



Trustees' Annual Report

For the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024

The National Heritage Science Forum is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), registered charity number (England & Wales) 1154160.

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Nancy Bell
Sara Crofts
Prof Gaffney (Chair) (from 24/01/2024)
Prof Adam Gibson
Dr Jen Heathcote
Dr Freya Horsfield
Prof Nigel Llewellyn (Chair) (until 24/01/2024)

Objects, mission and strategic priorities

The stated charitable object of the National Heritage Science Forum is:

To promote the efficiency and effectiveness of charities, not-for-profit organisations and voluntary organisations and the effective use of resources for charitable purposes by charitable and non-charitable bodies working to promote the understanding, preservation and conservation of the UK's material cultural heritage for the benefit of the public. Material cultural heritage is the things both natural and man-made that are valued for their meaning and significance.

About the National Heritage Science Forum

The National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) has its roots in the recommendations of a House of Lords Select Committee report on Science and Heritage (2006), the Science and Heritage Programme (AHRC/EPSRC 2007/12) and the National Heritage Science Strategy (published 2010).

The **mission** of the National Heritage Science Forum is to improve collaboration in heritage science by connecting communities of practice. The Forum:

- Shapes the future through strategic partnerships to build and share knowledge, data and skills across organisational boundaries.
- Connects people: researchers, conservators, curators, scientists from many disciplinary backgrounds, educators at all levels, and commercial operators.
- Co- creates the strategy for Heritage Science in the UK and coordinates its delivery.

Structure, governance and management

The National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) is a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO), registered charity number (England & Wales) 1154160. The operation of NHSF is governed by its Constitution. This reporting period covers 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

NHSF's Board of Trustees (currently eight trustees) is responsible for managing the affairs of NHSF including compliance, public benefit, strategic direction, development of the organisation, risk management, financial sustainability and application of resources in the pursuit of the Forum's charitable object. The Board of Trustees met (virtually) four times in this reporting period. In addition, two virtual planning sessions were held to review the charity's place in the evolving heritage science landscape.

The NHSF Member Council, on which representatives of NHSF's member organisations sit, is a subcommittee of the Board of Trustees. Its role is to initiate and direct the Forum's subject-specific (heritage science) activities. A nominated trustee attends meetings of the Member Council to support good communication between the two groups. The Member Council met four times in this reporting period.

NHSF's 11th Annual General Meeting took place in hybrid format (in-person and online) on 24th January 2024. At the AGM members agreed: the minutes of the 10th AGM be signed as a correct record; to receive the annual report for the year ending 31st March 2023; to receive the statement of accounts for the year ending 31st March 2023 and to appoint Prof Chris Gaffney as a trustee and Chair of the Forum. At the AGM Prof Nigel Llewellyn concluded his term as a trustee, and Chair of the Forum.

NHSF contracts out operational and administrative support to Preservation Matters Ltd. The schedule of services and contract is reviewed annually by the Board of Trustees.

Appointment and induction of trustees

One trustee (the Chair) retired from the Board in 2023-24. Two trustees led the recruitment process for a new Chair which included a review of the role description and open advertisement of the opportunity. Following applications and interviews, Prof Chris Gaffney was proposed to the Board of Trustees for appointment. The Board agreed to the proposal and in turn proposed him for appointment by the members at the AGM on 24th January 2024.

Before appointment potential trustees have access to the role description, the latest annual report and annual accounts and a meeting to discuss current strategic priorities and how the Forum operates. After appointment, trustees are provided with a copy of the Trustees and Members Handbook which covers the governance, management and operations of NHSF.

Register of related party interests and transactions

All trustees are asked to complete the related party interests form on appointment and thereafter, annually. All trustees are asked to complete the form for declarations of related party transactions following the end of the financial year. At each trustee meeting trustees are asked if there are any new declarations of interest to be made, or any declarations of interest in relation to the meeting's agenda. For the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 no trustees' remuneration was paid and no trustees were paid expense claims. Four trustees were connected to organisations which paid membership fees totalling £8,000 to the National Heritage Science Forum. There are no other related party transactions.

Risk management

NHSF maintains a risk register for the purpose of identifying and managing risks to the organisation. The risk register is reviewed by trustees at each trustee meeting. In the last year, the key risk was that NHSF would be unable to deliver against key objectives or charitable aims due to a lack of operational/trustee resource, resulting in a loss of confidence in NHSF and a loss of member support. A number of mitigating controls have been agreed by trustees amongst which are the operation of the Member Council and ensuring good communication between the Board and members. In addition, the board planning sessions that took place in October and November 2023 focussed on prioritisation of activities and strengthening NHSF's capacity to deliver its objectives by nominating a trustee lead for each of four agreed priority areas of: stakeholders and impact, facilitating heritage science collaboration, diversifying income and supporting members.

Activities and achievements

The trustees have referred to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit when reviewing NHSF's aims and objectives and when agreeing the activities of the charity.

NHSF brings together organisations active in the field of heritage science so that knowledge and innovation can be shared to improve the understanding and preservation of cultural heritage as well as methods of engagement with it, for the benefit of the public. It aims to support the strategic development of heritage science in terms of research, capacity building, application, collaboration and infrastructure.

The Forum's strategic priorities for 2023-2024 were:

- A successor to the Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK 2018-2023 is developed.
- UKRI and AHRC are provided with sector data and insight to support investment in, and successful launch of, RICHeS (Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science).
- The broad relevance of heritage science is well articulated, demonstrating how heritage science helps to address the issues that matter to people.
- A vibrant and sustainable NHSF is able to champion heritage science and support its members.

1. A successor to the Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK, 2018-2023 is developed.

In 2022, the Member Council agreed to lead the development of a successor strategic framework, to cover the period 2024-2027. Members have contribute to a review and refresh of the current framework by examining the current strategic drivers for heritage science in the UK and proposing adjusted outcomes that reflect current needs. The drafting of the refreshed framework was originally planned for the end of 2023 but was deferred until 2024 because of member engagement with the funding calls for the UKRI Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science.

The 2018-2023 framework has continued to guide the activities of NHSF's three working groups during this reporting period. In addition, NHSF's newsletter, blog, social media channels and strategic framework padlets have all been used throughout the year to raise awareness of the current Strategic Framework goals and invite organisations from beyond NHSF's members to show how their work contributes to the goals.

2. UKRI and AHRC are provided with sector data and insight to support investment in, and successful launch of RICHeS (Research Infrastructure for Conservation and Heritage Science).

NHSF has continued to work with UKRI and AHRC to support the development and launch of RICHeS. Specifically, the Forum has:

- Held an event in May to support the development of the Digital Research Services (DRS) strand of RICHeS. The event explored the needs of the sector, current and proposed solutions and related initiatives from which the DRS might learn.
- Published a selection of case studies to illustrate the value of heritage science research to society.
- Nominated a trustee to the RICHeS project board which has strengthened the Forum's channels of communication with UKRI as the project goes through its final stages of approval.
- Contributed to the evaluation of AHRC's World Class Labs portfolio which includes awards made through the Capability for Collections (CapCo) and Creative Research Capability (CResCa) programmes.

In addition, NHSF has provided support in communicating the goals of RICHeS to the wider heritage science community through its website, newsletter and social media, including promotion of the three funding calls which ran from July-October 2023.

3. The broad relevance of heritage science is well articulated, demonstrating how heritage science helps to address the issues that matter to people.

The Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK, 2018-2023 is a tool to help the heritage science community work together on three strands of:

- Excellent research
- A skilled and diverse heritage science community
- Demonstrable social and economic impact

NHSF facilitates three working groups to support member collaboration on activities that will address these goals.

The **Research working group** focused on the contribution of heritage science to five societal grand challenges of climate emergency, health & wellbeing, digital society, equality and inclusivity, and sustainable development. In the period of this report the group has:

- Held 'deep dive' events on the themes of digital society and climate emergency.
- Engaged the wider community with research gaps relating to the role of heritage science in addressing the climate emergency.
- Continued to publish case studies which provide examples of the role of heritage science in addressing the societal challenges.
- Contributed to a Welsh Government focus group on the Climate and Nature Emergency in Wales.

The **Communities working group** focused on increasing engagement with heritage science at school age, supporting the development of technical skills and knowledge, supporting access to a range of apprenticeships and postgraduate opportunities and improving recognition of heritage science as an attractive career. In the period covered by this report, the group has:

- Facilitated a second year of mentor opportunities by bringing together mentors and mentees.
- Held a facilitated roundtable on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to explore the state of practice and the challenges and opportunities associated with improving EDI.
- Collated resources available from members to support career progression.
- Engaged with skills initiatives including the Historic Environment Skills Investment Plan, I-conled discussions on a 'red list' of conservation skills and an English Heritage convened panel on the links between Science & the Humanities and how heritage can support learning across disciplines.
- Explored how to build on the previous year's work to increase engagement with heritage science at school age through a project focussed on the creation of heritage science STEAM education resources.

The **Impact working group** brings members together to demonstrate the positive social and economic impact of heritage science. In the year of this report, NHSF has:

- Surveyed members and the wider community to collect insights on the ways in which organisations collect impact data and the audiences they seek to engage.
- Discussed the value of aligning existing reporting and evaluation methodologies across home nations and major funders.
- Heard a presentation from DCMS in April titled 'Economic valuation and cultural values: the role of heritage science' to explain and support engagement with the Culture & Heritage Capital programme.
- Published a briefing note on the National Lottery Heritage Fund Strategy 'Heritage 2033' in April.
- Contributed to the Council for Science and Technology's roundtable on R&D in the Creative Industries in July.
- Published a briefing note in September to summarise developments in the Culture & Heritage Capital programme.

NHSF's wider communication activities also support the articulation of the relevance of heritage science. In July-August NHSF commissioned simple messaging on the value of heritage science from an external consultant and this is being used to review how NHSF communicates with a broader community of interest than its existing members.

The e-newsletter continues to be published monthly and shares information on NHSF's work, the activities of its members, as well as news, policy developments, events and jobs from across the sector. Subscribers have grown from 320 in March 2023 to 392 at the end of March 2024. During 2023-24 Twitter followers have increased from 2,001 to 2,160. NHSF set up a LinkedIn page in January 2024 which had gained 185 followers by April 2024. The purpose of this page is to build links with a peer community of researchers and heritage professionals.

4. A vibrant and sustainable NHSF is able to champion heritage science and support its members.

In the year covered by this report, NHSF has gained three new members (the Science Museum Group, British Library and University of Reading) who are all making an active contribution to the Forum. The Member Council remains the primary means of connecting members to each other and sharing views on research interests and wider challenges and opportunities.

NHSF facilitates collaboration between its members, and the wider heritage science community. The Climate Emergency 'deep dive' event that took place in January 2024 is a good example of collaborative activity. Presentations were given by twelve of the Forum's twenty-one member organisations, whilst nineteen member organisations were amongst the 96 people who attended.

The Forum also plays an active role in raising issues of importance to the sector with policy-makers and other opinion-formers. NHSF's engagement with the development of UKRI's RICHeS programme, representing an investment of £80 million over a period of 10 years, provides an example of the positive contribution that the Forum has made to the wider landscape.

In the year ending 31st March 2024, the Forum engaged in a number of other policy, advocacy and partnership activities, including:

- Consultation on future National Centre for Archaeological Archives
- Contribution to Welsh Government focus group on Climate & Nature Emergency
- Council for Science & Technology roundtable on R&D in the Creative Industries
- Refresh of the Historic Environment Scotland Skills Investment Plan
- Briefing note on Scotland's Museums & Galleries Strategy
- Briefing note on National Lottery Heritage Fund Strategy 'Heritage 2033'
- Briefing note on the Culture & Heritage Capital programme
- English Heritage STEAM skills panel event

Communication and events

Over the course of the year the Forum has organised a range of events for members and non-members to deliver its mission of connecting communities of practice and increasing collaboration. Events in 2023-24 included:

19th April – Member Council

21st April – Working group co-convenors (next steps Strategic Framework refresh)

3rd May – Digital Society 'deep dive' – Digital infrastructure needs, provision and gaps

4th May – Communities working group (mentoring, strategic framework drivers, plans for EDI-themed summer Member Meeting)

17th May – Research working group (de-brief following digital infrastructure event of 3rd May, strategic framework drivers, societal challenge case studies)

17th May – Mentor/Mentee information event

26th May – Capturing impact member meeting

9th June – Communities working group (mentoring next steps, planning of EDI event)

16th June – Board of Trustees

28th June – Member Meeting on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

6th July – Impact working group meeting

12th July – Member Council meeting

3rd October – Board of Trustees

24th October – Board planning meeting

20th November – Communities work group (actions following EDI event, member initiatives (HES Skills Investment Plan; TNA curriculum work)

21st November – Board planning meeting

4th December – Board of Trustees

7th December – Research working group (Climate emergency event planning)

24th January – Climate Emergency ‘deep dive’ event

24th January – AGM

31st January – Impact Group (explore role in follow-on to Climate emergency event)

6th February – Member Council

9th February – Presentation to EM-UKI meeting about NHSF and development of RICHeS.

21st February – Board of Trustees

22nd February – Communities working group meeting

Planning and development

The strategic framework for heritage science in the UK has continued to guide NHSF’s activities in 2023-24 and work in that period has contributed to a refresh of the framework for 2024-2027. NHSF will now consult with members and the wider heritage science community on the goals of the emerging framework so that it delivers benefit for the many different organisations and individuals active in the field of heritage science.

Each year the NHSF Board of Trustees agrees priorities for Forum for the year ahead, in consultation with the Member Council. The strategic priorities that have been agreed by the Board of Trustees for 2024-25 are:

- A successor to the *Strategic Framework for Heritage Science in the UK, 2018-2023* is launched.
- The importance, potential, context and wider relevance of heritage science is effectively articulated.
- A vibrant and sustainable NHSF is able to champion heritage science and support its members.

NHSF will now develop an action plan against which progress can be measured.

Policy on reserves

The trustees of the National Heritage Science Forum (NHSF) have considered the charity's budget and future plans in determining its need for reserves. The trustees have agreed a reserves policy to safeguard NHSF's activities in line with its charitable objects against uncertain income streams.

The trustees have agreed to retain unrestricted free reserves equivalent to a minimum of nine months of operational expenditure to meet these needs. This is calculated as an average of the past 3 years' operating budgets, and estimated for 2024-25 as approximately £32,513. At 31 March 2024, NHSF's unrestricted reserves were £51,599. The trustees will monitor reserves through the year as part of budget reporting and will review this policy annually. Planned expenditure in the forthcoming year is expected to draw minimally on free reserves.

The Trustees confirm that there is no material uncertainty as to whether the charity can continue as a Going Concern.

Declaration

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Trustees:

Signature



Print full name
Prof. Chris Gaffney

Position
Chair, Board of Trustees

Date 21 / 10 / 2024

Signature



Print full name
Dr. Jen Heathcote

Position
Treasurer

Date 22 / 10 / 2024

Accounts

Accounts for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024 are presented using the receipts and payments accounts template provided by the Charity Commission.



Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period
from

01/04/2023

To

31/03/2024

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Membership subscriptions	45,875	-	-	45,875	42,875
Fee income	-	-	-	-	1,600
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-	-
Bank interest	115	-	-	115	87
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total (Gross income for AR)	45,990	-	-	45,990	44,562
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	45,990	-	-	45,990	44,562
A3 Payments					
Consultancy services	41,477	-	-	41,477	36,446
Board meetings	-	-	-	-	-
Trustee expenses	-	-	-	-	100
Website	1,150	-	-	1,150	952
Telephone, print, post, stationery	-	-	-	-	9
Events	2,632	-	-	2,632	611
Travel and subsistence	156	-	-	156	-
Subscriptions	850	-	-	850	773
Commissioned research/services	1,500	-	-	1,500	200
Independent examination	960	-	-	960	864
Projects	1,474	-	-	1,474	-
Bank charges	60	-	-	60	72
Sub total	50,259	-	-	50,259	40,026
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	50,259	-	-	50,259	40,026
Net of receipts/(payments)	- 4,269	-	-	- 4,269	4,536
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	55,868	-	-	55,868	51,331
Cash funds this year end	51,599	-	-	51,599	55,868

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Cash at bank	51,599	-	-
CCXX R1 accounts (SS)				30/08/2024

	-	-	-
	-	-	-
Total cash funds	51,599	-	-

(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))

Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
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B2 Other monetary assets

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
		-	-
		-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

B3 Investment assets

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
Independent examiner fee 2023-24 accounts	Unrestricted	960	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
	Chris Gaffney	
	Jen Heathcote	

NATIONAL HERITAGE SCIENCE FORUM

INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT

TO THE TRUSTEES OF NATIONAL HERITAGE SCIENCE FORUM

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of National Heritage Science Forum (the charity) for the year ended 31 March 2024.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the charity you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act).

I report in respect of my examination of the charity's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act. In carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the charity as required by section 386 of the 2006 Act; or
- 2 the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
- 3 the financial statements do not comply with the accounting requirements of section 396 of the 2006 Act other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination; or
- 4 the financial statements have not been prepared in accordance with the methods and principles of the Statement of Recommended Practice for accounting and reporting by charities applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.



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22 / 10 / 2024
Dated: