

New research reveals Durham's heritage boosts pride and tourism

17/03/2015



Durham Cathedral

And in a poll conducted by specialist research company BritainThinks for the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), nearly as many (88%) revealed that the city's historical sites and memories were also important to them on a personal level.

To coincide with 20 years of National Lottery investment into the UK's heritage, amounting to over £6billion, the city of Durham was one of 12 towns and cities across the country picked to find out how the public viewed that investment and to see to what extent it had made places better to live, work in or visit.

Key UK findings

- 80% think local heritage makes their area a better place to live
- 64% think heritage has improved in recent years in terms of how well it is looked after and what it has to offer
- Heritage plays a powerful role in bringing people together and helping to improve perceptions of quality of life

- Benefits of heritage seen as both transactional and emotional, encouraging local pride and fostering social cohesion

Key findings in Durham

- 70% of people strongly agree and 21% slightly agree that they feel pride in their local area because of heritage projects and sites
- 95% believe that the area's heritage makes Durham a place that other people are likely to visit
- 88% believe heritage is important for them personally and 70% describe Durham's heritage as important for their personal sense of identity
- 91% who've visited heritage sites have gained a better understanding of their area and 73% gained a better understanding of other cultures
- 56% are aware of HLF and 77% believe HLF's support for heritage projects represent a good or excellent use of Lottery money

As well as making places visually more attractive and providing activities and places to visit, the research also revealed that heritage is also seen as important for the local economy and instilling local pride and community cohesion.

When we think about Durham's city heritage, buildings such as Durham Cathedral (which together with Durham Castle forms a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and the natural setting of the River Wear are often the first that spring to mind. Both have received grants from HLF and an overwhelming majority of those surveyed had visited those sites (98% and 92% respectively).

In fact, historic buildings and monuments and land and biodiversity are among the top three areas of HLF investment in the city of Durham.

The second biggest area of investment is museums, libraries, archives and collections. However, when asked about an example of one of these projects – the online community archive Durham in Time – just 6% had made use of the resource but 30% of those felt it had personally benefited them.

So, while many people benefit from such projects, they are often not as well-known as sites such as the visually impressive cathedral. Community and intangible heritage were revealed as the two areas with the lowest investment, but the fact that 70% describe Durham's heritage as important for their personal sense of identity suggests that there could be so many more proud local heritage stories to tell!

Ivor Crowther, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: "It's fantastic to see the clear sense of pride people have for the city of Durham and its heritage, as well as the personal and economic benefits that come with investment. The survey also shows us that we all still have work to do to increase involvement in the amazing projects that are already happening and inspire new ones, especially exploring community and intangible heritage, to ensure our city's rich heritage story is fully told."

Durham's heritage is also seen as a great boost for the city's tourism industry. An incredible 95% of residents surveyed believe its heritage attractions make people likely to visit.

Melanie Sensicle, Chief Executive of Visit County Durham, said: "We recognise heritage as one of Durham's greatest assets alongside our stunning countryside. Our success at attracting HLF funding for city-based properties as well as those in its hinterland, Beamish Museum and Auckland Castle, has been critical to our ability to attract and delight visitors from all over the globe."

Helen Grant, Minister for Tourism, said: "Britain has such a rich and proud heritage - it is synonymous with our national identity and who we are. It's great to hear that our iconic buildings and fantastic cultural attractions also have a positive effect on our wellbeing too, making people happy."

"But not only does it make us proud Britons happy but it also puts smiles on faces of millions of overseas visitors too who are coming to experience the best of Britain in record numbers, boosting local economies up and down the country."

While there are challenges, the fact that so many are proud and involved in their heritage and believe investment in heritage is a good or excellent use of Lottery money, the future looks bright for Durham's city heritage.

Find out more on the [20 Years 12 Places webpage](#) – including a UK summary report, an essay of the main findings, research slides, reports for each place with films plus more detail on the methodology.

Follow us on Twitter - [#20Years12Places](#), [@HLFNorthEast](#), [@heritagelottery](#).

Notes to editors

BritainThinks research

350 Durham residents also shared their views on ten sites and projects which have received HLF funding, including:

Durham Cathedral has received a number of grants for a variety of projects exploring its rich heritage. In 1996, it received £224,500 to update, redisplay and improve environmental conditions for its St Cuthbert exhibition. In the same year £43,955 was also awarded to repair the Grade I listed Prebends Bridge. The cathedral's Open Treasure project is currently in the development stage of a grant bid. If successful it will see a number of spaces opened up alongside exhibitions and a learning and outreach programme.

River Wear passes through the heart of Durham and several projects along its length have been funded by HLF. In 2000, Durham City Council was awarded £32,200 for a riverbanks survey and restoration plan and Durham Cathedral received £49,900 in 2007 and £337,500 in 2009 for Heritage Woodlands and Riverbanks projects.

Durham Light Infantry Museum & Art Gallery received £49,900 in 2002 to improve access to its medal collection. In 2005 a project awarded £49,700 made recordings held at the Imperial War Museum relating to the Durham Light Infantry in the Second World War available locally for the first time. The museum extended its exhibition in 2010 with a grant of £42,000 to include the story of the 3 Rifles tour in Afghanistan.

Lindisfarne Gospels Exhibition at Palace Green Library was explored by Year 6 pupils from St Bede's Catholic Academy thanks to a £9,600 grant in 2013.

Wharton Park in the city centre is currently undergoing an extensive restoration and engagement programme with a grant totalling over £2.5million.

Oriental Museum at University of Durham is the only museum in the North of England devoted entirely to the art and archaeology Northern African and Asian cultures. The museum received a £314,500 grant in 1999 for a new mezzanine to improve access to the collections and £88,400 in 2001 to permanently add the Henry De Laszlo collection to the museum.

Old Durham Gardens were restored thanks to a £10,000 grant awarded to City of Durham Council in 1995.

Durham Museum & Heritage Centre saw improved access and increased involvement from the community as well as the development of the churchyard into a city-garden featuring a sculpture of St Cuthbert, thanks to a £43,300 grant.

Durham in Time online community archive - Durham County Council was awarded £250,000 in 2007 to give local communities throughout County Durham the opportunity and training to digitise and share their diverse range of archives. Memories, traditions, interviews and dialects are now shared on the [Durham in Time website](#).

Further information

For more information contact Rebecca Lamm, HLF press office, on 020 7591 6245, email: Rebecca.Lamm@hlf.org.uk.

Efallai y bydd gennych chi ddiddordeb hefyd mewn ...

[School children exploring the heritage of the Painted Hall in Greenwich](#)

'20 years in 12 places' – New research reveals UK's heritage helps make us happier