

# New research reveals Newark's heritage helps make us happier

17/03/2015



The new Civil War Centre, set to open this summer, is the latest heritage project in Newark

Lottery investment in local heritage and historical sites has helped to improve quality of life and make Newark a better place to live, say an overwhelming majority of residents in a new study.

The research also revealed that the town's museums, parks, monuments and famous buildings are not only seen as nice places to visit but help foster a sense of pride, giving the area and its residents a distinct sense of identity.

These are some of the main findings in a poll, carried out by specialist research company BritainThinks for the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

People were quizzed about a range of heritage sites including the Newark Air Museum, Newark Castle and Gardens, the new National Civil War Centre and Sconce and Devon Park.

## 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 Newark**

- The wealth of local heritage sites was viewed as a source of local pride by 79% of respondents
- The same percentage said they felt they made Newark a better place to live
- 93% said heritage was an important factor in attracting tourists to the area
- Local residents were also appreciative visitors of local heritage. Some 96% had been to Newark Castle and Gardens with 89% having visited the Palace Theatre and 83% the Sconce and Devon Park
- 87% say they enjoyed their visits and 86% felt the historic attractions were well maintained
- 82% believe that visiting local heritage sites helped them to better understand the history of the area, while 60% gained a better understanding of other people's cultures
- 74% of respondents felt that the money invested in heritage projects in Newark was a good or excellent use of Lottery players' money

**Vanessa Harbar, Head of HLF East Midlands**, said: "It's fascinating to see a direct link between investing in heritage and people's happiness and quality of life. This research has shown that people believe heritage not only brings practical and economic benefits to their town but that they also have an emotional investment and pride in local historic sites."

Vanessa continued: "The research is reassuring but also throws out some big challenges for us. It has shown that we need to keep investing in ways that connect heritage projects to local needs and quality of life. Everyone who values their local heritage can play a role in getting the word out about what it has to offer."

The study is one of 12 carried out around the UK following 20 years of investment by HLF, the largest dedicated funder of the UK's diverse heritage. The aim was to better understand the public's view of National Lottery investment and to see to what extent it had made places better to live and work in or visit.

Newark residents responded in line with other similar sized towns such as Pontypool, Wales and Armagh in Northern Ireland in strongly believing that their area is a good place to live and that heritage is a key part of this. They were also almost universally of the view (94%) that heritage was important to the country as a whole.

Of all 12 locations, Newark has the highest proportion of people who are aware of the value of HLF investment to their town, possibly because of recent high profile grants. 59% of residents are already aware of the new National Civil War Centre, which is set to open this spring.

**Michael Constantine, Business Manager at the National Civil War Centre**, added: "These results are hugely reassuring, but no surprise to those of us delivering Lottery-backed projects in

Newark. The level of public support for the National Civil War Centre has been absolutely tremendous. As we close in on our big public opening in May that bodes well for the future. The past is never far away in this beautiful town, reinforcing local distinctiveness and pride of place and also underpinning a growing tourism sector.”

**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."

Visit the [20 Years 12 Places webpage](#) to find out more – 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.

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### **Notes to Editors:**

HLF has awarded grants worth a total of £9.4million in 30 projects in Newark since 1996/7, equivalent to £209.22 per local resident.

**Newark Castle Gardens** – from 1997-2000, Newark Castle Gardens underwent a significant redevelopment, thanks to a £525,000 HLF grant. Paths were resurfaced, thousands of trees and shrubs planted and a new bandstand was added to these formal gardens which were designed by Victorian landscape Architect H E Milner.

**Sconce and Devon Park** received a £1,219,000 HLF grant in 2007. The money helped bring back to life the park's unique 'Queen's Sconce', a fortification built during the English Civil War. Funding was used to develop a new, bridged access to the sconce and created a guidebook and family trail so visitors can read about its history. The money also helped provide a new visitors' centre with a café, public toilets, a children's play area and two kilometres of surfaced footpaths, improving access for wheelchair users and buggies.

**Civil War Centre** – In 2012 Newark and Sherwood District Council were awarded £3,462,800 to repair Newark's Grade II\* listed Old Magnus Buildings and reopen them as a National Civil War Centre. The new centre, the first museum solely dedicated to the English Civil Wars of the 17th century, is set to open to the public in May 2015.

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