

# IMPACT REPORT 2024

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Heritage  
Trust  
Network

Empowering people to rescue  
and reuse historic buildings and  
spaces for their communities







## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to empower people to rescue and reuse historic buildings and spaces for the benefit of their communities.

## OUR VALUES

### *Responsive*

We offer friendly interaction and engagement. We listen to member needs and develop resources to meet those needs as quickly as we can.

### *Reliable*

You can trust us. The advice and guidance that the Network gives to members is grounded in their experience, evidence and the knowledge of industry experts.

### *Inclusive*

We reach out to new groups of people, remove barriers to participation and actively support those who experience disadvantage and discrimination.

### *Courageous*

We are ambitious, innovative, take risks and learn from failure as well as success.

*Photographs from top:*

*Norwegian Church, Cardiff.  
© Norwegian Church Cardiff Bay*

*Learning about traditional buildings at The Ridge,  
Dunbar. © The Ridge*

*Delegates at Network Conference 2023, Newcastle  
Civic Centre. Photo by Damien Wootten*



## Our impact

Our Network has always had great stories to tell about our member organisations: how they deliver benefits for their communities, rescue and re-use well-loved buildings and spaces and overcome massive challenges. However, we felt we lacked the data to demonstrate the overall impact of our membership – how many projects they were delivering, how much they were spending on heritage regeneration and how many jobs and volunteering opportunities they were creating. So it has been part of our plans for a while to initiate an annual impact survey. Earlier this year, thanks to support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we finally had the time and resources to do it.

This report documents the results of that survey, showing the remarkable impact not-for-profit organisations that are members of our Network are having on their communities. Community heritage delivers so much for people and places throughout the UK: providing facilities, rescuing buildings at risk, restoring nature, regenerating high streets, creating jobs, visitor attractions, workspaces, arts venues, and improving wellbeing.

Our membership includes a wide range of organisations: trusts set up to regenerate heritage sites across cities, counties, regions or nations, charities focussing on restoring and managing a single site, and community organisations without 'heritage' in their objects that have chosen to operate from a historic site.

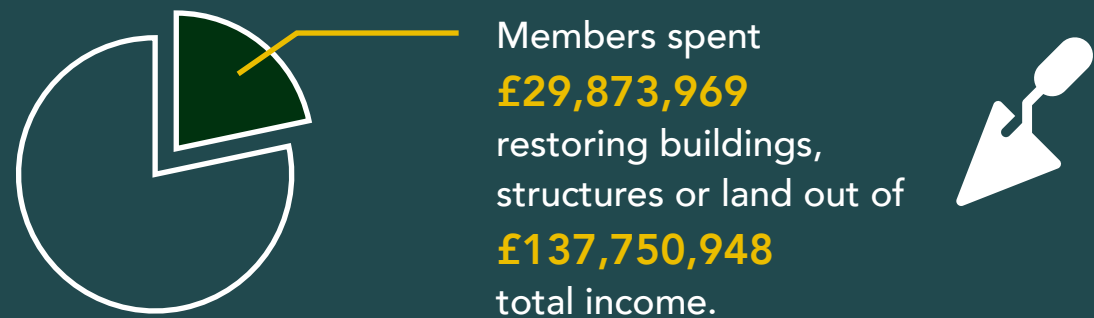
We also want to tell you what we have been up to as a Network in the last year, the learning and networking events we have been offering, the information we have provided, the support we have given to members, and how much our membership has grown and become more diverse over the past year.

Finally, we want to share with you a summary of the strategic plan we have developed to take the Network forward over the next five years.

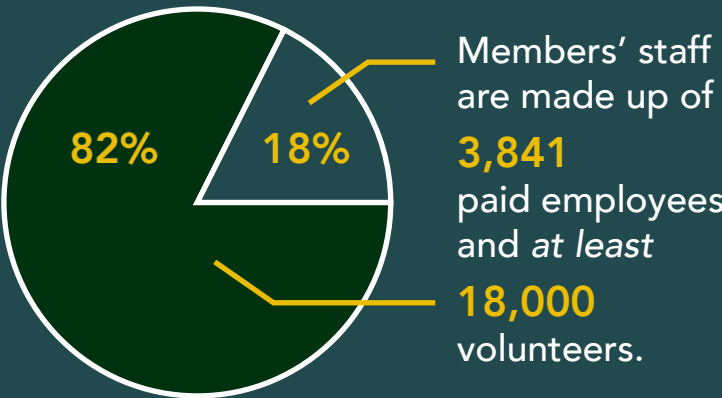
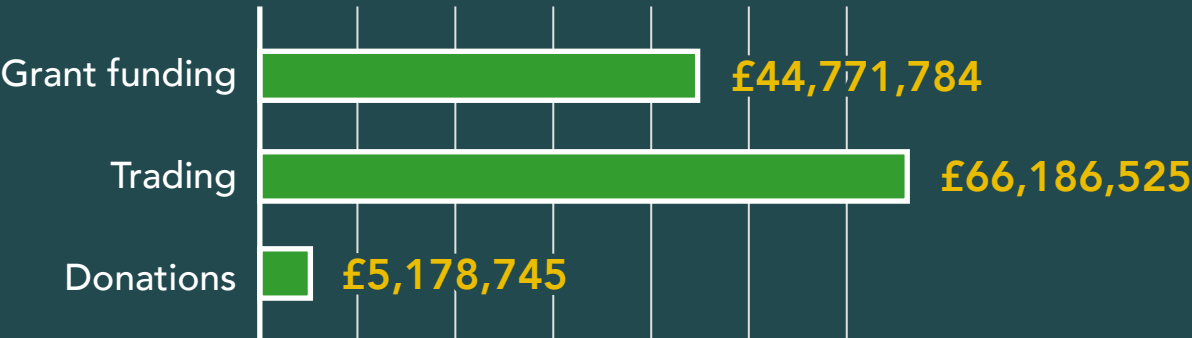
*Conference 2023 delegates.  
Photo by Damien Wootten*



# Members' impact in 2023



## TOTAL INCOME:



*I don't know what I would do if we didn't have Heritage Trust Network behind us.*

## OUR MEMBERS:



acquired  
**54**  
sites



restored  
**46,162**  
m<sup>2</sup> internal space



regenerated  
**64**  
hectares of land



removed  
**43**  
properties from  
'at risk' registers



completed  
**240**  
restoration  
projects

## BY THE END OF 2023:



members owned  
**2,010**  
sites



on these sites  
**7,822**  
people were employed



sites hosted  
**2,402**  
business



sites home to  
**1,510**  
households

*We have learned a lot from the various workshops/online sessions to help us make progress on our journey to save our building.*



# Inverkeithing Town House

Inverkeithing is a historic harbour town with a variety of historic buildings including a collection of five Category A-listed buildings in a small conservation area.

With a focus on restoring and preserving significant landmarks, the Inverkeithing Heritage Regeneration Scheme has been delivered in partnership by Fife Council and Fife Historic Buildings Trust. It has engaged with the local community through a variety of activities aiming to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation for Inverkeithing's heritage.

The Town House dates from 1770 and served as the meeting place for the burgh council and represented the civic authority in the town. The Trust has restored the Town House to create an accessible and inclusive community hub that can host a range of events and activities. It will be managed by a new charity, while Fife Council retain ownership.

For more information, visit:  
[www.fifehistoricbuildings.org.uk](http://www.fifehistoricbuildings.org.uk)

# Tyne Theatre and Opera House

The theatre has had a turbulent history and in 2008 Newcastle City Council signed the freehold over to the Tyne Theatre and Opera House Preservation Trust. After initially leasing the theatre to a private operator, in 2015 the Trust was finally in a position to set up a subsidiary organisation to manage the building independently.

In 2023, the Trust concluded a year-long project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, 'The Drury Lane of the North', which had three aims: to document the historic performance calendar, restore historic stage equipment with help from a master carpenter, and hold an international conference. The project has engaged 150 volunteers. They have helped research performances, cleaned the stage, lead tours, and learnt how to operate and maintain the machinery.

When complete, the theatre hopes to be able to demonstrate the Victorian stage workings by recreating some of the plays from the Historic Performance Calendar.

For more information, visit:  
[www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk](http://www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk)



*This Grade I listed building dates back to 1867 and originally had a reputation for showing bold, socially motivated plays, which provided entertainment and education to working-class audiences.*

Photo by Damien Wootten



# Merthyr Synagogue

In the 1980s the synagogue was deemed no longer viable as the Jewish community in Merthyr had dwindled, and the building was sold. It was used as a Christian centre and then later a gym, but by 2017 was no longer in use and had deteriorated badly with large holes in the roof.

Since the synagogue's purchase by the Foundation for Jewish Heritage in 2019, urgent repairs have been carried out. The Foundation is now undertaking a project to restore the building and create a community hub and heritage centre with National Lottery Heritage Fund, Welsh Government and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council support. The aim is to have the centre resemble the synagogue it once was as much as possible to tell the story of the building to those who visit. The main purpose of the centre, however, will be to tell the story of the Jewish community that lived in Merthyr Tydfil as well as the stories of Jewish communities across Wales, promoting inter-cultural understanding.

For more information, visit:  
[www.jewishheritage.wales](http://www.jewishheritage.wales)

*The Merthyr Tydfil Synagogue is a nineteenth century Northern Gothic-style building, and the oldest surviving synagogue in Wales.*

© Jewish Heritatge Foundation



*In Your Space Circus based in Derry/Londonderry, is a circus school and street theatre company which works with artists (local, national and international) with a wide range of skills.*

© In Your Space Circus

# In Your Space Circus

IYCS work individually and in collaboration with other organisations and art forms to deliver projects which involve circus skills, street theatre, visual arts, music, costume-making, and theatre.

In a unique partnership with St Columb's Cathedral, the Circus has taken a lease on the stunning Cathedral School building with plans to refurbish the building into a Circus School and circus arts venue.

The heritage building is considered 'at risk' and requires significant work internally to make it inhabitable. In Your Space Circus has secured initial funding to embark on a major capital fundraising campaign to attract funding, investment and donations to enable the organisation to restore and fit-out the building.

Both The Circus and St Columb's Cathedral are excited to be breathing life back into the building and reinstating it as a 'school', offering access to children, young people, adults and artists from across the city and region to learn, play and create.

For more information, visit:  
[www.inyourspaceeni.org](http://www.inyourspaceeni.org)



# Our Network in 2023–24



841

members



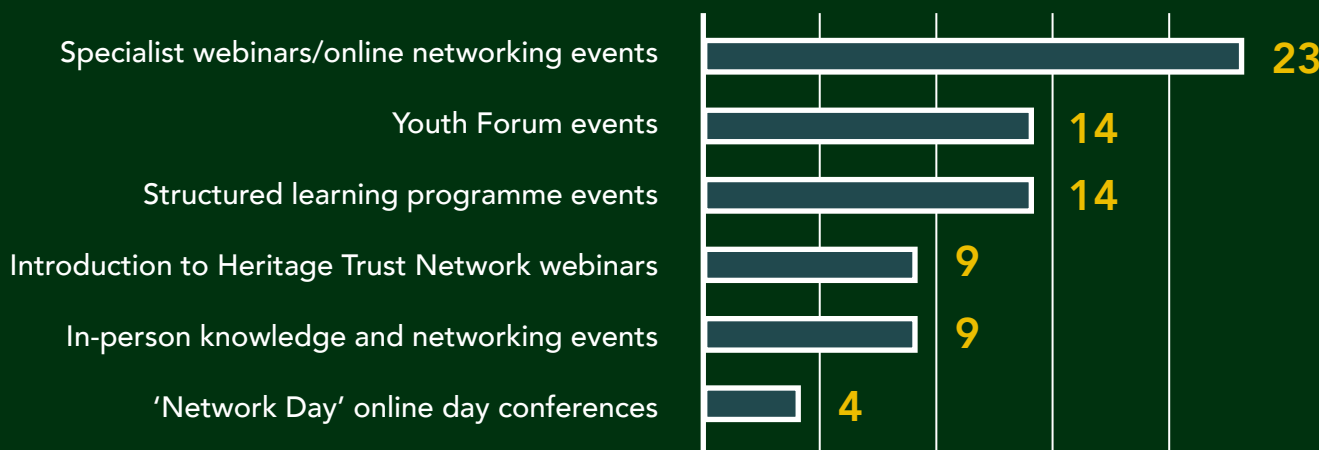
75

events



1,571

participants



190

member  
support cases



59

Youth Forum  
members



3

paid heritage  
traineeships



51,000+

Website views



140,000+

LinkedIn impressions



5,300+

LinkedIn followers



c.15,000

toolkit downloads



124,000+

Facebook impressions



52,000+

Facebook reach

## Annual Review

2023–24 has been year in which Heritage Trust Network has expanded its activities and grown its membership. A year of innovation, experimentation and planning.

Members and non-members continued to learn and network at our events including:

- Online Network Days, covering a variety of vital issues for community heritage
- In-person High Street regeneration events engaging with local authorities, community leaders, artists and professionals
- Specialist events on topics of concern such as energy efficiency, digital engagement, funding, social prescribing and wellbeing
- Online and in-person events in each nation
- Regular Introductory events for potential members and partner organisations
- Conference in Newcastle with over 200 delegates from all over the UK.

We sent out our regular newsletters with vital information on events, funding, tender opportunities, jobs as well as news from the sector.

We updated our Toolkit with essential guidance and information.

We answered dozens of support requests from members, providing advice and information or signposting them to experts.

Our work with young people really took off this year, with our Youth Forum flourishing. A highlight was the take-over day of the Historic England Connects online community. We held our first major event for young people in Port Talbot, focussing on careers, skills and volunteering opportunities.

We completed the transition of Digital Heroes, our digital volunteering initiative. The project formerly funded by the Heritage Fund was incorporated into our mainstream work.

Our Heritage Traineeships continued with a new UK trainee, and our first Heritage Trainees in Scotland and Wales.

Our work in Scotland continued to flourish led by our Development Officer, supported for the

first time by a Heritage Trainee thanks to Historic Environment Scotland and National Trust for Scotland. Working with communities to secure the future of their churches continued to be a big part of this work. We enabled scores of community volunteers to come together, share experiences and hear from the experts. We produced *Your Church Your Community* a digital resource, in partnership with Community Ownership Support Service and Historic Churches Scotland. A new learning programme took Scottish organisations through the heritage regeneration process. We are an active partner in Make Your Mark, a campaign to increase the number and diversity of Scotland's heritage volunteers.

Historic England invited us to be one of the organisations delivering Carbon Literacy training for heritage organisations. So far each of the courses have been fully booked

Essential Networks is our major development and resilience project supported by National Lottery Heritage Fund and this year the project's development phase was completed. We have hired expert consultants to examine marketing and communications, digital infrastructure, business development and HR and help us develop new plans and policies. We were able to pilot new activities and improve existing ones.

New initiatives included:

- Our Outreach Project in the Midlands and East of England which engaged with 45 accidental heritage organisations many of them ethnic minority led or working with marginalised groups
- Network Academy, a structured learning programme with 14 participants from member organisations seeking to take a step up in their effectiveness
- A health check tool to enable us to help member organisations to take a 360° look at all aspects of their operation
- Meetings with Partner (business) members and local authority officers who had engaged with us to discuss how we could better meet their needs.

# Our Strategy 2025–30

During 2023–24, with input from members, trustees and staff have developed a bold new strategic plan for 2025–30. Key parts of that plan are reproduced below. The whole document can be viewed at: [www.rebrand.ly/networkplan2530](http://www.rebrand.ly/networkplan2530)

## OUR MEMBERS

Tens of thousands of people are engaged in community-led heritage action throughout the UK:

- rescuing well-loved local buildings, structures, spaces and landscapes
- restoring, adapting and finding new uses for them
- maintaining and managing them as social enterprises.

This work is needed because:

- people passionately want to maintain the buildings and spaces that embody their memories and give their communities identity and meaning
- it provides vital space for community facilities, independent businesses, homes, visitor attractions, leisure, education, arts and culture
- it provides jobs and supports local economies
- it provides fulfilling volunteering opportunities
- it rescues heritage at risk and ensures it has a sustainable future.

This ecosystem of local heritage action has a breadth and reach that the larger national heritage bodies cannot achieve, into local communities, neighbourhoods, town centres and remote rural areas.

As local authorities and other public bodies come under financial pressure and often dispose of heritage assets, it is often the community that can provide solutions that find futures for those assets while continuing to deliver public benefit.

The community heritage sector does not have boundaries. It is part of the heritage sector but is also part of the community ownership and enterprise space. Community heritage organisations have links to the wider voluntary sector, local businesses, regeneration partnerships, arts and culture and all aspects of local life.

## OUR NETWORK

To achieve all this, community heritage organisations need information and guidance, they need expertise, they need opportunities to learn from each other, they need help when they face obstacles. This is what the Network provides by facilitating peer-networking and peer-learning, connecting members with partners and business, providing expertise, support, inspiration and a sense of community.

## OUR OBJECTIVES

- A. Encourage people to get involved in rescuing, restoring, reusing and managing heritage buildings, structures and spaces by forming new, or through existing, not-for-profit organisations (charities, community organisations and social enterprises)
- B. Help our members and other not-for-profit organisations to succeed in rescuing, restoring, reusing and managing local heritage for the benefit of their communities
- C. Raise the profile of not-for-profit organisations working with local heritage among key stakeholders whose decisions will influence whether they succeed
- D. Increase the diversity of people involved in grassroots action for heritage and ensure that our Network and the wider sector is an inclusive and welcoming place
- E. Improve the legislative, policy and funding environment to facilitate grassroots action for heritage.

## ACHIEVING OUR OBJECTIVES

We need to take the next step up in our development as an organisation, positioning ourselves to connect and support many more community heritage organisations, heritage businesses that support them, local authorities that want to work with them, and young people aspiring to join them.

- A. Develop our services to our members and the wider community heritage sector
- B. Grow our membership bringing the overwhelming majority of eligible organisations into membership
- C. Bring new groups of people and organisations into membership where this supports our strategic objectives and builds our resilience.
- D. Raise the profile of our Network so we are recognised as:
  - the go-to place for independent non-profit heritage enterprises to seek advice, support and learning from their peers and other industry experts,
  - an effective advocate for non-profit organisations restoring and managing heritage sites.
- E. Become a more diverse and inclusive organisation at all levels
- F. Build relationships and partnerships with key organisations
- G. Become a more effective and resilient organisation.

Photographs from top:

Digital Hero volunteers take over the Network’s social media at Conference 2023. Photo by Damien Wootten

Refurbished shop in The Burges, Coventry High Street Heritage Action Zone. © Historic England

Delegates at Network event tour of Moseley Baths, Birmingham. © Heritage Trust Network



# Contact us

## Heritage Trust Network

13–15 Fleet Street

Birmingham

B3 1JP

0121 233 9283

[admin@heritagetrustnetwork.org.uk](mailto:admin@heritagetrustnetwork.org.uk)

[heritagetrustnetwork.org.uk](https://heritagetrustnetwork.org.uk)



# Funders



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[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)



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EACHDRAIDHEIL  
ALBA



NATIONAL  
TRUST *for*  
SCOTLAND



The Pilgrim Trust

Cover image: Delegates visit Tyne Theatre and Opera House, Conference 2023. Photo: Damien Wootten

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