



National Audit Office

Promoting Participation with the Historic Environment

REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL | HC 881 Session 2008-2009 | 22 July 2009

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SUMMARY

1 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (the Department) exists to improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities. One of its core policy objectives of the last five years has been to drive up participation rates, with a particular emphasis on addressing inequalities between different population groups. This report examines the effectiveness of the Department in working with English Heritage to deliver its objective of broadening participation in heritage.

2 As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2004, the Department agreed a target (Public Service Agreement 3) to increase by three percentage points the number of people visiting historic sites from three under-represented groups – black and minority ethnic groups, those with a limiting disability, and those in lower socio-economic groups – over the three years from 2005-06 to 2007-08. In the current spending period, from 2008-09 to 2010-11, the Department's focus on participation in heritage has changed. As part of Public Service Agreement 21, it now has a broader target to increase participation in sport and culture, including the historic environment, across the population as a whole.

3 English Heritage is the Government's statutory adviser on the historic environment, and the strategic lead for the heritage sector in England. It works in partnership with central government departments, local authorities, voluntary bodies and the private sector to conserve and enhance the historic environment, broaden public access to heritage, and increase people's understanding of the past. English Heritage has a wide range of functions including:

- making recommendations on the designation of historically important places and advising local authorities on managing change to such places through the statutory planning process;
- making grants to individuals and organisations to assist with the conservation and maintenance of historic sites; and
- acting as a custodian of last resort for over 400 historic properties and monuments, ranging from major paying attractions, to ruins which are free to the public, and properties of historic importance but limited popular appeal.

4 This report examines how effectively the Department and English Heritage have pursued Public Service Agreement 3 to increase the diversity of people participating in heritage, and considers English Heritage's role in helping to deliver the Department's contribution to Public Service Agreement 21 to increase participation more widely. We looked in detail at the performance management framework through which the Department has incentivised English Heritage to contribute to its targets on participation, and the actions English Heritage has taken in supporting the wider heritage sector and at the properties it manages. Details of our research methods are at Appendix 1.

On the effectiveness of the performance framework to deliver the Department's participation objectives

5 The Department's Public Service Agreement 3 (PSA 3) targets were challenging. Whilst the proportion of the wider population that visit historic sites is high at around 70 per cent, there are practical, psychological and cultural barriers to increasing the number of people from the target groups visiting historic sites. A particular challenge is to influence the behaviour of those people who say that they are not interested in heritage, which is a reason given by a high proportion of those who do not visit historic sites. Moreover, the Department and English Heritage have little direct influence over the wider heritage sector and have to rely on their ability to change behaviour by promoting the exchange of knowledge and good practice, and by taking opportunities to work in partnership with others.

6 Despite these challenges, the Department met its target to increase visits to designated historic sites by people from black and minority ethnic groups by three percentage points over the period 2005-06 to 2007-08. It did not do so for the other groups it prioritised, achieving a statistically significant increase of about two per cent in visits by people from lower socio-economic groups but no significant increase in visits by people with limiting disabilities.

7 The Department took the lead in delivering the PSA target for the historic environment and established a cross-sector working group, which included English Heritage, for this purpose. The performance framework agreed between the Department and English Heritage for the period 2005-06 to 2007-08 did not, however, clearly align English Heritage's priorities and objectives with the Government's commitment to broaden participation. There was a weak link between the Department's PSA target and the activities English Heritage agreed to report on, which primarily involved delivering a number of 'outreach projects' targeted at small groups of people from the priority groups. The Department measured overall performance against its target through a household survey that collected data on visits to all elements of the historic environment. It did not, however, put in place a mechanism by which the contribution of English Heritage could be judged.

8 Public Service Agreement 21 (PSA 21) covers the period from 2008-09 to 2010-11 and aims to build more active communities. The Department's contribution to this target involves increasing the number of people who participate in at least two out of five cultural and sporting activities, including visiting the historic environment. In response to recommendations from its Capability Review in 2007 the Department has adopted a risk based approach to monitoring its NDPBs which has resulted in a more streamlined funding agreement for English Heritage. The Department is continuing to discuss with English Heritage the activities it will undertake to increase participation, including its contribution to the delivery of PSA 21, and how the effectiveness of this contribution will be assessed.

9 There is also scope for English Heritage to contribute to the wider aims of PSA 21 such as promoting volunteering and giving people a greater role in decision making. English Heritage seeks to involve local communities where investment in a property is planned and delivers the majority of its outreach projects in the community, but it has not sought to build links with the communities around its properties more systematically. It also involves around 1,000 volunteers in a range of roles, but is less reliant on volunteers than charitable organisations in the heritage sector.

On English Heritage's performance in contributing to the objective of broadening participation

10 As the strategic lead for the heritage sector, English Heritage has a key role to play in delivering the Department's policy objectives. Faced with a real terms decline in revenue funding of one per cent over the last five years, coupled with an increase in responsibilities, English Heritage has focused on increasing the income it generates from its properties and growing its membership base. In 2005, it set itself a target to eliminate the deficit from opening its properties to the public, and to increase its members to one million, by March 2010. In both areas it has made significant progress. Between 2005-06 and 2008-09, it increased the revenue generated from its properties by five per cent each year in real terms, thereby reducing the deficit from opening its properties from £5 million to £2.5 million. Over the same period it increased its membership by 15 per cent from 595,000 to 687,000.

11 Although English Heritage is the strategic lead for the heritage sector, it only manages around five per cent of England's heritage sites that are open to the public. To influence the wider sector it must rely on promoting the value of heritage, spreading good practice and effective partnership working. The majority of heritage organisations feel that English Heritage could do more to engage the public with the historic environment. It is, however, effective at securing access to historic properties whose conservation it funds through its grant programme and plays an active role in facilitating debate and disseminating knowledge on broadening participation.

12 English Heritage estimates it has delivered 251 outreach projects over the three-year period (2005-06 to 2007-08), meeting the performance measures it agreed with the Department that related directly to PSA 3, though within this total longer term projects may be counted more than once in their lifecycle. It has also sponsored 'Heritage Open Days', which aims to raise awareness of heritage by opening historic buildings that are usually closed to the public and giving free access to sites that usually charge. The outreach team is valued and respected for its work by the wider heritage sector. There is little evidence, however, that project evaluations have been used to inform decision making and English Heritage has not put in place a means to evaluate the outcomes that its outreach projects or Heritage Open Days achieve in the long term.

13 English Heritage has introduced some initiatives to address barriers to visiting its properties. In 2008 it strengthened its approach to conducting access audits at its properties by evaluating both the physical and intellectual accessibility, and in 2009 it piloted diversity training for staff based at properties. Despite these positive steps, and a commitment to increase the number of visitors from priority groups to its sites over the period 2005-06 to 2007-08, English Heritage did not set a baseline or target for the diversity of visitors to its properties. The data English Heritage collected in this area was not sufficient to draw conclusions at a site level, so it was not well placed to judge the effectiveness of any strategies to broaden the diversity of its customer base.

Conclusion on value for money

14 The performance management framework agreed between the Department and English Heritage did not clearly align English Heritage's priorities and activities with the policy objective to broaden participation. In view of the significant barriers to broadening participation and the disparate nature of the heritage sector neither the Department nor English Heritage had sufficiently strong levers by which to change people's behaviour. Although the Department did establish a new method of measuring performance against its broad participation objective through the *Taking Part* survey, this was not intended to, and did not in fact, measure the effectiveness of English Heritage's contribution. While one of the Department's three participation targets was met, it is unclear to what extent the actions of the Department or English Heritage contributed to this result.

15 The drive to broaden participation came at a time when English Heritage faced a number of competing priorities, and in particular financial pressures, which have led it to a focus on maximising the revenue generated from its properties. English Heritage is respected for its outreach work, but has been poor at evaluating the long term impact of projects or of wider initiatives to broaden participation. The evidence base on which English Heritage has made decisions about how it seeks to broaden participation with the historic environment has therefore been weak, and the value for money of these initiatives cannot be determined.

Recommendations

16 On the basis of the findings set out above, the National Audit Office makes the following recommendations:

On the Department's performance management

a The Department delivers the majority of its policy objectives through over 60 non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), setting out through funding agreements what the organisations are expected to deliver for the money they receive. We found that the alignment between the Department's objectives and English Heritage's targets was weak.

- **The Department should agree with each of its NDPBs how it will measure their contribution to the delivery of the Department's Strategic Objectives and Public Service Agreements and how the cost effectiveness of that contribution will be assessed.**

b The Department and English Heritage have yet to agree how English Heritage's contribution to the objective of increasing participation for the period 2008-09 to 2010-11 will be assessed.

- **The Department and English Heritage should agree clear and relevant measures with which to assess English Heritage's performance in helping to drive up participation over the period from 2008-09 to 2010-11 as a matter of urgency.**
- **The Department should agree what each of its NDPBs is expected to deliver before funding is released.**

On English Heritage's work to promote participation

c English Heritage has not evaluated effectively the impact of its activities to broaden participation, and there is limited evidence that past performance is being used to inform future strategy.

- **English Heritage should build in longitudinal evaluation at the start of initiatives to broaden participation, such as its outreach projects and Heritage Open Days. It should identify and report on both costs and outcomes.**

- **English Heritage should benchmark the cost and impact of its outreach activities against similar work carried out by other organisations.**

- **English Heritage should base decisions about where to direct future resources to broaden participation on analysis of the relative cost and impact of past projects.**

d Public Service Agreement 21 for the period 2008-09 to 2010-11 is focussed on building more cohesive, empowered and active communities. There is considerable scope for English Heritage to do more to leverage the impact it can have in pursuit of these aims.

- **English Heritage should review successful volunteering practice across the heritage sector to identify where it could increase its impact by making more widespread use of volunteers across its activities. It should set targets to increase the contribution made by volunteers over the next five years.**

- **English Heritage should carry out research to profile the communities local to its properties and the range of visitors each attracts. Having identified the properties with the most potential, it should then produce an action plan at each to raise the level of community engagement.**

PART ONE

Establishing a framework to promote participation

The Department's priorities and targets for participation

1.1 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (the Department) exists to 'improve the quality of life for all through cultural and sporting activities, to support the pursuit of excellence and to champion the tourism, creative and leisure industries'. Increasing participation with cultural and sporting activities is integral to achieving its aims.

1.2 The Department's strategic objectives and Public Service Agreements (PSAs), which it delivers with assistance from its strategic lead organisations and sponsored bodies, are agreed as measures of progress towards key policy objectives. Following an extensive review of policy in 2000, informed by consultation with the heritage sector and the general public, the Government published the document *Force for Our Future* in December 2001. *Force for Our Future* concluded that people care deeply about the historic environment and that it should be 'accessible to everyone and ... is seen as something with which the whole of society can identify and engage'.¹ English Heritage is the Government's statutory adviser on the historic environment and the strategic lead for the heritage sector, and is therefore the key delivery body the Department works alongside to increase participation.

1.3 Between 2005-06 and 2007-08 the Department prioritised increasing the diversity of those who participate with culture and sport. Public Service Agreement 3 launched as part of the 2004 Comprehensive Spending Review, was agreed and required the Department "to increase the take-up of cultural and sporting opportunities by adults and young people of 16 and above from priority groups." For the historic environment the Department

aimed to achieve a three percentage point increase in participation levels of those visiting designated historic sites from three priority groups: black and minority ethnic groups, those with a limiting disability and those in a lower socio-economic group.

1.4 Over the period 2008-09 to 2010-11, the Department is prioritising increasing the numbers of adults and children who participate in cultural and sporting activities. The Department is responsible for contributing to PSA 21, owned by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), which aims to build more cohesive, empowered and active communities. Progress towards PSA 21 is measured by six indicators, of which the Department is responsible for one which aims to achieve an increase in the percentage of all adults aged 16 and over who participate in culture and sport. To be successful, the Department needs to deliver a statistically significant increase in participation levels in a basket of five cultural and sporting activities – including visiting designated historic sites – which is defined as taking part in two or more of the five activities per year. The lack of a stand-alone target for heritage complicates the Department's task in passing to English Heritage specific responsibility for increasing participation.

1.5 From 2008-09 there are no longer any targets for increasing the diversity of those who participate with the historic environment, though the Department continues to support activities to meet this objective in its delivery plans. Treasury guidance issued with PSA 21 requires that "performance information about participation levels by groups who are currently under-represented is gathered, assessed and acted upon", but PSA 21 contains no indicators by which performance in this area will be measured.

¹ *The Historic Environment: A Force for Our Future*, DCMS/DTLR, December 2001.

Challenges in delivering targets to increase participation

1.6 Increasing participation with the historic environment is challenging and not directly within the influence of government. Designated historic sites are broadly defined within Public Service Agreements 3 and 21 – for example, including historic towns and cities and sites connected with sports heritage, such as Wimbledon – and are not limited to those sites which the Department or English Heritage can influence directly. English Heritage manages around five per cent of England's heritage sites that are open to the public as visitor attractions, and many of these attract few visitors. The Department and English Heritage therefore cannot act alone, but must also seek to influence the wider heritage sector, which contains a large number of disparate bodies, to drive up participation.

1.7 Whilst over 70 per cent of the population have visited a historic site in the last year, the proportion of visitors from the priority groups is lower at around 60 per cent.² There has been a broad range of research conducted into barriers

to participation and the Department has recently launched a £1.8 million joint programme to research the delivery of cultural and sporting opportunities.³ In 2008 English Heritage commissioned research into the results of the *Taking Part* survey, a national survey designed to measure participation across the cultural and sporting sectors including progress against PSA 3, to identify the reasons most commonly cited for not visiting a historic site (**Figure 1**). Addressing some of the barriers identified, such as a lack of interest or time, requires the behaviour or motivation of individual citizens to change and this is difficult for government to influence. Other barriers, such as feeling out of place at a site, can be tackled more directly though are still challenging.

1.8 To better understand the barriers to visiting historic sites we held focus groups in January 2009 with people from organisations representing the priority groups. The following quotes (**Figure 2**) from our focus groups illustrate some of the experiences and perceptions that can discourage people from the priority groups from visiting heritage sites.

1 The most commonly cited reasons for not visiting a heritage site from *Taking Part*

Rank	Lower socio-economic groups	Black and minority ethnic groups	Limiting disability or longstanding illness	Whole population
1	Not really interested	It's difficult to find the time	My health isn't good enough	Not really interested
2	It's difficult to find the time	Not really interested	Not really interested	It's difficult to find the time
3	I might feel uncomfortable or out of place	I might feel uncomfortable or out of place	Lack of transport/can't easily get to it	My health isn't good enough

Source: *Quantitative Analysis of Data from the Taking Part survey*, Centre for Economics and Business Research (2007)

2 Quotes from workshop participants

On not really being interested:

'cultural relevance is the key – if it's not that relevant to people's personal lives then they won't want to engage with the site.'

On feeling uncomfortable or out of place:

'[Visitors are] white, middle class, retired and professional older people.'

'when we walk into these properties we get a sense of rejection and omission'

'[It's] like you don't belong there. The staff attitude and even the attitude of certain general public on certain sites they look at you like you don't belong there ... It's almost like 'how did they let you in?''

On lack of transport or having difficulties getting to a site:

'Everything costs a hell of a lot of money these days. We are living in a recession... Not everyone can afford to get to these places. Train fares are a lot of money...'

On health not being good enough:

Workshop participants from groups representing those with a limiting disability did not cite health as a significant barrier to visiting a heritage site, instead highlighting some of the practical reasons why visiting a heritage site may be less attractive to someone with a limiting disability:

'it's no good me going to such a place, they won't be able to accommodate me when I get there. You get a disabled toilet and that's it.'

Source: National Audit Office workshops with organisations representing priority groups

² *Taking Part: The National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport, Final assessment of progress on PSA 3*, 11 December 2008.

³ The Culture and Sport Evidence Programme (CASE) is a three year programme of research led by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in collaboration with the Arts Council England, English Heritage, the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and Sport England.

The role of English Heritage

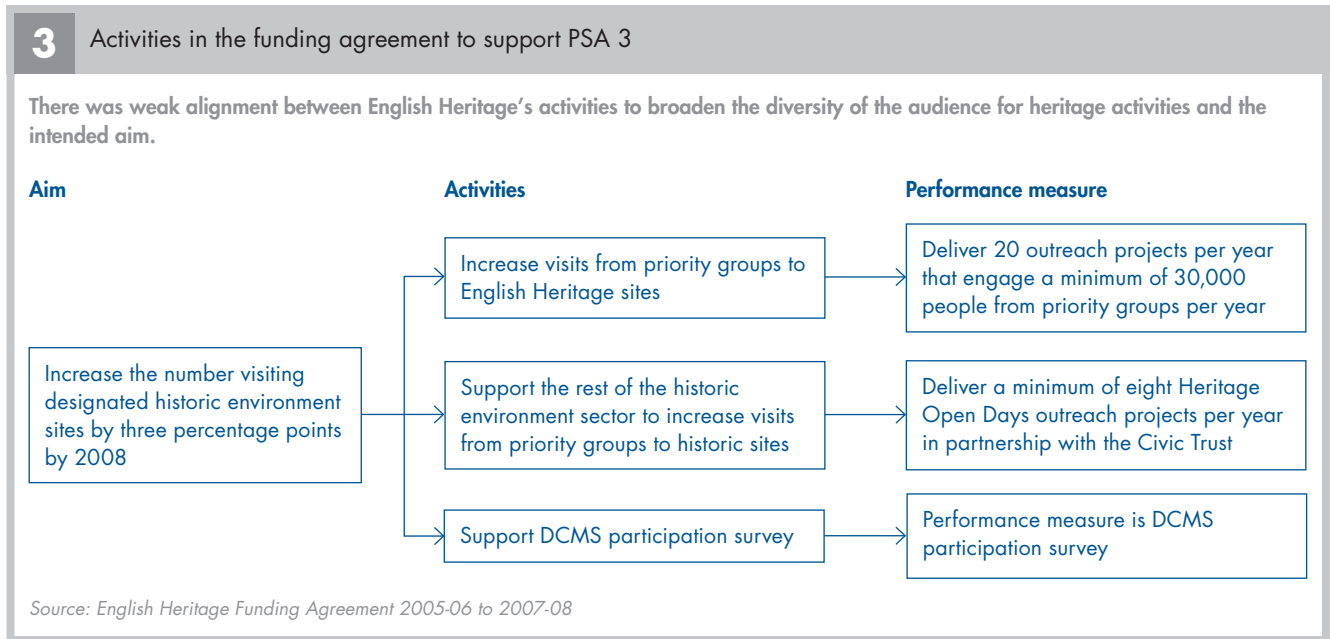
1.9 English Heritage is an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department, and is the Government’s statutory adviser on the historic environment and strategic lead for the heritage sector in England. It also contributes to the objectives of the Department of Communities and Local Government and the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs. English Heritage exists to protect and promote England’s historic environment and ensure the past is researched and understood by engaging the public, local and national government in a cycle of understanding, valuing, caring for and enjoying their historic buildings, monuments, landscapes and marine heritage.

1.10 English Heritage pursues a broad range of activities to meet its strategic aims and those of the three departments it works with. It has a role in both the designation of historically important places and in advising Local Authorities on the management of change to such places through the statutory planning process, and is also a source of expert technical advice on all aspects of conservation. English Heritage makes grants to owners of historic properties to assist with the conservation and maintenance of these assets. English Heritage also acts as custodian of last resort for around 420 historic properties and monuments, of which 112 are operated as charging visitor attractions.

Performance measures for Public Service Agreement 3

1.11 Although English Heritage is the strategic lead for the heritage sector, the Department took the lead in delivering Public Service Agreement 3 (PSA 3). The Department set up and chaired the PSA 3 Heritage Steering Group, which met four times a year. The Steering Group brought together representatives of English Heritage, the Civic Trust, the National Trust, Historic Royal Palaces, the Churches Conservation Trust, the Historic Houses Association and an independent diversity advisor to monitor progress against an action plan outlining the activities each organisation intended to deliver in pursuit of PSA 3. However, the extent of English Heritage’s role in contributing to the PSA 3 target was not clearly defined. English Heritage refers to achieving a three percentage point increase in people from priority groups visiting historic environment sites as one of its critical success factors in its 2005-10 strategy.

1.12 The Department did not agree a strong framework to measure English Heritage’s performance towards PSA 3. English Heritage’s funding agreement for the period 2005-06 to 2007-08 specified the key activities it would undertake to broaden the diversity of participation in the historic environment and how performance would be measured. **Figure 3** shows that whilst activities were related to the intended aim, the performance measures did not align with the activities. For example,



delivering 20 outreach projects each year, of which only 25 per cent are based at English Heritage properties (see paragraph 3.8), is unlikely to have a significant impact on the number of visitors from priority groups to English Heritage properties.

1.13 The Department commissioned the *Taking Part* survey to measure the levels of public participation in the cultural and sporting sectors, including the historic environment but did not establish a means to evaluate the contribution of English Heritage. The survey was launched in July 2005 to measure the proportion of the population participating in sport, culture and the arts and to create a baseline from which to measure progress. The survey was designed specifically to measure participation rates and does not collect detailed qualitative information, such as on the impact of English Heritage's activities.

Performance measures for Public Service Agreement 21

1.14 The Department has changed its approach to managing relationships with its non-departmental public bodies in response to recommendations from its Capability Review in 2007, which found that it did not have sufficiently differentiated, segmented or risk-based approach to engaging with its sponsored bodies. The Department now seeks to be more strategic, applying proportionate monitoring informed by a risk based assessment of each organisation's capability to deliver.

English Heritage was assessed by the Department as 'low risk' for its delivery of the Department's objectives which resulted in a more streamlined funding agreement for 2008-09 to 2010-11 with fewer performance indicators and a reduction in scrutiny from the Department. The number of targets within the current funding agreement has reduced from over 50 to just 11, but English Heritage must also report progress on specific activities intended to deliver the strategic priorities of the three departments it works with.

1.15 Some of the key outputs required of English Heritage, including those relating to English Heritage's contribution to Public Service Agreement 21 and its education strategy, are still being discussed more than one year into the funding agreement. The delay has limited the Departments' ability to use the funding agreement to hold English Heritage to account for the effectiveness of its activities to promote participation and education.

What has been achieved

1.16 From 2005-06 to 2007-08, Public Service Agreement 3 (PSA 3), to increase participation by three percentage points, was met for only one of the three identified priority groups in the heritage sector (**Figure 4**). The proportion of people from a black or minority ethnic group visiting designated historic sites rose by 3.4 percentage points over the period. Across the cultural and sporting sectors only four out of the Department's 20 targets for participation have been met.

4 Results of the *Taking Part* survey for PSA 3

Priority Group	Increase/(decrease)	Statistically significant increase ¹	Target to increase participation by 3 percentage points met
Black and minority ethnic	3.4	Yes	Yes
Limiting disability	1.5	No	No
Lower socio-economic group	2.3	Yes	No

Source: *Taking Part: The National Survey of Culture, Leisure and Sport, Final assessment of progress on PSA 3, 11 December 2008*

NOTE

¹ The difference between the 2005-06 and 2007-08 results must be statistically significant at the 95 per cent level, after taking into account the survey's design.

PART TWO

Supporting the sector to broaden participation

Effectiveness of English Heritage in influencing the sector

2.1 Although the Department took the lead in delivering Public Service Agreement 3, as the Department's strategic lead for the heritage sector, English Heritage made a commitment through its funding agreement to support the sector to broaden the diversity of participation. To this end, it has undertaken a range of activities, which we examine below, to influence the behaviour of other heritage organisations.

2.2 Surveys of the heritage sector indicate that English Heritage is well regarded for its conservation expertise but that it could provide clearer leadership to the sector, especially on promoting participation with heritage. English Heritage surveys a range of its stakeholders to get feedback on the service it provides and its reputation in the sector. In the most recent survey in March 2009, 99 per cent of respondents agreed that English Heritage was regarded as the expert on the historic environment. However, 56 per cent considered it could do more to lead the sector in developing educational policy and applying best practice, and 76 per cent felt it could do more to engage more people with the historic environment. A similar range of views were identified in our own survey of heritage organisations completed in April 2009.

2.3 To analyse how English Heritage could support the heritage sector, we commissioned research to explore ways in which organisations with limited direct levers can influence the agenda of others. This part of the report explores four areas highlighted by our research in which English Heritage could maximise its influence:

- by promoting the value of heritage in society;
- by influencing the behaviour of professionals;
- by working in partnership with others; and
- by using grant funding to promote participation.

Promoting the value of heritage in society

2.4 Our research identified a number of ways in which strategic leaders such as English Heritage can raise awareness and promote the value of its work to society. For example, in seeking to change the behaviour of the public it may be possible to foster a sense of public concern and thereby increase support in the population to achieve a policy aim such as protecting and celebrating heritage. English Heritage's *Heritage at Risk* Register records all historically significant buildings, wrecks, landscapes and monuments that are at risk from neglect and attracts significant national press coverage. Each year English Heritage publishes a report on the state of the historic environment, highlighting changes in the sector and key challenges. English Heritage also administers the Blue Plaque Scheme in London, which helps highlight local heritage by recognising London buildings associated with historical figures. The scheme has been running for over 140 years and there are now over 800 Blue Plaques in London. English Heritage also provides support to local authorities and others wishing to develop their own schemes outside London.

2.5 The bicentennial of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade in March 2007 provided an opportunity to raise awareness of black cultural links to English history. English Heritage worked with the rest of the heritage sector to research connections to the slave trade, abolitionists and the lives of black people and produced a guide identifying properties with connections to the slave trade. Special events and exhibitions were also held at some properties whose past occupants had a strong connection to the slave trade. The outreach team also ran a number of projects in this area.

2.6 A key component of English Heritage's promotion of the historic environment is its commitment to the Heritage Open Days initiative in England. This is an annual scheme to raise awareness of heritage by opening sites which are usually closed to the public or giving free access to sites which normally charge for admission.⁴ English Heritage funded the Civic Trust to manage the scheme from 2000 to 2008 and, in May 2009 when the Civic Trust went into administration, took the scheme in-house. In addition to funding Heritage Open Days, English Heritage has supported the scheme by providing marketing support and by committing half of its outreach team's time to work with communities to open up properties that represent England's diverse history.

2.7 English Heritage's approach to Heritage Open Days at its own properties, however, illustrates the tension it faces between leading the sector by example and to promote participation on the one hand and protecting its commercial income on the other. English Heritage provided free entry to only 50 per cent of its charging properties for Heritage Open Days in 2008, in part because the benefits of opening its most popular properties would have been more than offset by a reduction in revenue. It does not know what the impact such a decision has in the long term, nor whether by opening a higher proportion of its properties on Heritage Open Days it would encourage other heritage organisations to do the same.

2.8 Government research suggests that volunteering can play an important role in securing wider engagement with public policy.⁵ English Heritage has made some progress in increasing the number of volunteers it uses, and estimates that it has a total of 1,000 volunteers, approximately 0.5 for each member of staff. It does not routinely offer volunteers placements at properties, and is considerably less reliant on volunteers than charitable organisations in the heritage sector. The National Trust estimates that it involves over 52,000 volunteers across a range of its activities – a ratio of over ten volunteers to each member of staff.⁶

2.9 Increased community engagement can be an effective way to increase public interest in heritage and is a Government priority and the central aim of the Local Government White Paper.⁷ Although English Heritage collects the views of the community around properties where investment is planned and delivers 75 per cent of its outreach projects in the community, it has no plans to research the communities around its own properties more widely. Cadw, the historic environment service of the Welsh Assembly, has conducted some 60 'community profiling' exercises to better understand how its historic properties are perceived by the surrounding communities, at a cost of £130,000. Insights from these exercises were used to devise strategies to strengthen local community engagement.

4 The scheme was devised by the Council of Europe in 1991 and has been running in England since 1994. London has its own scheme called London Open House.

5 *The future role of the third sector in social and economic regeneration: final report*, (Cm 7189) HM Treasury/Cabinet Office, July 2007.

6 *The National Trust Annual Report, 2007-08*.

7 *Strong and Prosperous Communities – the Local Government White Paper*, (Cm 6939) October 2006.

Influencing the behaviour of professionals

2.10 Our research suggests that providing compelling evidence of what works can be an effective way to encourage professionals working in related sectors to adopt new ideas and change behaviour. English Heritage facilitates the exchange of knowledge on promoting participation and diversity in a number of ways, including:

- **Organising conferences.** *'Your Place or Mine? Engaging New Audiences with Heritage'* was held in 2006 in partnership with the National Trust and brought together some 350 professionals across the sector. *'Missing Out? Socio-economic Status and Heritage Participation'* was held in 2009 to examine how to broaden the appeal of heritage, particularly to low income family groups.
- **Creating tools to share information.** English Heritage established the *'Our Place'* website which provides discussion forums for people working with hard-to-reach groups and gives details of future events.
- **Facilitating debate.** English Heritage chairs a working group on broadening access to the historic environment which meets four times a year to share experience and take forward initiatives across the sector to promote engagement with priority groups.
- **Promoting the importance of heritage.** Through its Historic Environment Local Management (HELM) programme, English Heritage provides information, training and guidance to local authorities and community organisations whose work impacts on the historic environment. As at March 2009, 76 per cent of local authorities had appointed a 'heritage champion' as a result of the HELM programme.

Working in partnership with others

2.11 Our research identified that effective partnerships are key for organisations with limited direct authority or financial levers to achieve their goals. The nature of partnerships varies, from inter-organisational agreements to networks, but all involve sharing resources and expertise to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes. English Heritage has developed partnerships with a range of organisations in the heritage sector and beyond to help conserve, promote and manage the historic environment. At many of its properties it has to work alongside a range of other organisations to manage and protect the site and enable safe access to it. It has also developed a range of effective partnerships with local community organisations through its outreach projects (see paragraph 3.9), many of which attract funding in kind from participating groups.

2.12 English Heritage has also worked in partnership outside the heritage sector to promote the historic environment. Engaging Places is a project that provides information for teachers on using the built environment for education and enables cross-sectoral partnerships to be built. It is hosted by CABE (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment), and run in partnership with English Heritage. The website identifies organisations that can help teachers and gives details of built environment sites, events and teaching material.

Use of grant funding to promote participation

2.13 Direct financial support is an effective means of influencing behaviour. Although the Heritage Lottery Fund is by far the largest grant giving body in the sector, making payments to grant recipients of £300 million in 2008-09, English Heritage uses over a quarter of its grant-in-aid, £29 million in 2008-09, to make grants to protect the historic environment. It attaches conditions to conservation grants to heritage sites to allow public access, typically to provide at least 28 days public access per year for ten years after grant-aided work has been completed. English Heritage publishes information about visiting grant aided properties on its website and in a directory of heritage visitor attractions.⁸ Grant recipients are required to provide updated contact information annually.

⁸ The directory, which is published annually, only contains information on secular grant recipients.

2.14 English Heritage has improved its monitoring of compliance with access conditions since the National Audit Office and Committee of Public Accounts identified concerns in 2001. In response to the Committee's report *English Heritage: Access to Properties*,⁹ English Heritage now carries out annual "Anonymous Visitor" surveys to check whether access conditions to grant aided properties are being adhered to. In 2008 English Heritage's survey of 29 grant aided properties found that in 70 per cent of cases the ease of arranging the visits was either 'good' or 'excellent', and the quality of the visit was rated as good or excellent in 86 per cent of cases.

2.15 To obtain a more comprehensive picture of the compliance with grant conditions we conducted a mystery shopping exercise in February 2009 to test the access conditions at all of the 528 properties that had received grants, but had not been selected for English Heritage's own survey. Of the 399 properties we were able to contact during a two-week period (see Appendix for our methodology), it was easy to get information about opening times at 387 (97 per cent), and for 379 (95 per cent) the opening times and admission charges given were consistent with the grant conditions. We also found evidence that grant recipients had made efforts to make their properties accessible to those with a physical disability. Over 40 per cent of those contacted told our mystery shoppers that their properties were accessible to wheelchairs and 25 per cent said that they had disabled toilet facilities.¹⁰ English Heritage requires grant recipients to have an accessibility audit on their property for compliance with disability discrimination legislation as a condition of the grant.

2.16 English Heritage has also made a small number of grants to organisations in the heritage sector to help them broaden the audience for heritage. For example, in 2006 English Heritage awarded a grant of £70,000 over two years to Heritage Link, an umbrella organisation representing the heritage sector, to run a series of five seminars for community heritage organisations exploring how best to engage with new audiences. Over 130 people attended the seminars, which resulted in five community projects being developed during the lifetime of the project and the creation of a website to share learning more widely.

⁹ *English Heritage: Access to Properties*. Committee of Public Accounts, (12th Report 2000-01, HC 265).

¹⁰ Many of the properties which receive grant funding from English Heritage are private homes, not visitor attractions, and so the level of provision of facilities for disabled visitors is considered to be good. There are no benchmarks to directly compare this provision against.

PART THREE

Using English Heritage's properties to broaden participation

3.1 English Heritage's properties are the focal point for its interaction with the public. It is responsible for conserving and maintaining a diverse estate of over 400 historic properties that are open to the public. The estate includes abbeys, castles, ruins, stately homes and palaces, and ranges from popular visitor attractions, such as Stonehenge which had over 890,000 visitors in 2008-09, to ruins which might attract a handful of visitors a year (Figure 6). English Heritage is the custodian of last resort and may step in to preserve historic buildings and monuments that would not otherwise be saved. Over 110 of its properties are operated as charging visitor attractions and the remaining 300 sites are not staffed and are free to the public. Opening English Heritage's properties to the public involves significant costs including the cost of marketing and staffing the properties, and of maintaining the buildings and facilities to enable public access. Across the whole estate the income received from admissions and sales in shops and cafes does not cover these costs.

English Heritage's strategy for its charging properties

3.2 English Heritage's strategy has been to maximise income generated from its properties and increase its membership base, rather than increasing visitor numbers in what it had assessed to be difficult market conditions. English Heritage is funded by a grant-in-aid from the Department and from revenue it generates from its operations, principally the historic properties it operates as visitor attractions. Government funding for English Heritage has declined by £1.8 million in real terms (one per cent) over the last five years, whilst its responsibilities have increased (Figure 5). In 2008-09 English Heritage received £124.9 million in revenue grant-in-aid and generated a further £48.1 million of income primarily from its properties. Its five-year strategy for 2005-10 set targets to eliminate the deficit of operating its properties, increase the number of members to one million and increase the number of free educational visits to its properties to 650,000.

3.3 To achieve its strategy, English Heritage has focused on investing in and promoting properties with the greatest potential to generate income. In 2007-08, 50 per cent of the marketing budget for properties was used to promote the ten most visited properties. Historically themed events held at properties are also used to generate income, and over 80 per cent of the budget for events is spent at just ten properties where the return will be greatest. From 2003 to 2008 English Heritage's investment strategy targeted increasing the income generating potential of properties by improving the visitor experience at sites.

5 English Heritage's total funding



Source: National Audit Office analysis of English Heritage Annual Accounts (2004-05 to 2008-09)

NOTES

- 1 Revenue grant-in-aid for the costs of relocation have been excluded from revenue grant-in-aid for the years 2006-07 to 2008-09.
- 2 The 2008-09 costs have been deflated to 2007-08 prices using a Treasury forecast, and may be subject to change.

6 English Heritage's charging properties

More than half of English Heritage's charging properties had less than 20,000 visitors in 2008-09

Top ten sites by visitor numbers



English Heritage sites by visitor numbers

100,000 to 1,000,000 (9)

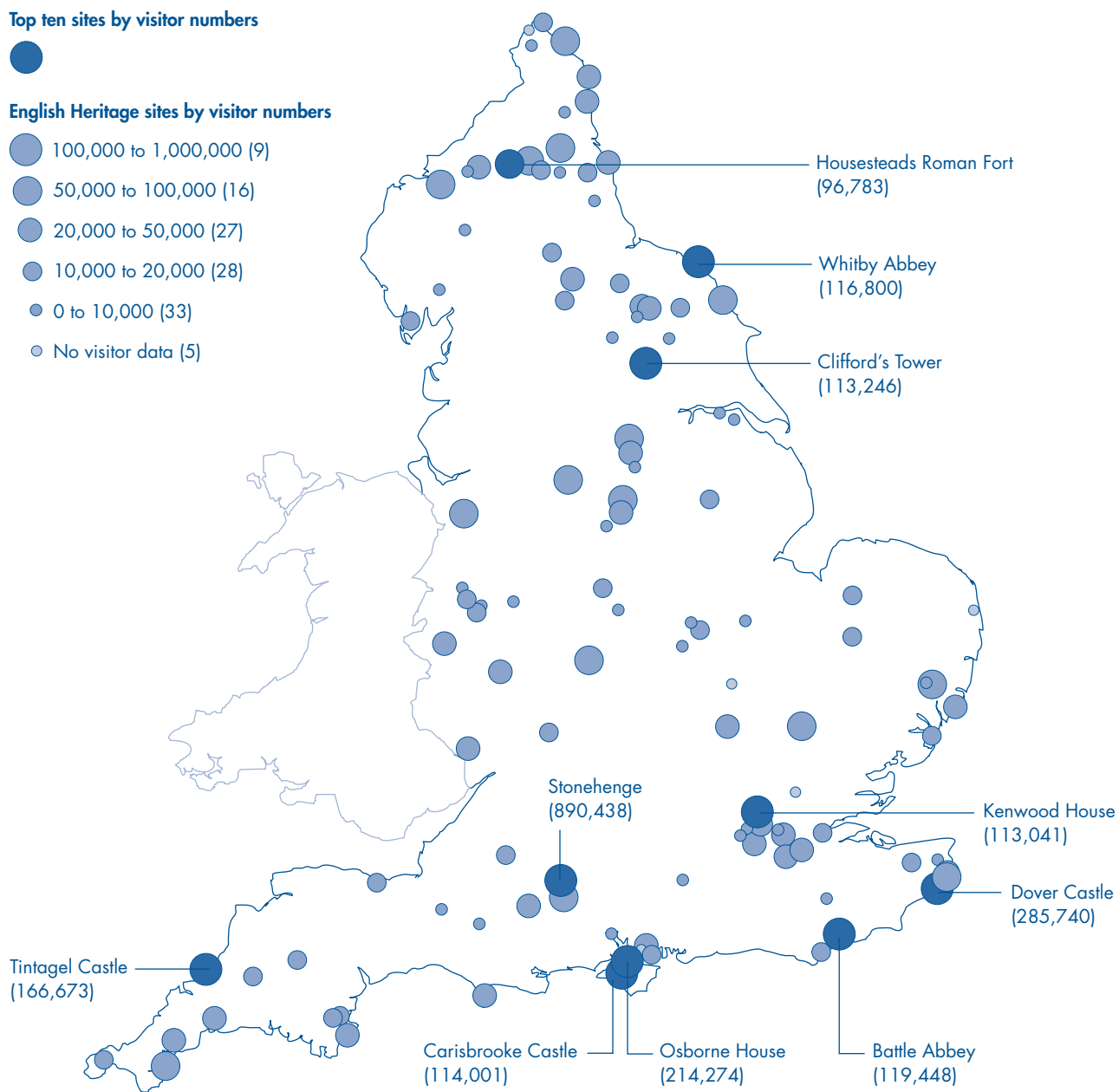
50,000 to 100,000 (16)

20,000 to 50,000 (27)

10,000 to 20,000 (28)

0 to 10,000 (33)

No visitor data (5)



Source: English Heritage

NOTE

English Heritage's ten most visited properties are labelled alongside their visitor numbers for 2008-09.

A budget of £30 million was spent building visitor centres, educational facilities, shops and cafes (Box 1). Half of the investment projects were at the top 15 most visited properties. Significant price increases are made following investment – for example, the price of visiting Audley End House rose by 14 per cent in 2008-09 following investment at the property, compared to a three per cent inflationary increase for most other English Heritage properties.

3.4 English Heritage has successfully increased the revenue generated from its properties at a rate of five per cent per year in real terms since 2005-06. However, progress in reducing the net cost of running its properties has been slower than planned, in part because of a change to way the cost of operating the properties has been calculated but also because costs rose (Figure 7). English Heritage reduced the net cost of running its properties from £5 million in 2005-06 to £2.5 million in 2008-09 – missing its target of £1.5 million for that year.

3.5 English Heritage has been successful in increasing membership numbers. The number of members has grown by 15 per cent since 2005-06 to 687,000 in 2008-09 – a faster rate of growth than that achieved by the National Trust. Over the same period, the National Trust's membership base grew by six per cent to 3,600,000 in 2008-09.¹¹ Although the number of English Heritage members has increased, visitor numbers have declined by two per cent since 2005-06 compared to a small increase in the number of people visiting heritage sites overall.

Increasing the diversity of visitors to English Heritage's properties

3.6 English Heritage is not well placed to judge the effectiveness of initiatives aimed at increasing the number of visitors to its properties from the Department's priority groups. Although English Heritage committed to increasing the number of visitors from priority groups, it did not establish a baseline or target. English Heritage measures the diversity of visitors to its sites as part of its annual site surveys (Figure 8), but the results do not allow English Heritage to evaluate the impact of its initiatives on diversity of visitors at a site level, because different properties have been included in the survey each year.

3.7 Despite the absence of a target for the number of visitors to its properties from the priority groups, English Heritage has more recently pursued strategies to address barriers to participation. For example, in 2009 English Heritage piloted a diversity module as part of its customer service training for property-based staff, and in 2008 it developed its programme of access audits for its properties to assess physical and intellectual barriers beyond that required by the Disability Discrimination Act. In recognition of the fact that its workforce is considerably less diverse than both the civil service and the wider population (Figure 9), English Heritage has also committed to roll out a workforce diversity strategy in 2010.

BOX 1

Investment at Kenilworth Castle

In 2006 English Heritage embarked on a programme of significant investment at Kenilworth Castle. Kenilworth Castle is English Heritage's flagship property in the West Midlands, and in 2006 attracted around 91,000 visitors, generating around one third of the region's income. However, Kenilworth Castle's visitor facilities and site presentation were believed to be holding back the property's potential to generate more income. The main elements of the investments were:

- Remove unsightly buildings and improve visitor access by building a new ticket office and shop
- Create a new permanent exhibition explaining the Castle's history
- Improve the catering facilities
- Recreate an Elizabethan garden and aviary in the grounds

Improvements delivered:

The ticket office and shop were completed in April 2006, the permanent exhibition opened in June 2006 and the cafe opened in April 2007. In May 2009 the Elizabethan garden and aviary were opened to the public.

Impact of investment:

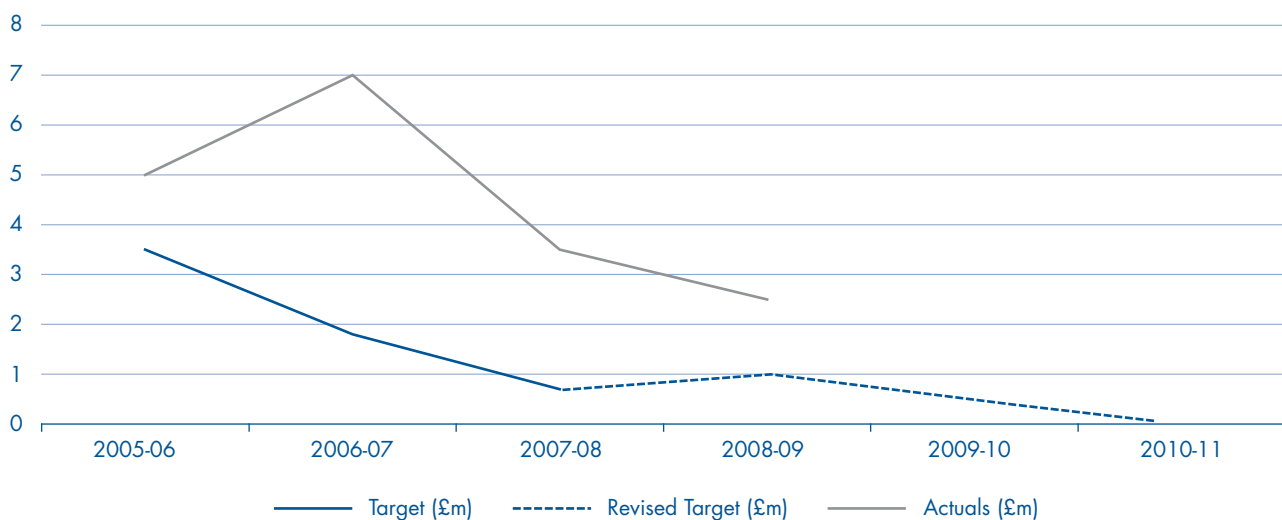
The project cost £4.1 million in total, with funding from English Heritage, the Wolfson Foundation and the Department, and is on track to meet English Heritage's long term investment targets. Some £1.1 million of the total cost resulted from archaeological work on the site of the Elizabethan garden, and English Heritage has not included these costs in appraising the success of the project.

Income generated at Kenilworth has increased from £361,000 before the investment in 2005-06 to £619,000 in 2008-09, including a three-fold increase in income from membership sales and a 30 per cent increase in retail income. It is too early to evaluate the long term impact of the Elizabethan garden on income generation or visitor numbers.

¹¹ National Trust membership figures include corporate members.

7 Progress in reducing the cost of running English Heritage's properties

Net cost of running properties (£m)



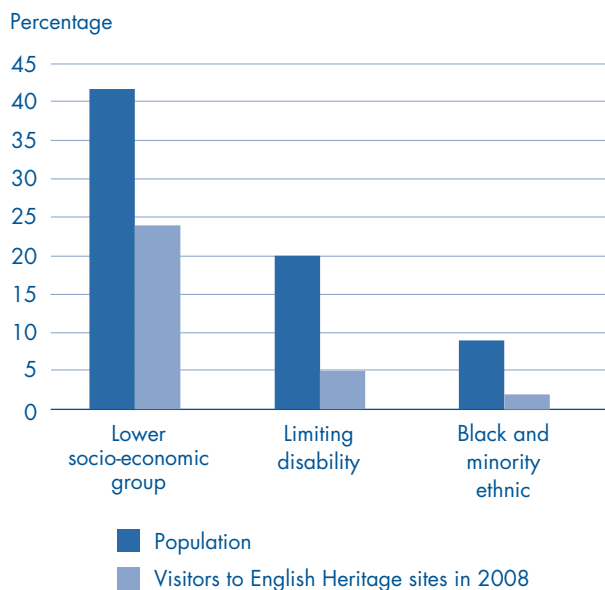
Source: English Heritage 2005-06 to 2007-08 Funding Agreement Progress Report, April 2008 and English Heritage 2008-09 to 2010-11 Funding Agreement Progress Report, April 2009

NOTE

A change to the way the operating deficit was calculated, to capture more relevant costs, alongside a large publishing stock write-off and project overruns caused English Heritage's operating deficit to increase by £2 million from 2005-06 to 2006-07.

8 English Heritage visitor demographics at its ten most visited sites (2008)

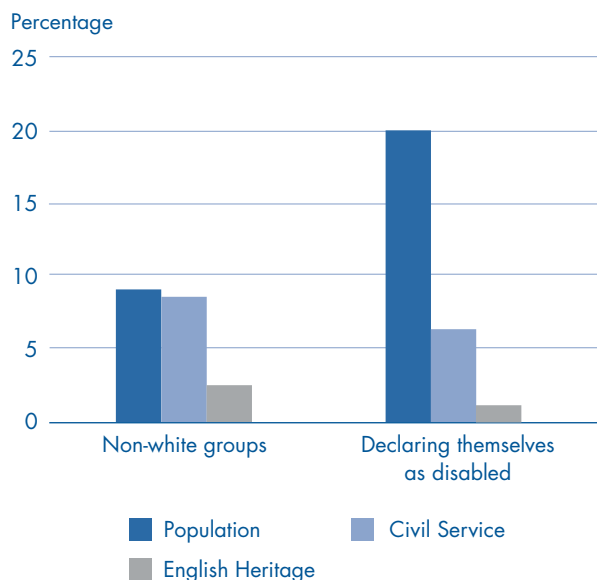
Visitors to English Heritage sites are not representative of the wider population.



Sources:
 Population estimates: Black and minority ethnic and lower socio-economic groups: 2001 Census, Limiting Disability: Department for Work and Pensions estimate of number of adults with a limiting disability (2004)
 English Heritage visitor demographics: Estimated by visitor survey in 2008 (based on visitors to the top ten most visited charging properties)

9 The diversity of English Heritage's workforce

Visitors to English Heritage sites are not representative of the wider population.



Sources:
 Population estimates: as for figure 8
 Civil Service: Civil Service Statistics 2008 – Office of National Statistics, Statistical First Release
 English Heritage: English Heritage Annual Report 2008-09

3.8 English Heritage established the Outreach Programme in 2003 to engage new audiences in the historic environment, and for the period 2005-06 to 2007-08 the outreach team was responsible for English Heritage's activities to support PSA 3 as set out in the funding agreement (see figure 3). The outreach team has two main functions: to facilitate outreach projects with local communities; and to support the Heritage Open Days scheme (see paragraph 2.6).

3.9 English Heritage estimates that it delivered 251 outreach projects during the three year period of PSA 3. Within this total, some projects are counted more than once if, for example, the development of the project falls into one year but it is not completed until the next. About a quarter of the projects are at English Heritage properties. Projects are focused on the three priority groups named in the PSA 3 target although there are no targets for the number of projects aimed at each priority group. The outreach team works in partnership with community organisations, local authorities, arts and heritage organisations, other third sector organisations and youth groups to deliver the projects. Projects attract support in delivering the project from partner organisations – either 'matched funding' or 'funding in kind' such as through the provision of buildings or the input of staff. The outreach team estimates that it secured over £385,000 of such benefits in 2008-09.¹²

3.10 Outreach projects are varied in nature and the cost per participant is very variable. Projects are designed to work with a relatively small number of people intensively and to involve many more indirectly through, for example, creating an exhibition or performance. The average cost per participant directly involved for the four projects we reviewed in detail was £580. One project we reviewed marked the bicentennial of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade by working with 12 people to make textile bags that would form the basis for a touring exhibition. This project cost £28,000 and the resulting exhibition was viewed by an estimated 6,300 people, giving a cost per visitor of £4.

3.11 Although the outreach team is valued and respected by the sector for its work with hard-to-reach groups, English Heritage cannot yet demonstrate the impact of its outreach projects. It plans to evaluate the longer term impact of projects on participants, but has not yet done this. English Heritage evaluates outreach projects using feedback from participants, partners and project workers and records the number of people that took part. However, it does not perform cost benefit analysis, and there is little evidence that evaluations are used formally to inform decision making.

Delivering education programmes at English Heritage's properties

3.12 Increasing participation with the historic environment in the longer term is likely to be dependent on engaging people when they are young. English Heritage's research into the results of the *Taking Part* survey found that being taken to a heritage site as a child was the single most important factor in determining whether people would visit as an adult.

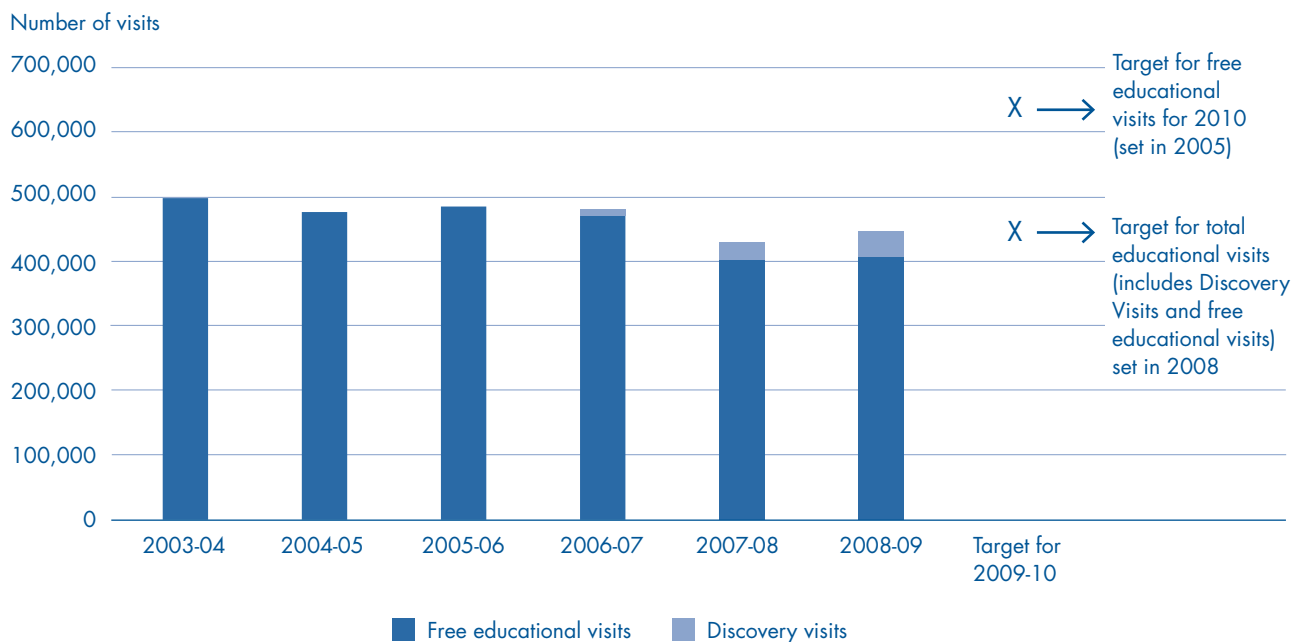
3.13 English Heritage's target to increase the number of free educational visits to its properties to 650,000 a year by 2010 will not be met, and a new target of 450,000 educational visits by 2010 has been agreed (**Figure 10**). English Heritage has a statutory responsibility to offer free educational visits at all of its properties. Free educational visits are led by the teacher or group leader with support from educational material and information about the site provided by English Heritage. It has revised its methodology for measuring the impact of its educational activities and now measures 'learners engaged', which includes free educational visits, and estimates that in 2008-09 850,000 'learners'¹³ were engaged.

¹² This includes direct financial contributions of £220,000 and volunteered staff time and resources of £165,000.

¹³ The new definition of 'learners engaged' is very broad and, in addition to free educational visits and Discovery Visits, it includes amongst other things the number of family activity sheets given out at properties, the number of Heritage Learning magazines sent out to schools and the number of downloads of educational material from English Heritage's website.

10 Educational visits to English Heritage's sites

The number of free educational visits to English Heritage's properties has fallen by 20 per cent since 2003-04.



Sources: English Heritage data and English Heritage Funding Agreement's 2005-06 to 2007-08 and 2008-09 to 2010-11

3.14 English Heritage has tried to address the decline in free educational visits by launching a new type of educational visit – the *Discovery Visit* – in 2006. English Heritage identified that teachers wanted facilitated visits, and that the majority of comparable organisations already had products that met this need. Discovery Visits can be led by specialist educators, visitor operations staff or volunteers and offer a facilitated visit for a fee (**Box 2**). Sixty two English Heritage sites now offer Discovery Visits, and in 2008-09 39,300 learners took part. Discovery Visits have proved successful and demand for visits often outstrips supply although the income received is not yet sufficient to cover the costs. Discovery Visits cost English Heritage approximately £9 per visitor including staff time in 2008-09, which was offset by income of approximately £2 per visitor (based on a group of 30 people).

BOX 2

Discovery Visit: Case Example

Osborne House: *Waiting on – hand and foot!*

The visit is led by Mrs Pilkington, the Housekeeper, who talks about life as a servant during Queen Victoria's reign. Children learn through activities such as blacking boots, cleaning brasses and beating the rugs and are provided with costumes. The visit currently costs £75 per group for a 70-minute workshop.

This Discovery Visit won an independent Sandford Award in 2008 for the quality of the educational learning experience offered and the feedback from teachers and children has been very positive.

"Probably the best school trip ever in 12 years of teaching"

"Thank you for our wonderful visit. We thought the house was in very good condition considering it had been around so long."

APPENDIX

Methodology

The main elements of our fieldwork, which took place between January and April 2009, were:

Selected method

Purpose

1 Review of key documents

Our review included English Heritage's national, regional and departmental strategies and investment plans for the properties we visited (Method 5).

To inform our understanding of English Heritage's strategy, and how it contributed to the Department's objectives.

2 Evaluation of secondary data including:

- English Heritage visitor surveys
- Visitor and income figures for each property
- Results of the Department's participation surveys
- Trends data from Visit Britain on visits to leisure attractions.

To identify performance and trends in visitor numbers and income at English Heritage's properties and in the wider sector.

3 Literature review

We engaged consultants to analyse research and identify good practice on how organisations influence the behaviour of others and reviewed research on the barriers to participation.

To understand how English Heritage could support and influence the heritage sector to broaden participation, and to develop questions for our survey and workshops with heritage organisations (Methods 7 and 8).

4 Semi-structured interviews

We interviewed staff from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and English Heritage staff working in:

- Properties
- Marketing
- Education
- Outreach
- Social Inclusion Policy.

To identify:

- How English Heritage's strategies had been implemented
- The extent of activities undertaken to address barriers to participation
- How the Department evaluates the performance of English Heritage.

Selected method

Purpose

5 Visits to properties

We visited nine English Heritage properties which charge for entry and conducted semi-structured interviews with site staff.

We selected the properties to cover different levels of visitor numbers, a geographical spread and a range of property types.

We visited:

- Audley End, Essex (historic house and gardens)
- Birdoswald and Housesteads, Roman Forts, Cumbria and Northumberland respectively
- Dartmouth Castle, Devon
- Dover Castle, Kent
- Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire
- Osborne House, Isle of Wight
- Rangers House, London
- Stonehenge, Wiltshire.

We also visited a National Trust property, Osterley Park in London.

To understand how properties are used to broaden participation by examining:

- The property strategy
- The accessibility of the property
- What educational and outreach activity takes place
- What partnership working and volunteering take place.

6 Examination of Outreach and Heritage Open Days projects

We reviewed project plans and evaluation reports, where available, for seven English Heritage outreach projects, selected to represent a range of target groups, regions and project types. We also visited two to speak to staff, partner organisations and participants.

To establish:

- How the project sought to broaden participation
- How many people had benefited
- Planned and actual costs and outcomes
- How the project had been evaluated and the learning applied.

7 Survey of heritage organisations

We engaged consultants to manage a web survey of members of Heritage Link, an umbrella organisation for heritage bodies. We followed up responses in greater depth through focus groups and structured telephone interviews.

To evaluate how well the sector felt that English Heritage had supported them to broaden participation.

Of the 86 organisations contacted, 25 responded giving a response rate of 29 per cent. Reasons for nil responses included:

- The organisation did not feel the survey was of relevance to them
- The organisation was too busy
- Our consultants found it difficult to contact the organisation.

Selected method**Purpose****8 Workshops with priority groups**

We engaged consultants to facilitate three workshops with organisations representing the three priority groups.

To identify the barriers to participation and progress being made to tackle them.

In total 18 representative organisations were involved including:

- Eight organisations representing people from black and minority ethnic groups
- Five organisations representing people from lower socio-economic groups
- Five organisations representing people with limiting disabilities.

9 Interviews with heritage organisations

We spoke to a range of bodies including the heritage bodies for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and key heritage organisations in England such as the Heritage Lottery Fund and National Trust.

To identify how other heritage organisations sought to broaden participation.

10 Mystery shopping of grant recipients

We engaged consultants to conduct a telephone census of all grant recipients not covered by English Heritage's most recent survey to establish whether access arrangements were in line with grant conditions.

To establish whether grant recipients were providing public access to their properties as required by grant conditions.

We attempted to contact 523 grant recipients and called each telephone number five times over a two-week period at different times of the day until successful. We were able to speak to 399 recipients (76 per cent).

Of the 124 grant recipients we were unable to contact, the telephone numbers held by English Heritage were incorrect for 27, and of these 20 had been corrected at the time of publication.

11 Workshop with English Heritage

We engaged consultants to facilitate a workshop to assess the costs and benefits of English Heritage's activities to broaden participation.

To identify the cost and impact of activities undertaken by English Heritage and how it prioritises and evaluates them.

A more detailed description of our methodology can be found at: www.nao.org.uk/historicenvironment09_methodology

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