

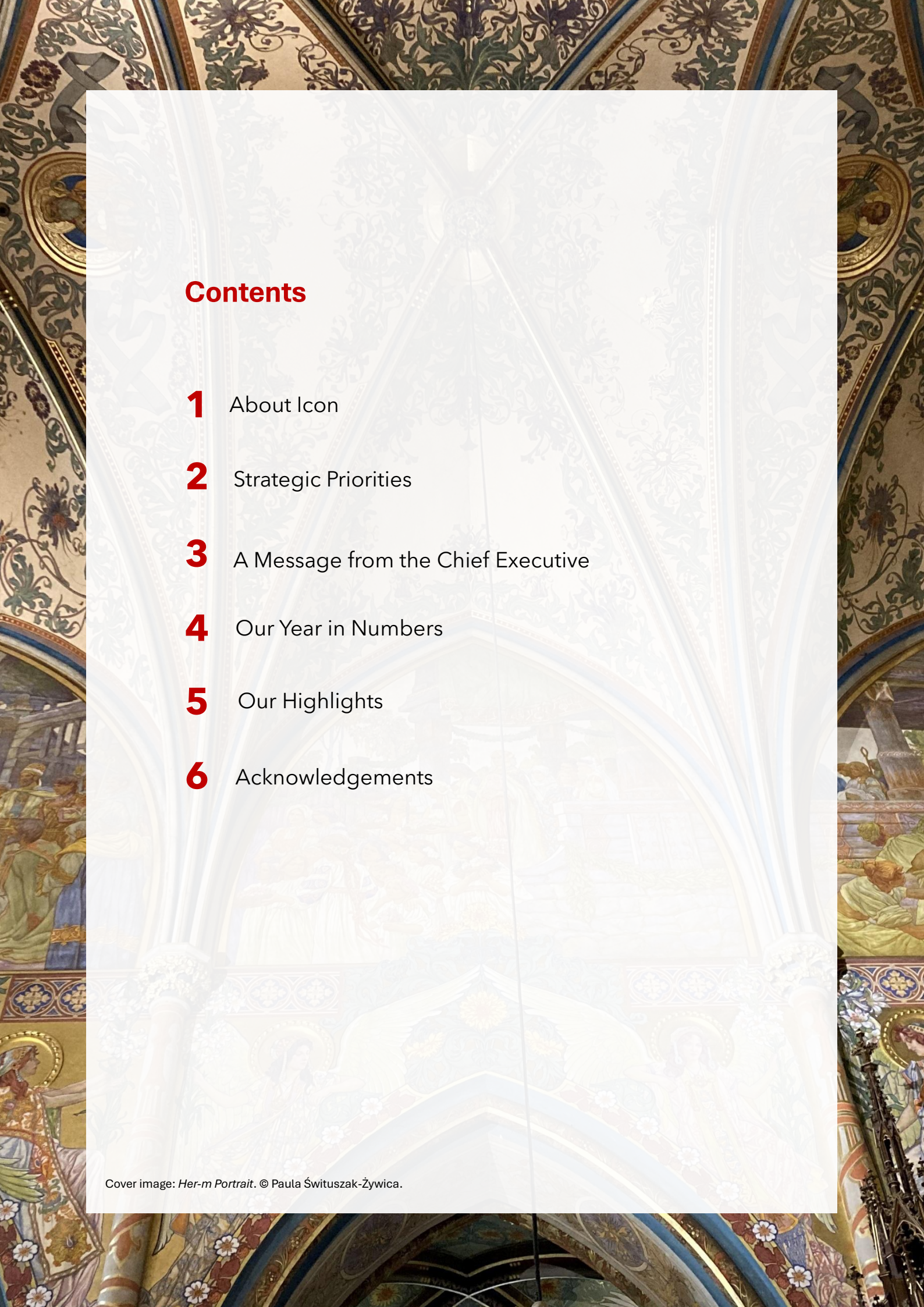


The Institute of Conservation
Impact Report 2024-2025



THE INSTITUTE OF CONSERVATION

20
YEARS



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About Icon

Icon (the Institute of Conservation) is a charity championing cultural heritage, and the professional membership body for the conservation profession.

Icon's Vision

Icon's Vision is to protect, preserve and promote our treasured cultural heritage through cultivating skilled conservation professionals, supporting meaningful collaboration across the cultural heritage sector, and delivering public benefit through engagement and advocacy.

Icon's Mission

Icon's mission is to represent and support the practice and profession of conservation by promoting the public value of caring for cultural heritage and upholding high standards and ethics in conservation practice. Icon ensures that the guardians and owners of objects, buildings and collections can access knowledgeable and passionate professionals who will help them safeguard the physical remains of our past for the future.



Rebecca Goddard treating a mid-17th century lacquer screen, Royal Oak Foundation Conservation Studio, National Trust. © Rebecca Goddard.



Vanessa Obando performs consolidation work on an image of the Virgin and Child in the Church of Santiago Apostol in Santiago, Misiones, Paraguay. © Fernando Franceschelli.

Our Strategic Priorities

Icon continues to deliver against the **Icon Strategy 2030**, which was published in April 2022 and focuses on achieving wider recognition of the value that conservation brings to society and ensuring that the work of conservation professionals is recognised and respected.

There are **five key objectives** that support the delivery of Icon's Strategy:

- 1** Champion cultural heritage and the value of conservation.
- 2** Extend our reach within the UK and internationally.
- 3** Maintain high standards in conservation practice.
- 4** Develop conservation as an inclusive and rewarding career.
- 5** Strengthen our Institute.

A Message from the Chief Executive

2024-25 was a positive year for Icon. With a focus on strengthening our foundations as an organisation we have supported our professional conservation membership, and worked to champion conservation, its vital role in caring for our shared heritage and delivering impact for communities and audiences.

2025 marked an important anniversary – 20 years since five conservation bodies came together to form Icon providing a stronger voice to advocate for the profession and champion the positive impact of the work of conservators.



This objective is still central to Icon's mission and our anniversary in 2025 has acted as a springboard to celebrate the conservation profession and highlight the outstanding work of conservators across the UK and internationally. I am delighted to share with you some of the positive impact achieved for conservation, heritage, and wider society during the year.

Advocating for Conservation

Icon was delighted to be elected as an Appointing Body of the National Trust at their AGM in November and appointed Jane Henderson ACR FIIC as a Council Member providing a conservator's insight to discussions and decisions.

Conferences, Events, and Groups

We were delighted to welcome the conservation community to the Icon24 Conference at the Royal Geographical Society in July 2024. With the conference theme 'Conservation for Change', over 400 delegates and speakers engaged in networking and discussion to inspire positive change.

Icon Groups also had an impressive year, with both Icon Northern Ireland and Icon Private Practice setting up, hosting inaugural events and providing focused support for practitioners. The Icon Scotland Plenderleith Lecture welcomed Caroline Bendix ACR as keynote speaker and saw the emotional launch of the Mel Houston Accreditation Grant. With over £8,000 raised to support this initiative to-date, it's moving to know Mel's legacy will live on in the conservators of the future.

Grants and Awards

The Marsh Charitable Trust has continued its support of conservation with the presentation of six Conservation Awards in July 2024, wrapped into the conference programme for Icon26. These awards spanned student and early career conservators to conservation in action, environmental sustainability, and innovation in conservation, and recognised outstanding projects both in the UK and abroad, with the Kabarnet Museum, Kenya winning the Award for Conservation in Action.



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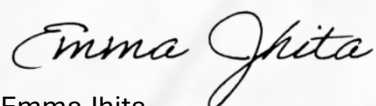
We have also been delighted to continue our partnership with Tru Vue, delivering Tru Vue Conservation and Exhibition Grant Scheme for the 6th year running. Seven grants were awarded, six to institutions in the UK and one in Bhutan.

Funding and Future Focus

We were delighted to receive funding from the Swire Charitable Trust for our work supporting conservation skills at risk in November 2024. Additionally, we launched a new fully funded internship programme focused on preserving conservation skills at risk. Six different funders collaborated on this initiative: Anna Plowden Trust, Idlewild Trust, Julia Rausing Trust, National Manuscripts Conservation Trust, Pilgrim Trust and The Radcliffe Trust. We are incredibly grateful for all support committed to Icon's programmes to embed resilience in conservation and ensure historic objects and collections can be enjoyed today and continue to inspire for generations to come!

We continue to work closely with partners and funders to ensure this is a reality for conservation and, as part of Icon's 20th Anniversary focus have been consulting members on a future petition for Chartership. This is just one way in which the relevance of conservation can achieve greater recognition, the public relevance be better understood, and conservators more effectively supported in their future careers.

Thank you to all of Icon's members, our active members or volunteers and Trustees for your hard work and dedication to deliver so much for conservation and for the heritage we all care so deeply about. Also a big thank you to the Icon staff team. Together we can safeguard our heritage and inspire the conservators and heritage professionals of the future!



Emma Jhita

Chief Executive Officer

'2024-25 saw the arrival of Icon's 20th anniversary year where we sought to celebrate and extend the achievements and skills of our members whilst strengthening and widening Icon's sustainability and reach through our external partnerships. It was a particular highlight to be part of the Icon24 conference in London in July 2024, feel the positive momentum and impact of our conservation community and see how it is shaping the world. My thanks go to my fellow Trustees, the staff team and members, especially our very active members who volunteer in a huge

range of roles to support Icon's work. Last but not least, we appreciate and value our supporters and partners who are committed to working with us to achieve our goals. Onwards and upwards to Icon's next 20 years!'



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Emma Chaplin

Chair of the Board of Trustees

Icon's Year in Numbers

265 New members

Including **57** Student members

Representing **45** different countries

2 New Groups

To connect conservators working in **Northern Ireland** and **Private Practice**



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1 Icon Conference

Bringing together **372** delegates

To hear from **40+** speakers and panellists

Over **2** inspiring days

At the **Royal Geographical Society** in London

6 Members achieved Icon Accreditation

with a further **23** starting the process

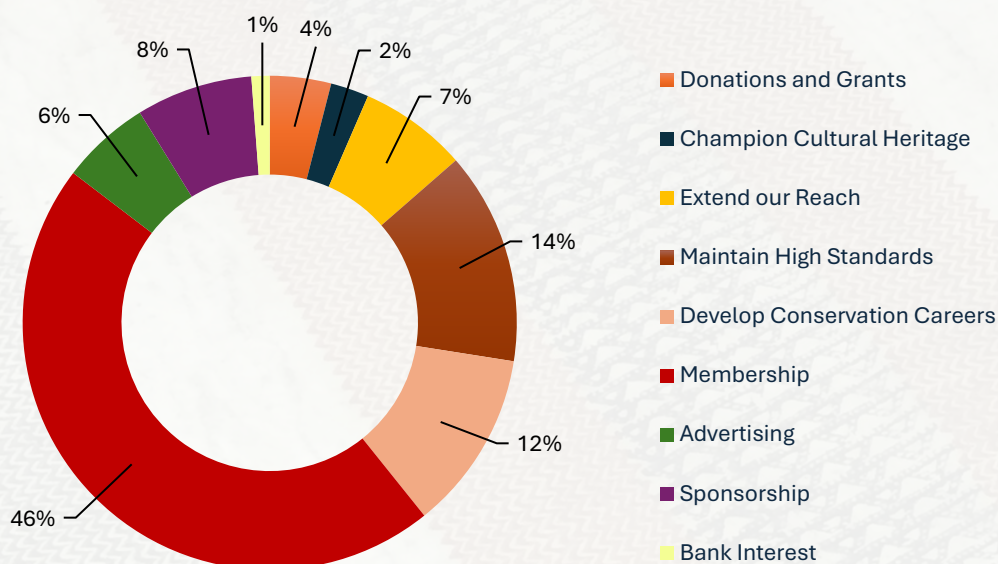
72 Jobs were advertised on Icon's website

with **6** Icon interns placed in areas of skills at risk, including **manuscript** and **musical instrument** conservation

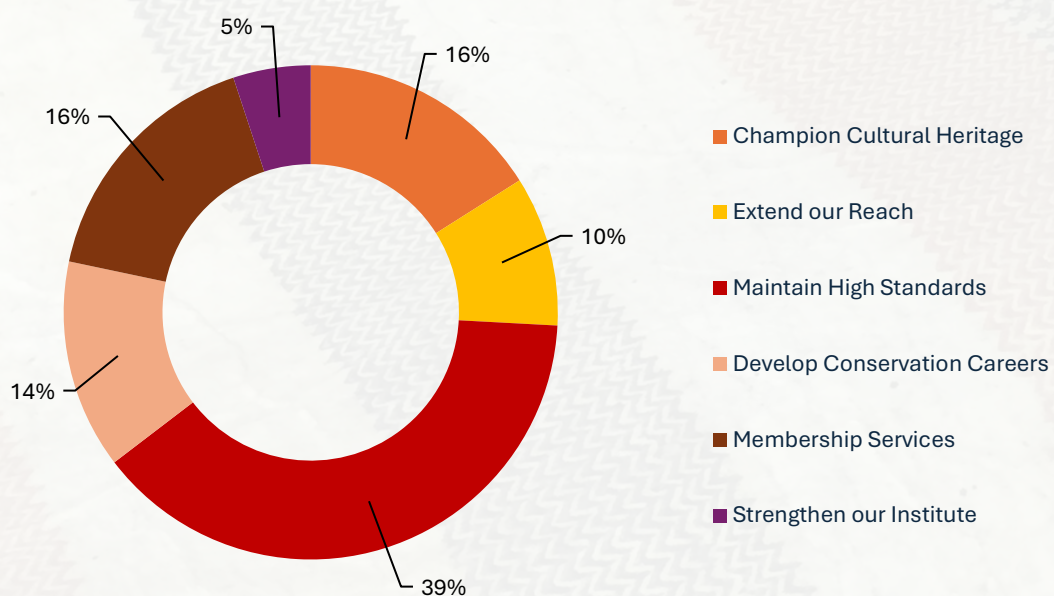


Icon's Year in Numbers

Income



Expenditure



Our Highlights

Icon24: Conservation for Change

In June 2025, 371 conservator-restorers and allied heritage professionals joined us, both in person and online, at the Royal Geographical Society in London to hear from more than 40 inspirational speakers from around the world. Icon24 highlighted that conservation is about more than preserving the past; it's about meaningfully engaging with communities, sharing stories, and inspiring progress. Conservators are at the forefront of a shift from object-focused to audience-centred collections care.



© James Pike Photography Ltd.

There was a real buzz throughout the venue as delegates reconnected with colleagues, made new contacts, and took part in a packed and inspiring programme of talks and presentations - showcasing the power of conservation to help us connect with our past and shape our future.



© James Pike Photography Ltd.

Throughout the day, we explored a range of powerful topics: from the remarkable work taking place at the 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York, to efforts to bring cultural care into a colonial collection at Kedleston Hall. Sessions also highlighted the potential of apprenticeships to secure the future of the

profession, and the vital role conservator-restorers can play in addressing the climate crisis. Delegates also had the opportunity to view film footage from the BFI National Archive and learn about some of the most challenging conservation work taking place in Antarctica.

Icon24 truly showcased the impact of the conservation profession to connect people, inspire change, and safeguard our shared heritage for the future.

Our Highlights

Mutual Recognition of Accreditation between Icon and ICRI

In May 2024, we were delighted to announce that Icon had reached an agreement on the mutual recognition of professional accreditation between Icon and the Institute of Conservator-Restorers in Ireland (ICRI).

Both ICRI's and Icon's accreditation systems have their roots in the same professional discussions that took place within the conservation community during the 1980s. These conversations recognised the vital role that independent assessment of a conservator-restorer's technical skills and in-depth understanding of conservation theory and practice plays in driving up professional standards across the sector.

As part of this agreement, we undertook a detailed comparison of our respective professional standards and assessment processes to ensure clear parity in what is assessed, as well as the rigour and robustness of each system. This thorough review has given both organisations full confidence in the equivalence of our accreditation processes and the professionalism of those who achieve them.

This marks an important milestone for Icon - extending our international reach and strengthening recognition of our professional accreditation system as well as the opportunities for our members to work confidently and collaboratively across borders.



Our Highlights

Creating connections: Icon Groups

Icon's specialist interest groups continued to grow over 2024/2025, with Icon Northern Ireland and Icon Private Practice joining the ranks and taking the total to 26.

As ever these groups offered outstanding support to our professional community and beyond, creating connections and sharing knowledge across the profession. All made possible by the incredible work of our wonderful volunteers. A big thank you to all the committee members, from chairs to treasurers who give their time freely to organise a wide range of events, training and networking opportunities.

Highlights from the year include:

- Icon Northern Ireland, a new national Group for conservators and heritage professionals working in Northern Ireland launched in Belfast at the Public Record Office Northern Ireland (PRONI). The event saw speakers share their experience of the collections care that enabled the 25th anniversary tour of the Belfast Good Friday Agreement in 2023.
- The Private Practice Group hosted its first in-person networking event at Burghley House in Stamford. Where the group discussed its aims for the next few years and members had the opportunity to visit the workshops of furniture conservator Anthony Beech ACR and textile conservation studio The Landi Company.
- The Ceramics and Glass Group celebrated their 40th anniversary with an AGM which included lectures exploring conservation projects in practice, collaborative approaches with other fields, and research in conservation science. As well as tours of Sir John Soane's Museum, the Wallace Collection and a dinner.
- The Stained Glass Group delivered their annual conference, Beyond the Whall: The Challenges of Conserving Glass from the Arts and Crafts Movement to the 21st Century at the University of Chester. The conference investigated the work of Christopher Whall's pupils and later 20th Century stained glass artists, with a series of papers on how to tackle the conservation of this innovative and highly creative era of stained glass design

Our Highlights

Protecting and Preserving Skills Across the Conservation Profession

The conservation profession relies on a relatively small pool of highly skilled conservator-restorers. While Icon's membership represents expertise across more than 150 material specialisms, challenges within the education sector and a shrinking number of professionals in certain areas mean that vital skills - many developed over decades - are increasingly at risk.

For example, within industrial heritage and large objects conservation, there are currently only six Accredited members of Icon with the expertise required to care for such collections. This raises serious concerns about succession planning and the ability to pass on specialist knowledge to the next generation of conservator-restorers.

Thanks to the generous support of the Swire Charitable Trust, Icon has been able to deliver workshops and training for conservator-restorers working in this field, helping them to develop their expertise and work towards Icon Accreditation. In addition, six dedicated funding partners have collaborated with Icon to establish internships focused on areas where skills are most at risk, with the first placements targeting musical instrument and manuscript conservation.

This challenge is acknowledged throughout the heritage sector. Achieving lasting change requires continued collaboration with stakeholders to champion and support the essential technical skills and specialist knowledge on which the sector



© Jonathan Santa Maria Bouquet



Our Highlights

The Tru Vue Conservation and Exhibition Grant Scheme

2024-2025 marked another year of successfully supporting small heritage institutions to care for our shared cultural heritage. With thanks to our partners Tru Vue®, we were able to deliver the Tru Vue® Conservation and Exhibition Grant Scheme for the 6th year running.

This year, Tru Vue® funded projects continued to reflect the breadth of heritage collections in the UK and internationally. From restaging sleeper train carriages in Scotland to revealing and conserving wallpaper history in south Wales, the scheme has enhanced access to a range of historically significant objects while safeguarding them for future generations through conservation activity.

A particular highlight this year has been the relocation of the National Museum of Bhutan's natural history collection. The grant scheme enabled the collection to be moved from temporary administrative buildings that had housed them after a powerful earthquake in 2011, back to their home in the museum's 17th century watchtower, renovated and equipped with new environmental control systems and secure Tru Vue® exhibit cases that will protect the newly conserved collection for future generations.

With more of the 2024-2025 projects coming to a close at the end of the year, we're looking forward to sharing their exciting outcomes with Icon's membership very soon.



© National Museum of Bhutan

Our Highlights

Championing Conservation: The Marsh Conservation Awards

Icon's 2,300 members and the wider heritage sector nominated the best and brightest in conservation across five categories in the 2024 Marsh Conservation Awards, presented this year at the evening reception for Icon24.

From industrial heritage in Scotland to traditional dress in Kenya and promoting sustainability in London, the winners of the 2024 Awards reflect the disciplinary breadth of conservation practice and its ability to engage communities on a local, national and global scale.

Dr David Leigh FSA FIIC ACR, Plowden Medal, Chair of the Marsh Conservation Awards Judging Panel, commented:

'The judging panel was impressed with the quality and range of the nominations this year. The calibre of the winning entries demonstrates not just the exceptional skills of the conservators who are charged with looking after our shared cultural heritage, but also their responsiveness to the values that communities place on collections and a readiness to explain and engage people with their important work.'



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The 2024 Marsh Conservation Award Winners

The Marsh Award for Heritage Conservation in Action: Kabarnet Museum, National Museums of Kenya

The Marsh Award for Innovation in Conservation: Industrial Museums Scotland, Powering our People

The Marsh Award for Environmental Sustainability in Conservation: Alexandra Wade, London Metropolitan Archives

The Marsh Award for Early Career Conservator: Alannah Hay, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Portsmouth

The Marsh Award for Outstanding Student Conservator: Emma Callaghan, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Hartlepool



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© National Museums of Kenya



© Industrial Museums Scotland

Our Highlights

Maintaining Standards across the Heritage Sector

End Point Assessment (EPA) is the final stage of an apprenticeship. It provides an objective evaluation of an apprentice's knowledge, skills, and behaviours to confirm that they are fully competent in their occupational role. The EPA is carried out by an independent organisation to ensure fairness and consistency across all apprenticeships.

As a registered End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO), Icon provides independent validation that an apprentice has met all the requirements of the Apprenticeship Standard for their programme. This is an important part of Icon's work in setting standards of practice for the conservation profession, as well as supporting the wider heritage sector by assessing apprentices who are working to protect and preserve collections.

It has been a long journey to reach this stage - developing the full suite of policies and processes, and registering with Ofqual, the government regulator for qualifications and standards. We were therefore delighted to run our first EPA in 2024 for the former Museum and Gallery Technician Apprenticeship Standard. This milestone gave us the opportunity to put theory into practice, strengthen the quality of our own work, and ensure that our EPA services are recognised as being of high quality and truly reflective of the professional standards expected across the heritage sector.



© National Museum of the Royal Navy



© Anna Gallwey

Acknowledgements

Icon is grateful for the contributions of all those who have worked passionately on the projects highlighted in this report and others throughout the year.

We would like to thank the many members who volunteer their time and expertise to Icon, including our Group Committee members, participants in Icon's various working groups, Trustees, event speakers, and critical voices in the sector.

We are also grateful to all of our members who support the Icon Accreditation process including Accreditation Committee members, assessors, mentors and CPD readers. We estimate that our members contribute more than £260k of in-kind support each year, calculated at a professional day-rate and we couldn't do it without you.

Lastly, we wish to express our appreciation to the Swire Charitable Trust and Heritage Compass for their support through the year, and to all those who donated funds in memory of the late Mel Houston, Nigel Williams, and Frederick Bearman, as well as those who have made donations in support of our broader work.



© Matt Wreford



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