

# Icon's Strategy 2017–2022

On 24 June 2020 Icon's Board of Trustees took the decision to extend this *Strategy* to 2022 to take account of the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

# Message from the Chair



The Institute of Conservation is more than just an organisation that brings together all those interested in conservation. It is a movement of members who together deliver huge benefits to our cultural heritage and collections of all kinds, working on a daily basis in the care and conservation of much that is precious to us. With the insight, experience and professionalism of Icon members, our cultural heritage is in safe hands.

Icon is its members; whether they work in public, private or charitable sector. It is the voice of the many conservators, allied professionals and volunteers who continually and devotedly support advocacy, excellence and engagement to further the interest in and commitment to conservation.

Together we form a connected and connecting body that is well placed to rise to the challenges of an uncertain world. We recognise that there are stringent economic constraints, reducing resources in the public sector and intense competition for grant funding. We also are keenly aware that there are political challenges throughout the UK and that the impact of leaving the EU may be felt strongly in a small but interconnected profession such as conservation.

There is also a great deal to be optimistic about. There are unprecedented levels of public curiosity in the cultural heritage and increased appreciation of the role of conservation in sustaining that heritage. Our cultural tourism is flourishing and with it increased interest in the economic and social benefits that

our heritage can bring. At the same time, new technologies and a more connected world offer ever expanding opportunities to reach and involve more people; there is a growing appetite for conservators to share the passion that they have for their work. As we reach out to inspire and celebrate conservation, we can galvanise support to deliver improvements not only for conservation but for the wider public benefit.

Our strategy sets out aims and objectives which will inform Icon's work across the next five years. It sets a strong direction that will help us to focus on our key areas of activity but also that will enable us to respond to the challenges and changes that the next few years may bring.

I am delighted that this strategy has been developed and honed through consultation with our members who have overwhelmingly endorsed and supported the aims and who will be key to delivering the actions that will make our collective aspirations a reality.

We have had support from the many partners and stakeholders who have been engaged through our work to develop the strategy and who have helped us to deliver many of our recent achievements.

The Institute of Conservation, its members and supporters, in creating this strategy, want to reach out to all those who are interested in and appreciate that our past can make a vital contribution to our future.

Siobhan Stevenson ACR,  
Chair of the Board of Trustees (2015-2019)



Our new website has transformed our ability to present conservation to the public.





## Icon – Who we are

A membership organisation and charity which brings together those with a passion for the care of cultural heritage

**Icon members** include volunteers, owners of cultural heritage, heritage professionals, and professional conservators.

**Conservators** are specialised in the treatment, investigation, research, restoration and documentation of a wide range of materials. They provide advice and education and, in collaboration with many other professionals and volunteers, work to extend the life of cultural heritage by keeping it in as close to original condition as possible where this is appropriate. Conservators are essential to providing good collections care and management, working to prevent damage to collections on display, in transit and in storage. They work in public bodies, private practices and in not-for-profit organisations. Conservators work with a range of other professionals, for example, heritage scientists, who contribute to our understanding of objects and collections through their research.

## Icon – What we do

**Conservation of cultural heritage** protects the things we value for now and for the future. It enables the care and safeguarding of the tangible cultural heritage, from a cherished family heirloom to a national treasure, such as the Staffordshire Hoard. The practice of conservation encompasses artworks, architecture, archaeology as well as industrial, natural and social history collections whether they are held by museums, heritage organisations or other private or public collections.



Icon's special interest groups provide high quality events and learning opportunities.



Baroness Margaret Sharp of Guildford launched our National Conservation Education & Skills Strategy. The Clothworkers' Foundation generously supported the post of Chief Executive to lead Icon and the conservation sector.



## Icon's vision

**Icon's vision** is for cultural heritage to be valued and accessible and for its future to be enhanced and safeguarded by excellence in conservation

## Icon's mission is to support:

**Advocacy** – through influencing our partners and the public

**Excellence** – through building knowledge, high standards and valuing the profession

**Engagement** – through encouraging public awareness and participation



# Advocacy

## **Extending our influence as a strong voice for conservation of the cultural heritage**

We continue to represent the views of our members, working with members and partners to respond to consultations across the UK and further afield. We will enhance our visibility to government and policy makers and launch new communications platforms to speak directly to partners and our public.

## **Promoting the value of high quality conservation with our partners and with the public**

We provide quality standards for conservation that are widely acknowledged and supported. We will continue to build recognition for Icon accreditation and to engender support from members, employers and funders. We will promote the value of stable and sustainable conservation education with policymakers and we will continue to champion the highest standards of practice through our Conservation Awards.

## **Becoming the authoritative source of information on conservation in practice, policy, and the profession**

We make information accessible through a range of traditional and digital platforms. We will continue to develop our attractive and public-facing website by working with our members to expand content. We will improve accessibility to the information available for external audiences and our members. We will identify and conduct research to provide insight, establish trends and set benchmarks. We will disseminate this information widely through developing relationships with key opinion formers.



The professional conservator is distinguished by having specialist knowledge and skills in the treatment and care of specific types of objects and materials, for example, furniture or paper. Others specialise in the preventive care of collections.





# Excellence

## **Championing excellence and high professional standards in the practice of conservation**

We will work with members, stakeholders and partners to build on our accreditation, develop our standards and support excellence throughout the profession. We will foster leadership and provide opportunities for promoting good practice.

## **Inspiring quality through support for skills development, education and training**

We will continue to promote our highly regarded internship programme and will support professional development opportunities. We will work with our members to develop innovative ways to transfer skills and experience. We will work with our specialist groups to provide a focus on practical skills and deliver high quality learning opportunities.

## **Encouraging information exchange and the sharing of knowledge**

We will run regular national conferences and will develop our highly valued publications, such as our Journal and Magazine. We will also develop conservation and collection-care guidance for partners and the public. Through support for our special interest groups and networks we will make available informal learning and facilitate collaboration.

## **Nurturing those involved in conservation from entry to later career and beyond**

We will continue to promote a framework of sustainable career paths in conservation. We will extend opportunities for engagement at entry level and in schools and will provide an expanded offer to retired members.



# Engagement

## **Expanding and strengthening our membership base with those involved and interested in conservation of our cultural heritage**

We will reach out to new audiences, developing our membership categories and offer in order to encourage increased engagement, diversity, accessibility and participation.

## **Inspiring people from all backgrounds to value and engage with heritage, conservation and conservators**

We will seek funding and partners for major projects to introduce people from diverse backgrounds to conservation.

## **Diversifying those participating in conservation practice and the conservation profession**

We will engage with a broader range of potential entry-level recruits and with the support of our partners aim to offer targeted traineeships.

## **Realising the potential of conservation to promote wellbeing, develop a sense of place and encourage active citizens**

We will work with members and a wide range of stakeholders to promote engagement in conservation projects and to build capacity and confidence in the sector for managing conservation volunteers. We will work towards the development of a new set of conservation standards for volunteers.



The involvement of major sponsor Beko plc and other partners was the key to success in delivering our awards in 2015. Volunteering was highlighted in two awards.



## Our Charitable Objects are:

- To advance the education of the public by research into and the promotion of the conservation of items and collections of items of cultural, aesthetic, historic and scientific value; and
- To preserve and conserve items and collections of items of cultural, aesthetic, historic and scientific value.



# The following values underpin all our activities

- Work with **integrity**: we are open and honest and do what we believe is best for our shared cultural heritage, the public and our members.
- Be **inclusive**: we value diversity and ensure that opportunities are open to all those who want to care for our heritage.
- Be **forward and outward-looking**: we keep our eyes on the horizon and on the world around us.
- Be **ambitious advocates**: both for our organisation and the things we believe in.
- Be **collaborative and generous**: we work with our members and partners to achieve the best results together.
- **Uphold high standards**: we value, support and promote the expertise and professionalism of our members and partners.





## Icon Effective and sustainable

To achieve our aims, we will work to enhance operational effectiveness and embrace a culture of continuous improvement within the organisation.

**We will continue to deliver against our aims while:**

- Ensuring robust and proactive governance
- Promoting sustainability through sound financial management
- Maintaining effective dialogue between the Board and the members
- Using technology to deliver efficient and effective services

The Heritage Lottery Fund awarded us an unprecedented third tranche of funding to continue our Training Bursary Scheme for internships for three more years, bringing the total to £2.45m, with an additional £1m leveraged from other funders. Icon members train the next generation of conservators.



# Implementation of the strategy

**Icon will develop yearly business plans with detailed actions to include:**

- Production of our Journal and Magazine
- Delivery of our national conferences
- Effective delivery of accreditation and continued development of sector standards
- Development of a register of accredited conservators
- Delivery, in partnership, of conservation internships
- Continue the partnership with the V&A on the Conservation & Collections Care Technicians Diploma
- Support of our vibrant special interest groups and expansion of our interdisciplinary networks
- Implementation of our programmes within a realistic and robust budget



Since 1999, we have accredited over 1000 conservators.



# Implementation of the strategy

To measure the effectiveness of the strategy Icon will develop our research base to include:

- Trends in salaries and workforce skills gaps
- Trends in member satisfaction
- Awareness of the Icon brand
- Support for accreditation by our partners and stakeholders

To assess our success we will focus on targeted outcomes in each of the three strategic areas to include:

- Increased awareness of Icon
- Increased use of our digital services
- Increased effectiveness of Icon advocacy
- Year on year increase in our membership
- Increase in the number of accredited members
- Increase in the proportion of supporters
- Increase in member satisfaction





We welcome your ideas on  
how we can work together to  
deliver our strategy.

Please write to:

**feedback@icon.org.uk**

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## Photo credits

**Page 1 front cover:** Mika Takami, Treatment Conservation Manager at Historic Royal Palaces, working on objects for display at Kensington Palace. *Photo © Historic Royal Palaces.*

**Page 2 top left:** Siobhan Stevenson ACR, Chair, Icon Board of Trustees. *Photo credit: Matt Wreford.*

**Page 2 top right:** Delegates enjoying a reception at the Icon Conference 2013, Glasgow. *Photo credit: Neil Miller.*

**Page 2 bottom right:** Icon's new website. *Photo credit: Kia Abdullah.*

**Page 3:** Icon/HLF Intern Abigail Tyler at Understanding Tapestry event, Icon Textile Group, March 2015.

**Page 4 top:** Newman Brothers' Coffin Works volunteers, Dawn and Ling. The Newman Brothers' Coffin Works was the winner of the Icon Award for Conservation in the Community 2015. *Photo credit: Newman Brothers Coffin Works.*

**bottom:** Baroness Margaret Sharp of Guildford launching the Icon National Conservation Education & Skills Strategy at The Clothworkers' Foundation 2012-16. *Photo credit: Matt Wreford.*

**Page 5 top:** Peter Martindale ACR using stereo microscope at St Mark's, Pennington. *Photo credit: Paul Young.*

**bottom:** Younger Icon members at Icon16 Conference. *Photo © Bianca Harvey.*

**Page 6 top:** Cleaning an object from the Staffordshire Hoard using a thorn. The Staffordshire Hoard project was the Winner of The Pilgrim Trust Award for Conservation 2015. *Photo © Birmingham Museums Trust.*

**bottom:** A Staffordshire Hoard object during cleaning using a thorn. The Staffordshire Hoard project was the Winner of The Pilgrim Trust Award for Conservation 2015. *Photo © Birmingham Museums Trust.*

**Page 7 top left:** Grand Fountain, Paisley, Winner IMechE Award for the Conservation of an Industrial Heritage Artefact 2015. *Photo credit: J S Mitchell.*

**Page 7 top right:** Conservation Club volunteer Robert cleaning ormolu at Soho House. Conservation Club was shortlisted for the Icon Award for Conservation in the Community. *Photo © Birmingham Museums Trust.*

**bottom:** Staffordshire Hoard schools engagement event. The Staffordshire Hoard project was the Winner of The Pilgrim Trust Award for Conservation 2015. *Photo © Birmingham Museums Trust.*

**Page 8:** Icon/HLF Intern Silvia da Rocha with natural history specimens, National Museums Scotland. *Photo credit: Matt Wreford.*

**Page 9:** Maria Pardos Mansilla pins out a piece of lace after wet cleaning at The Bowes Museum. *Photo © The Bowes Museum.*

**Page 10:** Emily Austin, Icon/HLF textile conservation intern, with textile conservator Katy Smith, examining exhibits at the Bowes Museum. *Photo © The Bowes Museum.*

**Page 11 top left:** Intern Ioannis Vassalos funded by The Clothworkers Foundation with photographic collections at the National Galleries of Scotland. *Photo credit: Matt Wreford.*

**top right:** Conservation Club volunteer Michelle Gayle cleaning a stone sculpture in the galleries. Conservation Club was shortlisted for the Icon Award for Conservation in the Community. *Photo © Birmingham Museums Trust.*

**bottom:** ACR Lizzie Neville with delegates at Icon Adapt & Evolve Conference 2015. *Photo credit: Paul D Rowland.*

**Page 12 top:** Nanette Kissi, supported by Historic Royal Palaces, qualified with an MRes in Heritage Science from UCL in 2016. *Photo © Historic Royal Palaces.*

**bottom:** Liz Ralph, HLF Skills for the Future intern, PZ Conservation, Training Volunteers at Bodmin 2013. *Photo credit: Matt Wreford.*



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