part time or for others a very limited time.”*

Our brief has been quite deliberately to look pan heritage and pan UK. Normally, we would set out to define the scale of the opportunity in clear quantitative terms, such as the number of workers or the value to the UK economy. With this piece of work, this has been challenging, for two principal reasons:

* Firstly, because of the open definition of heritage - for example, The Heritage Fund itself keeps open how heritage is defined, and there is not alignment with other key bodies (such as DCMS) in how the sector would define itself.
* Secondly the atomisation of data means that there tends to be pockets of information about parts of the Heritage sector, but not the ability to aggregate this with confidence. For instance, reports and data sets tend to be broken down by either/or nation (Wales), by sub-sphere of heritage (e.g. Built Environment) or workforce segment (e.g. young people).

As a recent tender document from Historic England[[2]](#footnote-2) states:

*“While some organisations are currently collecting evidence on diversity of their workforce and volunteers there is no common repository of data available to facilitate national level understanding of diversity in the heritage workforce and subsequently support policy actions to improve it at organisational level.”*

We have therefore had to rely on proxy data to evidence that in volume terms this issue is worth addressing. Our reference points include, for example:

* Centre for Economics and Business Research report for Historic England:[[3]](#footnote-3) “*Given the nature of the activities embedded in the heritage sector, the sector`s employment contribution has followed a somewhat volatile trend. It is estimated that the heritage sector in England directly employed around 204,000 workers in 2017, and 198,000 jobs in 2018. While this represents a fall of 2.5% from 2017 to 2018, both years are higher than estimated in any year prior.”*
* Scotland’s Historic Environment Audit (SHEA) in 2018:[[4]](#footnote-4) This model estimates that there were 66,000 full time equivalent jobs (direct and indirect) in 2017, an increase of 20% from 55,000 in 2014.
* Expert Review of Local Museum Provision in Wales 2015:[[5]](#footnote-5) In 2011, the total museum workforce in Wales was approximately 3,435 people, made up of 1,317 paid staff and 2,118 volunteers.

## 1.2 Key themes

In this section, we provide a summary of the evidence relating to the main workforce concerns for heritage. Some of the themes here had been identified in prior desk research, interviews and workshops in our Discovery Phase.

We observe that much of the literature is either older, from the period 2010-2014 or extremely fresh (past 12 months and entirely focussed on post-Covid). We have therefore broken down our findings into material pre-dating Covid and more recent material, both post Covid material as well as exploratory evidence with regards to future workforce issues.

We are aware that the evidence base is constantly shifting, and it would be advisable to continue scanning for latest data as part of the mobilisation phase and narrative building around the proposed intervention.

## 1.2a Pre-dating Covid

**1.Workforce diversity**

The lack of diversity in the workforce is widely covered and includes issues on gender, ethnicity, disability and ableism, and socio-demographics as well as issues round access and inclusion. The challenges vary in specificity within the different spheres of heritage and different nations and regions of the UK.

Examples from the literature include:

* *“Rates of volunteering were higher for the upper socio-economic group than the lower socioeconomic group, for adults living in rural areas compared with adults living in urban areas, and for members of heritage organisations compared with non-members. A higher proportion of adults aged 45-74 had volunteered in the heritage sector in the last 12 months than younger adults.*”[[6]](#footnote-6)
* Those from lower socio-economic groups are more likely to say they have never been involved in volunteering, and those who have are less likely to be in certain leadership or representative roles, like being a trustee. Research on volunteering, and on participation more broadly, consistently indicates that inequalities of resources and power means that some people are more likely to be excluded from certain activities.[[7]](#footnote-7)
* *“The museums sector is predominantly white and female, according to recent research – although on average, men still earn more and are more likely to hold senior management positions. Schemes like ACE Changemakers and self-organised forums like Women Leaders in Museums and Museums Detox seek to encourage people from diverse backgrounds into the sector and support them once there.”[[8]](#footnote-8)*

**2.Workforce capabilities**

Over many years, attention has been given to a range of skills gaps affecting heritage. These encompass traditional skills, digital, business & enterprise. Some commentators have also reported on some weaknesses in professional development models which constrain the speed of change.

We found that these were also well documented, for example, within:

* The Cultural Heritage Blueprint[[9]](#footnote-9)
* The Historic Environment and Cultural Heritage Skills Survey[[10]](#footnote-10)
* Character Matters: Attitudes Behaviours and Skills in UK Museums Workforce, 2016.[[11]](#footnote-11)
* Skills gap/needs in the Heritage Sector A report for Historic England, April 2019[[12]](#footnote-12)

**3.Career pathways**

Often linked to skills development, we have also found an assessment of weak career pathways into and through heritage. In the Discovery Phase we also heard participants express a view that pathways and in and out of other sectors were also weak. There are also links here to the challenges in workforce diversity, but also education & training routes, recruitment practices and job security.

Some of the issues for the museums sector are referred to, for example, in the Mendoza Review[[13]](#footnote-13):

*“There are over 60 university courses in the UK specialising in museum practice, producing hundreds of graduates in museum studies in England each year. The Review team heard that these courses are not all providing graduates with the skills and knowledge they need in order to work in museums in England today...[..].. Apprenticeships and other non-traditional routes have potential to improve diversity..”*

**4.Volunteering**

Heritage is not alone as a sector in considering how best to involve, mobilise and motivate volunteers, developing mutually beneficial relationships and practices that work for organisations and volunteers alike. Within the literature reviewed, we found the following challenges and opportunities with respect to volunteering: capacity to recruit and succession planning; diversification; strategic planning and management; breadth of opportunities; and access and inclusion.

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly reduced opportunities for volunteering. From Historic England’s Heritage and Society 2020[[14]](#footnote-14):

* A heritage volunteering survey conducted during July 2020, found that 58% of volunteers planned to immediately return to their heritage volunteering post when their role restarts.
* Out of the 131 respondents, only 27 were not concerned about returning to their posts.
* The number of people volunteering also halved during the COVID 19 pandemic.

## 1.2b Post Covid themes

There are several issues for heritage that emerge as particularly strong in more recent literature. Many of these official reports or pieces of research were gathered in the context of trying to assess the damage to the sector caused by the pandemic and formulate recovery strategies.

**1.Employee health and well-being**

There is evidence of clear and widespread concern about the health and well-being not only of paid staff, but also unpaid volunteers. This is sometimes about physical health, for example concerning workplace covid-safe practices, but more often about mental health.

The comprehensive study by the British Academy[[15]](#footnote-15) reminds us of the challenges for mental health over the longer term:

*“The symptomatology of so-called ‘long COVID’ complicates the process of declaring an ‘end’ to a pandemic such as this, because for some it will continue. The lasting burden of grief and disruption to normal processes, social or otherwise, will also not end when the pandemic itself is declared over. While some mental health impacts may be short-term responses to the crisis, others have the potential for long-term scarring in different groups.”*

One commentary[[16]](#footnote-16) notes in relation to heritage:

*“However, the coronavirus pandemic has had a huge impact on the sector as a result of the prolonged lockdowns and closures in terms of lost income, a backlog of maintenance and restoration work and finding new ways to survive and adapt to a different world. All with an uncertainty of what the future will bring –which we can see from our research has had a significant impact on staff and volunteers’ mental health and wellbeing. In our recent survey at the end of March, we asked 500 heritage organisations how they felt. 65% said that Covid had exacerbated mental health issues in the sector.”*

**2.Organisational downsizing and restructuring**

In spite of significant emergency funding and access to other measures such as the furlough scheme it is clear that some organisations, no longer having access to reserves and facing continued disruption to the delivery of their work, are facing the prospect of contraction or significant change to their operations in order to continue to be viable. Affects are varied by heritage sphere and scale of organisation. We found examples in the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre report ‘Employment Vulnerabilities in the Arts, Creative and Heritage Industries as a result of Covid:[[17]](#footnote-17)

*“Of the 39,000 Arts, Cultural and Heritage jobs in [Northern Ireland], the research estimates that 12,000 – 16,000 (30% - 40%) are vulnerable as a result of COVID-19 impacts and restrictions.”*

And research for the Institute of Conservation[[18]](#footnote-18) presents a similarly grim analysis from a specific sphere of heritage:

*“The pandemic has also had a considerable impact on the work of employed conservators. 87% are working at reduced levels compared to before the outbreak, with a quarter expecting a reduction in their income in 2021.”*

**3.Ways of working (digital, now hybrid) and related skills**

Evidence from the sector also communicates challenges in adopting new ways of working as a result of the pandemic. Most frequently this relates to the shift to digital, as well as flexible home working. There is some material to show that the sector is also adjusting to changing appetites and needs on the part of visitors and participants, but it is not always clear exactly what this means in terms of workplace practices. For example:

*“Our research showed that just 8% of respondents were very well equipped to develop new models of volunteering, with a worrying 38% saying they were not. These figures are, broadly speaking, reflective of the sector’s readiness to diversify their volunteer programmes – with 38% saying they weren’t well equipped to do so.”*[[19]](#footnote-19)

*“With the experience of the last six months behind them, 83% of decision makers actually fear for the future of the heritage sector post COVID-19 if it doesn’t adapt and use digital attractions. Yet, nearly half (46%) of heritage organisations don’t believe they have the right skills to keep pace with technology-driven changes*.”[[20]](#footnote-20)

**4.A sharper focus on equality & equity**

Equality and equity are noticeably foregrounded in public discourse and literature in the wake of the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter campaign, with the quote below being illustrative of other comments.

*“Long-standing issues that divide society have been brought into focus by recent events that have resulted in large sections of society coming together to address systemic inequalities. Equality and inclusivity challenges require solutions that can only come from the plurality of voices, ideas, and perspectives found in a diverse, equitable, inclusive and culturally vibrant workforce. Poor diversity is a persistent issue in the heritage sector including heritage science.*”[[21]](#footnote-21)

The issues cover a wide variety of concerns connected with equality and inclusion; a tiny sample of the evidence base includes:

* The Social Mobility Commission’s toolkit for the Creative Industries[[22]](#footnote-22)
* Statements like the Council for British Archaeology on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Heritage[[23]](#footnote-23)
* Black Lives Matter charter for the heritage sector[[24]](#footnote-24)

## 1.2c Foresight themes

Our review of evidence included scanning foresight and futures thinking. In this sphere, we found very little that was specifically relating to Heritage, suggesting there is a potential gap in thinking which is anticipatory rather than responsive.

There has not been scope within this our assignment to make good this gap, however we think that there are several themes with particular relevance to heritage. These include

* The implications of an ageing workforce
* Labour shortages and changing skills needs
* Multi-generational workforces (even greater diversity of needs, styles, etc)
* Automation and AI, Internet of Things, big data and use of algorithms in management
* Environmentally friendly workplace practices
* Persistent equity and equality challenges – widening income and attainment gaps

The quotes and statistics below from a range of sources provided further definition to some of these points:

*“Demographic change will have a profound effect on the UK labour market over the next two decades and beyond. Over 30% of people in employment in the UK are over the age of 50, and there are unlikely to be enough younger people entering the labour market to replace this group when they leave the workforce, taking their skills and experience with them.”* [[25]](#footnote-25)

*“Shining a light on the opportunities and challenges that a multigenerational workforce brings shows that, due to flatter organisational structures and people working for longer, there are fewer opportunities for the younger generations to progress their careers in the conventional way. On the other side of the coin, organisations need to attract younger generations in order to bring in new skills such as data analytics, digital, cyber and social media that will ultimately enhance the way organisations engage with and serve their customers, both now and in the future. There is also a need to prepare for roles that may have not yet been created.”*[[26]](#footnote-26)

*“The problem for the UK labour market and our economy is not that we have too many robots in the workplace, but that we have too few. In 2015 the UK had just 10 robots for every million hours worked, compared with 167 in Japan.”* [[27]](#footnote-27)

*“Although many heritage institutions have collections and data that have been actively and consciously ‘given’ to them, today much of the data generated and created is ‘captured’, as a by-product of some form of digital interaction. This requires new types of expertise and development of new processes outside of traditional views of collecting.”*[[28]](#footnote-28)

*“However, the results of our research suggest that most UK organisations are not addressing energy and carbon issues at a strategic level. Only 10% of respondents state that their company has a carbon reduction target. Of those organisations that have set a target, none have set a science-based target. While 70% feel their business is already doing enough, their responses suggest they are not implementing the changes required to materially contribute to tackling climate change.... This lack of understanding is leading to employee apathy, with over half of respondents stating that they don’t trust UK businesses to deliver on their sustainability claims. 60% of junior level employees do not feel enough is currently being done to engage them in cutting carbon.”*[[29]](#footnote-29)

“*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.”*[[30]](#footnote-30)

Finally, Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) research[[31]](#footnote-31) shows that almost two thirds (64%) of workers believe they will need to participate in formal learning or training during their working lives. Among workers that expect to need to develop new skills, four in ten (40%) cite the impact of automation and new technology as a key reason, while 30% believe the type of work they do could become outdated or obsolete. However, the most cited reason workers say it is likely they will need to access formal development and learning in the future, is the length of time they expect to be working and the likelihood of needing to develop new skills as they get older. Just over two thirds (67%) of workers report this is a reason for needing to develop new skills.

In our research, we have been particularly struck by comments on ways of working. One report by Deloitte[[32]](#footnote-32) highlights some of the changes they are already noting:

*“Moving from hierarchies and centralised authority to fluid networks of teams, from control and commands to increased autonomy and trust, from applying technology to the task to building super teams of people and intelligent machines and from a focus on health and safety to amplifying wellbeing and meaning.”*

It has been interesting to note where heritage practitioners are commenting not just on the need for a more diverse workforce, but for different ways of organising work. One example embedded within a NatureScot’s report[[33]](#footnote-33) is shared here:

*“Many businesses in nature-based sectors are small and micro enterprises with seasonal labour demands where costs and availability of training can be challenging. Consideration should be given to workforce-sharing initiatives which allow smaller employers to share the costs of training and upskilling and help to create viable, year-round jobs, making the potential of losing skilled workers to other sectors less likely.”*

We also find Accenture’s[[34]](#footnote-34) provocation below in a piece on the future of work is interesting in the context of heritage:

*“Our research finds that organizations are struggling to provide models that satisfy the needs of all workers all the time. The “typical” employee experience no longer exists. Asking where people should work in the future might be the wrong question. A better question is: ‘What unleashes a person's potential, enabling them to be healthy and productive, regardless of where they work?’”*

## 1.3 Conclusion: focus on ‘ways of working’

The literature creates a picture of a sector under strain in different ways, some of which are consistent and persistent over time. As seemingly intractable challenges, any number of them might be ripe for addressing through an innovation programme.

However, we note that many of the themes referred to here have been or are being energetically addressed through ongoing programmes delivered by The Heritage Fund, or by other bodies within the sector. For example, the Digital Skills for Heritage, Cultural Recovery Funds and Recovery and Resilience Loans, and Enterprise Development Funding.

We also consider it advantageous to occupy a sphere where there is less ‘traffic’, otherwise the programme must become very specific in order to differentiate itself. Volunteering is a clear example where there are several options for support available to heritage organisations.

The conclusion we have drawn from our examination of workforce issues is that ‘ways of working’ emerges as a preferable theme. In reaching this conclusion, we have considered:

* The extent to which it requires or avoids high complexity and multi-player solutions;
* The opportunity it presents to build innovation muscle, balanced with current capacity of The Heritage Fund;
* Whether it can be a unifying focus pan heritage and pan UK and yet allow or differences in the contexts; and
* Whether it is a concept that bridges from near term post-Covid recovery to longer-term renewal.

As a theme, it also has the advantage of creating space to wrap in some of the other issues – such as inclusion and diversity, or volunteering. We see an opportunity in a programme which focuses on creating future-fit workforce models and ways of working for heritage that is distinctive by being anticipatory, enabling practitioners to work together to:

* Plan a response to increasingly diverse workforces (across many dimensions)
* Get ahead of broader trends in work, workforce and labour markets
* Factor in the changing role of technology
* Imaginatively respond to physical and environmental parameters

In practice, this means that the kinds of things applicants might be interested in could include:

* Models and practices that create the best work environment for a diverse workforce e.g. multi-faith, fully accessible
* Practices that reflect multi-generational needs
* Use of automation and Artificial intelligence in day-to-day heritage work
* Thinking more radically around remote working, digital nomads, access to global skills
* New workforce models that extend beyond existing forms of organisational collaboration and job shares
* Radical approaches to lifelong learning and re-skilling
* Models that deliver lighter carbon footprints

This allows scope for different starting points and perspectives from across the breadth of heritage and different home nation contexts. It provides an opportunity to gather more data across heritage on a common theme. It relates to issues that matter today to heritage organisations, but which are also important for continual renewal. This aspect of workforce is manageable for The Heritage Fund now and avoids getting stuck in complex and multi-player systemic blocks.

We see this as delivering the following outcomes:

* Heritage teams and organisations can build into the future – rather than building back a model which won’t meet today and tomorrow’s challenges
* Builds dynamism within heritage organisational infrastructure
* Supporting heritage practitioners to look to the future –an important signal of hope at a challenging time
* Improved productivity – i.e. improved outcomes for beneficiaries
* Creates spaces where the full diversity of the heritage workforce can contribute positively and builds a pan-heritage network

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